

# Tony Blair's premiership

■ **May 1, 1997:** New Labour wins general election with huge majority of 179 seats, ending 18 years of Tory rule. **Tony Blair**, 44, becomes Britain's youngest prime minister in 200 years



■ **Blair-Brown pact:** It is widely believed that Tony Blair and **Gordon Brown**, who becomes finance minister, had made pact ahead of 1994 Labour leadership contest – Blair would get top job but hand over to Brown after period to be agreed

■ **Sep:** Referendums vote in favour of devolved Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly



■ **Oct:** In historic moment, Blair meets with **Gerry Adams**, head of **Sinn Fein**, political wing of **IRA**. He is the first British PM to meet with

Sinn Fein for 76 years

■ **Nov:** Labour Party says it will return £1 million donation from F1 boss **Bernie Ecclestone** after tobacco sponsorship scandal

■ **Dec 11:** First major rebellion against Blair – 47 back-benchers revolt over plans to cut benefits to single parents

■ **Apr 10, 1998:** Blair negotiates historic **Good Friday Agreement**, creating power-sharing assembly in Northern Ireland

■ **May:** PM holds successful referendum to create new assembly for London and establish city's first direct elections for mayor

■ **Nov:** Flagship **Human Rights Act** passed. Law enshrines existing **European Convention on Human Rights** into UK law



■ **Mar 1999:** Blair backs U.S. President **George W. Bush's** "War on Terror" with attack on Afghanistan to overthrow **Taliban** regime and destroy al-Qaeda network



humanitarian grounds to prevent ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians

■ **Nov: House of Lords Act** passed. Major reform of upper chamber removes most hereditary peers. In first session of Parliament, Lords had rejected Labour bills thirty-nine times

■ **Jun 2000:** Blair heckled and slow hand-clapped for giving overly-political speech during address to Women's Institute

■ **Nov: Freedom of Information Act** passed extending people's access to official information



■ **Sep:** Fuel blockades bring British roads to virtual standstill as petrol pumps run dry

■ **Jun 8, 2001:** Blair wins second term with landslide majority of 165 despite lowest turnout since World War One

■ **Sep 11: Al-Qaeda** attacks on United States kill almost 3,000 people – Blair pledges Britain will stand shoulder to shoulder with America

■ **Oct 7:** Britain joins U.S. President **George W. Bush's** "War on Terror" with attack on Afghanistan to overthrow **Taliban** regime and destroy al-Qaeda network



■ **Dec:** Downing Street denies rumours of tensions over Blair-Brown leadership pact

■ **Feb 2002:** Blair lambasts Labour "wreckers" obstructing his public service reforms

■ **Apr:** Blair visits President Bush at his Texas ranch. They discuss possible action against Iraqi leader **Saddam Hussein**

**IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**  
THE ASSESSMENT OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

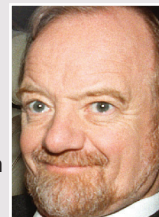
■ **Sep:** So-called "dodgy dossier" published, claiming Saddam can launch weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes. Downing Street criticised for "sexing up" intelligence. No such weapons subsequently found in Iraq

■ **Feb 15, 2003:** One million people march through London to protest against war with Iraq

■ **Mar:** Over 100 Labour MPs sign motion opposing Blair's controversial **Foundation Hospitals** scheme to give NHS hospitals financial autonomy

■ **Mar 7:** Attorney general **Lord Goldsmith** warns Blair over legality of going to war in Iraq – recommending delay until UN Security Council authorizes military action

■ **Mar 18:** Blair wins vote in parliament to wage war in Iraq but 139 Labour MPs rebel – party's biggest revolt in living memory – saying case for war has not been proved. Former Foreign Secretary **Robin Cook** resigns as leader of House of Commons



■ **Mar 19: Iraq war begins**

■ **May 12:** Cabinet colleague **Clare Short** quits over Iraq, saying Blair is "obsessed with his place in history"

■ **Aug 2:** Blair becomes longest serving Labour PM

■ **Oct:** Blair briefly hospitalized for irregular heartbeat

■ **Jan 2004:** Government narrowly wins vote on student top-up fees – issue on which Blair has staked his authority

■ **Jan 28: Hutton Report** exonerates government of deliberately distorting intelligence to justify Iraq war

■ **Jun:** Labour loses over 450 seats in local council elections

■ **Jul: Butler Report** concludes there were "serious flaws" in intelligence used by PM to justify Iraq war



■ **Jul 21:** Blair marks 10 years as labour leader

■ **Oct:** With speculation rife about an early election, Blair pre-announces resignation by saying he will not serve beyond a third term

■ **May 5, 2005:** Blair wins historic third term but with majority slashed to 65

■ **Jul 7:** Four suicide bombers attack London subway and bus systems, killing 52 people. Blair denies any link with Iraq war



■ **Nov 2:** Blair endures revolt in parliament forcing him to back down over proposed anti-terrorism plans. On same day, key ally **David Blunkett** has to resign over accusations of ministerial misconduct

■ **Mar 2006:** Calls mount for Blair to resign over **cash for peerages** revelations

■ **May 4:** Labour loses 135 seats in local elections

■ **May 14:** Senior legal figures react with fury to PM's plan to allow government to veto court rulings made under Labour's own 1998 Human Rights Act

■ **Jul-Aug:** Blair takes three-week holiday during conflict between Israel and Hezbollah – his refusal to call for ceasefire infuriates Labour backbenchers

■ **Sep 6:** Seven Labour MPs resign in protest against Blair's refusal to set timetable for exit

■ **Sep 7:** Pressure forces Blair to make humiliating public pledge to quit in 2007, but he refuses to set precise date

■ **Poll finds almost six in 10 people (58%) think Blair should go by end of year**