

The Conservatives in opposition, 1906–79: a comparative analysis

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The experience of being in opposition for a lengthy period is not one which the modern Conservative Party is used to, and it has tended to find it difficult. Since the 1880s, the Conservatives have grown accustomed to being seen – and to see themselves – as the party of government. They have been in office for so much of the period that exercising power has seemed to be the natural state of affairs, and this adds to Conservative frustration during spells in opposition. The party can feel – even if it does not always articulate this – that their removal has been in some sense unfair or a mistake, and this can hinder an analysis of the situation and the selection of strategies to tackle it. This problem is less apparent in shorter spells out of office, in which the impact of the previous defeat is still strong. However, as time passes, and especially if the prospect of recovery is not becoming apparent, impatience leads to tension and criticism within the party. The Conservatives have generally been better at holding their nerve – and even at staying united – whilst under pressure in government than they have been in the comparatively less-demanding role of opposition. This insecurity, which leads to inconsistencies, rushed decisions, grumbling in the ranks and mutterings about the leadership, has tended to diminish their effectiveness as an opposition party, even though they have often had a vulnerable government as a target. The Conservatives did not make much of their opportunities in 1906–14 or 1929–31, and made a surprisingly limited impact upon troubled Labour governments in 1968–70 and 1976–78. It should perhaps not be a surprise that they made no mark on a much stronger and more successful one in 1997–2001.

During the twentieth century the Conservative Party had seven periods in opposition. This chapter provides a context for the period since 1997 by considering the other six. The first part explores these periods thematically and considers the issues and factors which have determined the effectiveness of the Conservative Party in opposition. In the second part, a new approach is used to make a comparative analysis, from which conclusions and further questions can be drawn.

Themes and issues

Whether in office or in opposition, the fortunes of any party depend upon a combination of internal and external factors. The internal factors are those over which the party or its leaders can exercise some control. These include the choice of priorities, the content of policies, the image projected by statements and propaganda, the campaigning methods, the organisational structures, and the selection of personnel and of the leader. These are affected by the external factors, of which the most important are the performance of the economy (particularly unemployment, industrial relations, prices and incomes); levels of social cohesion, disorder and crime; public confidence in the legitimacy and effectiveness of political institutions; changes in social attitudes and personal mores; and international crises and external threats to national security. In opposition, a party can do little more than respond to the external factors and try to ensure that its position is as coherent and relevant as possible. There is, therefore, a natural tendency to let the government of the day cope with these challenges, and wait for mistakes and opportunities for criticism. However, this can be complicated by the legacies of the previous period in office, either because failures have eroded the party's credibility in a particular area, or because damaging charges of opportunism could be made if previously held positions are abandoned too quickly or drastically.¹ Responses in opposition tend to be cautious and incremental, even when they are presented with a flourish in order to capture public attention. This was the case with three Conservative policy initiatives during periods of opposition which were seen as particularly significant: Arthur Balfour's endorsement of tariffs in his speeches of 1907, Stanley Baldwin's announcement of a 'free hand' policy on food taxes in September 1930, and the publication of the *Industrial Charter* in 1947. In each of these cases there had been several preliminary steps, and although they were presented as bold moves they were actually the minimum needed to maintain party unity and morale.

Although the external factors are the ones most likely to change the political situation and affect public opinion, the opposition can neither predict nor control their timing and effects. For this reason parties in opposition tend to become preoccupied with the internal factors which they can affect, and to give these disproportionate attention. Conservative concerns in opposition have focused on three particular areas. The first of these is leadership, and the issue is straightforward and pragmatic: whether the existing leader still has an adequate range of support. This does not have to be enthusiastic, and may be due to a lack of attractive and credible alternatives and the deterrent effects of the risks involved in a challenge or revolt.² However, even if grudging or the product of inertia, leaders need a basic level of acceptance and consent; without this, their authority is undermined and the

situation becomes untenable. In the Conservative Party, the leader's position has always depended upon the parliamentary party; the introduction of an election procedure in 1965 merely formalised this. There are always some critics, dissatisfied on political or personal grounds, and the key is rather the attitude of the normally silent mainstream of the backbenchers. At the start of an opposition period their view of the leadership is mainly determined by immediate needs and pressures, and conjectures about the leader's suitability to carry the party to victory at the next election play a smaller part than might be expected.³ However, their reading of the leader's public standing will always be influential, and Conservative MPs make considerable allowance for the value of a leader who can extend the party's appeal beyond its normal sources of support. This was particularly the case with Baldwin after the 1923 and 1929 defeats, and went far to counterbalance the criticisms of his opposition leadership in 1929–31; in a slightly different way, it was also true of Winston Churchill in 1945–51. Whilst Balfour was considered remote and lacking in popular touch, his position was bolstered with MPs due to his pre-eminent abilities in debate in the Commons. After the stroke which ended Joseph Chamberlain's active career in 1906, Balfour's reputation and prestige overshadowed all of his colleagues in the perception of the press and the public.⁴ In addition, his patrician style had some advantages in the more deferential social structure of Edwardian Britain, especially with Conservative supporters. In 1965 the main leadership contenders marked a clear departure from the 'grouse moor' aristocratic image of Harold Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home; whether Reginald Maudling or Edward Heath was chosen, this would signal a shift of generation and social class, and the elevation of a modern, moderate and meritocratic outlook.

Although going into opposition can involve a change in the Conservative leadership, this has taken place much less often than the myth of leaders falling upon their swords might suggest. John Major was the first Conservative leader to resign his position immediately after losing an election, and his predecessors have generally remained in place. Balfour did so after 1906 through two further elections, Baldwin carried on after each of his defeats, Churchill was a fixture after 1945, and Heath did not contemplate stepping down until his unexpected rejection in the 1975 leadership ballot. The closest previous parallel is Douglas-Home, but his resignation in July 1965 was as much due to his own ambivalence about remaining as leader in opposition as it was to signs of an erosion of confidence.⁵ Perhaps of as much significance are the extensive changes in the wider leadership group – the figures of Cabinet rank – which often follow a defeat, especially after a long period in office. This has the effect of removing ministers identified with unsuccessful or unpopular policies and distancing the party from its previous record, although it also means the loss of experience. By 1910, and still more by 1914, the Shadow Cabinet contained almost no one from the 1902–5 Balfour

Cabinet. After 1929 there was open hostility to the continuation of the 'old gang' in the press and from MPs which resulted in extensive changes in the leadership, and this was reflected in the selection of Conservative ministers in the National governments of the 1930s.⁶ A group of new faces rose to prominence during 1945–51, and most of these departed after 1964.⁷ For slightly different reasons, Margaret Thatcher's Shadow Cabinet of 1979 was notably different in personnel from Heath's in 1974, and few of Major's team remained active after 1997.

Changes of leadership can be problematic, especially as until 1965 the Conservatives had no formal machinery for choosing or removing a leader, and forcing a reluctant leader to quit was likely to be difficult and counter-productive. Before 1965 the Conservatives tended to leave the leadership issue to pressure behind the scenes from senior colleagues, and this was usually aimed at making the leader more active and effective rather than persuading him to quit.⁸ Instead, party attention concentrated upon the two other areas of policy and organisation. A reappraisal of policy gave the opportunity to shed negative baggage from the previous period in office, and it was often more important to make clear what the party did not intend to do than to set out its future plans. This was true of the decision to postpone the food tax issue in order to concentrate upon Home Rule in 1913, the dropping of the tariff policy after the 1923 defeat, the acceptance of welfare reforms after 1945, and the rejection of interventionist policies after 1974. There was also a natural search for answers to the problems that had troubled the previous government, although the most ambitious attempt at this, the policy review of 1964–70, was not as helpful as had been hoped when the Conservatives returned to power in 1970. It was not very salient in public awareness and made little impact upon the target groups; in the 1970 election the Conservatives made similar gains in all social categories, and the issue on which the election was won – stability of prices and incomes – was the one where the party had notably failed to develop a policy.⁹ Nevertheless, developing new policies – especially if this highlighted new issues – could help to refresh the party's general image and the recovery of confidence in its ranks.

Organisational reform had a similar role, and was an even more obvious sphere of activity. The most serious defeats tended to follow long periods in office, during which the party organisation had declined in efficiency. The complacency and drift which was encouraged by the previous election successes resulted in the organisation being unable to adapt and cope with the period of unpopularity or apathy which came before defeat. Organisational problems were most visible before the three landslide defeats in 1906, 1945 and 1997, but they were also apparent in 1929, 1964 and 1974. This made reorganisation an obvious priority after each defeat, but focusing upon this could also be a means of avoiding less palatable questions. Only

a certain amount can be done to revive an organisation from within, or it becomes an exercise which may look good on paper but lacks substance. Organisational vitality depends upon a motivated membership and the securing of financial resources, and the incentives for these are mainly the result of the external factors in the situation. For this reason, organisational recovery tends to follow from an improvement in a party's popularity, rather than being a first cause of it. After this, the effect can be cyclical, with investment in professional staff and publicity allowing the party to benefit from a return of support. This was the case with the most famous organisational recovery of 1947–51, particularly with Woolton's fund-raising, but even so the outcome of the 1950 and 1951 elections was very close. The changes introduced after 1906, forced by pressure from the National Union, weakened central direction and fragmented the regional level into an ineffectual county localism.¹⁰ The reforms of 1911, which introduced the party chairmanship and a clear departmental structure in the Central Office, improved efficiency but were much less in the public eye; due to the intervention of the war, their fruition was seen in the role played by Central Office in the inter-war era. Lack of funds after the 1929 defeat led to reductions in Central Office staffing, and since the 1960s efforts to improve the organisation have been constrained by the need to economise and cut posts. These pressures could be partly reconciled by structural rationalisation and using new campaigning methods; Edward du Cann was appointed Party Chairman in 1965 because his business experience included modern practices in market research and advertising. After 1964 and 1974, organisational efforts were particularly directed towards groups where the party felt it lacked support, including urban voters, the young and trade unionists.¹¹ The Community Affairs Department was created at Central Office in 1975 to reach out to newly emerging social networks and groups.¹² Other developments may be of internal significance but have no electoral impact, such as the committee structure introduced in the parliamentary party in 1924.

There is a question as to how much such internal activities matter. They are often held to do so by those who have been involved in them, but this may be a case of busy bees assuming too easily that effort is directly linked to effect.¹³ The observation that it is the government which loses an election rather than the opposition winning it has become a cliché, but like most aphorisms it is repeated because it condenses a fundamental truth. If this is so, then there is little more for an opposition to do than wait for the government to run into trouble, and then exploit any opening as thoroughly as possible. This was the basis of Balfour's approach in 1906–9 and of Baldwin's after 1929, and it was certainly Churchill's preference after 1945. However, short-term reactions can cause problems, as in the mismanaged attack on the National Insurance Act in 1911 and too close an identification with the vested interests opposing the National Health Service Bill in 1946,

whilst in 1949 Churchill had to disavow a threatened motion of censure on health. The complete decay of the party organisation during the Second World War made organisational recovery a priority, although in choosing Lord Woolton as Party Chairman it is notable that Churchill opted for business rather than political experience. However, Churchill was much more resistant to policy initiatives, fearing that they would be distracting and involve making commitments too soon.¹⁴ Although the unsettled mood of the party after 1945 made some definitions of Conservative principles unavoidable, their significance was more in restoring Conservative self-confidence than in any public effect.¹⁵ This was at best diffuse and long term, and the Conservative recovery in the 1950 and 1951 elections was principally due to the Attlee government's economic problems and austerity measures. However, by the 1960s the belief that the policy reappraisal of 1945–51 had been vital in the revival had become so entrenched that the Conservatives implemented an even grander review. Twenty-three 'policy groups' were established after 1964, and after 1966 this increased to twenty-nine, involving 191 MPs and peers and 190 others.¹⁶ The first fruits of this made little difference in the 1966 election, and the Conservatives lost more ground to a government that still seemed fresh and effective. Having embarked early upon a policy exercise, there was the danger that the positions adopted would become ossified and outdated by the next election but would be difficult to change.¹⁷ The victories in the 1970 and 1979 elections were mainly due to the economic and industrial problems of the Labour governments towards the end of their terms – in particular, the damage done by devaluation in 1968 and the 'winter of discontent' in 1978–79 – than to any Conservative policy statements. If anything, in both cases there were concerns about the radicalism and possible harshness of the Conservative approach. In 1970 the Conservatives fought on a general programme with slogans directed at Labour's record in office, whilst the strategy from the effective 'Labour isn't working' advertising campaign of 1978 to the 1979 election focused upon the government's failures, industrial strife and the need to lower direct taxes. Thatcher gave few definite commitments between 1975 and 1979, and her cautious tactics were designed to keep the options open.¹⁸

If it is government performance that determines public opinion, the opposition will gain most from a more limited and reactive strategy. It still needs to distance itself from the problems which led to losing office, or it may be unable to reap the benefits from the government's difficulties. This has been a problem for Labour oppositions in the 1930s, 1950s and 1980s, but it has also affected the Conservatives. The clearest examples of being weighed down by the albatross of the past were in 1997–2001 and 1906–14, when the continued currency of the tariff issue deterred urban working-class support. At the same time, the tariff issue monopolised the attention of Conservative MPs and activists, like a black hole into which all else

disappeared. Tariff reform enthusiasts wanted no alternatives or distractions; they were convinced that failure in 1906 and 1910 had been due to half-hearted presentation and leadership, and that the answer was to focus everything on this crusade. Other possible initiatives were viewed with suspicion and hostility, especially in the field of social reform.¹⁹ The 1945 defeat was mainly due to condemnation of the record of the 1930s in both foreign and domestic policy, but it was soon apparent that neither Churchill nor the centrist-oriented generation who were rising to prominence amongst the leadership – particularly Anthony Eden, ‘Rab’ Butler, Harold Macmillan and Oliver Stanley – had any desire to return to pre-war methods. In the 1960s it took some time to shake off the outdated ‘grouse moor’ image of the later Macmillan years, and Conservative rehabilitation remained in doubt up to the declaration of results in 1970. After 1974, the party’s prized reputation for competence in government was badly dented, and there was continuing concern that a Conservative administration would be unable to govern because of inevitable conflict with the trade unions. This was a principal factor in continuing support for Labour and their ‘Social Contract’, however threadbare it became, and explains the widespread belief that James Callaghan might have won if the election had taken place in autumn 1978. It took the wreck of Labour’s industrial credibility in the winter that followed to balance the memories of Heath’s conflicts with the miners and the gloom of the ‘three day week’ of five years before.

As well as shedding the burdens of the past, in opposition a party needs to pull together and avoid factionalism. The latter is likely to give unwelcome reminders of unpopular matters, and undermine the appearance of being a ‘government in waiting’. It may be the case that oppositions cannot win elections by their own efforts, but it is certainly true that they can lose them by their mistakes.²⁰ This can occur in several ways, all of which will deter voters who might otherwise become disillusioned with the government. Visible disunity within a party makes it uncertain which direction it is going to take, and so makes reliance upon it risky. Whilst Labour had this problem in the 1950s and 1980s, the Conservatives have not been immune and it was a particular feature in 1906–14, 1929–31 and after the fall of Heath in 1975; to a lesser extent it was also a factor during the clash between Heath and Enoch Powell over immigration in 1968–70. Disunity suggests that the opposition will not operate effectively if it is returned to office, and this makes it more likely for the government to be given the benefit of the doubt. Factional disputes also tend to become bitter and obsessive, whilst the finer points of doctrinal dispute are of little interest to the general public.²¹ The result can be a party which is preoccupied with its own narrow concerns, and which appears unattractive to potential members or voters. These problems were features of the Conservative oppositions in 1906–14 and 1997–2001, and also in 1929–31 when – despite the impact of the slump and rising

unemployment – it was not until Conservative disunity was laid to rest that by-elections began show a significant swing away from the government in late spring and summer 1931.²² Only one of the three landslide defeats was not followed by continued sniping within the ranks and frequent reminders of the reasons for Conservative discredit, and it is no coincidence that the period after 1945 was by far the most successful of the recoveries.

The public perception of the credibility and image of the opposition is the result of several elements. The first can be termed the ‘see-saw’ effect, in which the government’s poor performance depresses its support and so automatically raises that of the opposition. This can be a powerful and direct force, but it is also unpredictable and capricious. For these reasons, it does not engender as much confidence amongst leaders, party officials and MPs as might be expected, and it produces a brittle and nervous atmosphere. Recovery on this basis can also have negative effects, as the appearance of progress reduces the incentive to tackle difficult issues. The Conservatives particularly experienced this element between 1967 and 1970, first in the opinion poll leads which they enjoyed after devaluation and Labour’s difficulties over Europe, industrial relations and prices and incomes, and then in the alarming evaporation of that lead in the spring of 1970.²³ The other elements are the unity and vigour of the opposition, its stance on the most important issues of the day and its general image. The latter is derived from several factors, including party propaganda, but perhaps most influential is the historic identity of the party and the classes and interests with which it is most closely linked. The leadership is another factor in the party’s image, but this makes it only part of one amongst several elements which together shape the standing of the opposition – and the latter still remains secondary to the standing of the government.

This raises the question of how much the figure of the party leader matters, and whether Conservatives have over-rated the importance of this. Certainly, there have been recoveries in opposition despite having a little-known or unpopular leader. In May 1968, several months after devaluation, the Conservatives enjoyed a 28 per cent lead over Labour in voting intentions, but only 31 per cent of the sample polled were satisfied with Heath.²⁴ In 1910 there is little suggestion that Balfour personally was popular, although he had the prestige and visibility of a former Prime Minister. In 1970 and 1979 the Conservative leaders had been selected in opposition and lacked this authority, and they had in different ways a forbidding or strident image and were outshone on television by the more ‘human’ style of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, the Labour Prime Ministers. Heath’s awkward manner and elitist recreations made it difficult to counter this quasi-Baldwinism, and Thatcher was more vivid and direct in reaching the public; it was in the 1979 campaign that she presented herself in positive contrast as a ‘conviction politician’.²⁵ Even in 1950 and 1951, Churchill may not have been any more

attractive than he had been in 1945; it would need to be shown how and why this has occurred, and clearly the Labour newspapers which presented him as a danger to peace were acting on the view that the negative elements were still present. Although this was not strictly a recovery from opposition, it is doubtful if Andrew Bonar Law's personal appeal was a significant factor in the victory gained by the anti-Coalition rebels in the general election of 1922. It is difficult for an opposition leader to compete with the incumbency advantages of prestige and familiarity which a Prime Minister possesses, particularly in media coverage. This suggests that the contribution of the leadership in opposition is less a matter of direct appeal to uncommitted voters, and more of giving the party the cohesion and self-confidence which translate into a sense of purpose. This is then disseminated by the media and has a slow effect upon public perceptions, thus affecting the standing and credibility of the opposition indirectly in what can become a cyclical pattern. Balfour was poorest in this respect (perhaps even more over the Lords in 1910–11 than over tariffs in 1906–10) whilst Baldwin was effective in 1924 but faltered in 1929–30. Heath's personal certainty did not transfer to his followers in 1967–70, but Thatcher was more populist and attuned to the media in 1975–79. On this criteria, the most successful leaders were Churchill in 1945–51, due more to prestige and charisma than to action or substance, and Bonar Law in 1912–14, when his partisan and abrasive methods appealed to the party much more than to the uncommitted.

The Conservatives in opposition tend to mix the desire to act as if still wearing the mantle of government – to appear sober, responsible, consistent and wise – with partisanship and tactical manoeuvre. The temptation to have the best of both worlds is understandable, but sometimes it results in gaining neither. Governments are expected to have answers, but oppositions have to operate without the benefit of civil service advice and support. The Conservatives set out to remedy this in the creation of the Conservative Research Department, which had been under consideration for some time but was founded after the party went into opposition in 1929. This provided evidence to support speeches, policy statements and propaganda, but inevitably it fostered a tone of dryness and caution. The desire to appear 'statesmanlike' encourages the drafting of policies, and the existence of a secretariat means that these can be elaborated in detail. However, these then become commitments and are vulnerable to changing circumstances, whilst they also give the government a target for spoiling attacks – something at which the Conservatives were particularly effective at when in office between 1981 and 1992.

Whilst it may be more productive to concentrate upon parliamentary opposition, this has two limitations. Firstly, although it may be good for morale in the enclosed world of the Palace of Westminster, it is largely invisible to the public and has only a slow and indirect effect upon government popularity. Secondly, troubling the government in the House of

Commons is very difficult if it has a large majority, and it is hard to motivate opposition MPs for repeated efforts that are more likely to result in their own exhaustion. The opportunities in the Commons were therefore limited in 1906–10, 1945–50, 1966–70 and 1997–2001. However, more was achieved in harrying the ministry over Home Rule in 1912–14, in using procedural devices in 1950–51, and in exploiting Labour's lack of a majority in 1975–79. A more cautious strategy was followed in 1923 and 1929–30, as there were benefits from showing that the minority Labour governments had been given 'fair play', and Baldwin was concerned that if an election came too soon it would benefit Labour more than the Conservatives.²⁶ Until the very end of the century the Conservatives had an overwhelming majority in the House of Lords, but this became the weapon that was too dangerous to be used. After the failure of this tactic in the constitutional crisis of 1909–11, it became clear that using the Lords against important government measures would link the Conservatives with the vested interests of the privileged few. The extension of the franchise in 1918 and the rise of the Labour Party made the position of the Lords even more questionable, and the Conservatives preferred not to draw attention to them. They were sensitive to the charge of 'peers versus people' and of seeming anti-democratic, and the Lords were barely used in 1929–31, 1945–51, and other periods since.²⁷

Whatever strategies are adopted in opposition, assessing and addressing the causes of defeat remains the essential first step towards any revival in fortunes. However, whilst this might seem self-evident, it is neither an easy nor an attractive prospect. There is a natural sense of shock in the wake of disaster, and a desire to avoid unwelcome truths. Morale and confidence are already low and may be depressed further, and there is also the danger that an inquest will rake up controversy and make matters worse by widening rifts and adding to factional tensions. For all these reasons, it is easier to let the past lie, and to look forward rather than back. The Conservative Party has rarely liked the idea of wide-ranging enquiries into election defeats, and prefers a pragmatic response of accepting the fact and limiting discussion to technical matters of organisation. The one occasion on which anything more ambitious was officially endorsed was after the 1929 defeat, when critical voices – mainly from 'diehard' MPs unhappy with Baldwin's centrist strategy – persuaded the Executive Committee of the National Union to send a questionnaire to all local associations asking for their analysis of the causes of defeat.²⁸ Central Office, which administered it, delayed the process and by the time a report was prepared it had lost much of its immediacy and relevance. The critical nature of the replies did not help towards any constructive opposition strategy; the report was quietly shelved, and the experiment has not been repeated. Analysis of the defeats has therefore tended to be informal, individual and mainly conducted in private. This does not necessarily make it more effective: in 1906 Balfour shrugged off his defeat as

part of a world-wide trend to socialism that included the 1905 Russian Revolution. Since 1964 defeats have been subjected to more balanced and professional analysis by senior party officials, but their reports have only limited circulation amongst the leadership.

Each defeat has its particular circumstances and causes, but a comparative assessment highlights several common factors in the Conservative defeats during the twentieth century.²⁹ The most significant of these can be grouped under four headings, of which the first is confusion over what the party stands for on the most important topics of the day. This is more than just difficulty in some areas of policy, and can involve reversals in key areas or promises, failure to present a coherent identity, and loss of certainty and confidence amongst leaders and MPs. It was a marked feature of public perceptions in 1906, 1929, 1945, 1964, 1974 and 1997, and is perhaps the most influential as well as the most common factor. It is linked closely with the second aspect, a sense of failure and powerlessness. This is most often the result of economic problems, as in 1929, 1964, 1974 and 1997, but it was also apparent in the struggle against the Home Rule Bill in 1912–14 and in the troublesome legacy from the inter-war era in 1945. The third factor is a product of long spells in office: the staleness of the ministry and the lack of fresh ideas, often leading to a growing public feeling of ‘time for a change’. These three elements can combine to produce a critical climate, particularly from the press, which in turn makes the government rattled and defensive. It then responds poorly to the dissatisfaction of its own supporters, as in 1905–6, 1927–29, 1955–56, 1972–74 and 1993–97. All these factors are more significant than the role of the leader, as they govern the standing of the government as a whole. It certainly will not help if the leader has a negative or weak image, as in 1906, 1964, 1974 and 1997. However, the 1929 and 1945 results show that a popular or respected leader cannot deliver victory if the other currents are flowing against. The final two factors are also consequences of problems in government rather than causes of them. The unity, morale, organisation and finances of the party in office come under strain when its popularity slumps, whilst through the ‘see-saw effect’ the vigour and strength of the opposition rises. This pattern was particularly apparent in the three most severe Conservative defeats of the century. In each case the opposition party had been troubled and ineffective for several years before Conservative failures transformed the situation, after which the health of their opponents improved to such an extent that they were the stronger and more effective party when the election came in 1906, 1945 and 1997.

A party in opposition can either concentrate upon its core values and express the outlook of its most vigorous and vocal supporters, or it can aim to widen its appeal even if this means changes in outlook and image. The first approach is the easiest, but carries the danger of solidifying in more permanent form the features which had made the party unattractive to voters

and led to the loss of office. This may have been particularly evident in 1997–2001, but it was also a feature of the periods after the defeats of 1906, 1910 and 1929, and was present to a lesser extent after 1964 and 1974. In practice, it is never a crude choice between the two strategies, and the common pattern is a mixture of the two. This becomes a matter of balance and presentation, and managing the inherent conflict.³⁰ Thus in both the late 1940s and late 1970s there was concern that the combative instincts of the leader – Churchill and Thatcher respectively – would involve the party in statements or positions which would deter moderate voters, however well they might echo the anger or concerns of the party's bedrock. The approach which Conservative leaders have taken has been shaped by their sense of where support had been lost, and therefore how it could be regained. There are two areas to be considered, and their different needs can produce conflict or uncertainty. The party whilst in office may have disappointed its core supporters by failing to respond to their needs or adequately protect their status or economic prosperity. At the same time, defeat would not have occurred without the loss of ground amongst floating and marginal voters who had supported the party in its previous victory, but who were not habitual Conservative supporters or did not think of themselves as such. This is likely to be due to a poor record in office, especially if there is a sense of the government having been in office too long and having drifted out of touch, or if there have been scandals.

Moving back towards the middle ground can be made more difficult by the changes in the composition of the parliamentary party which also follow defeat. Safer seats contain a much larger element of the party's core support, and so do not need to concern themselves as much with the sensitivities of moderate or floating voters. The competition for the nomination in these constituencies ensures that they have a range of credible candidates to choose from, and they are not constrained from selecting the candidate closest to their own views. Before the Maxwell Fyfe reforms of 1949, the financial contribution that the candidate would make to the local Association was a key factor which further tilted selection in favour of the wealthier section of society. Although this included some MPs of moderate outlook – such as Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan and Oliver Stanley – their visibility and later ministerial careers tends to obscure the fact that most MPs in safe seats were either in the centre or on the right of Conservative opinion. For this reason, the loss of marginal seats meant that the proportion of MPs of moderate outlook (whether by conviction or electoral pragmatism) diminished when the party went into opposition. At the same time, fewer of the right wing were defeated, and so the centre of gravity in the parliamentary party shifted in their direction.

This was of crucial importance in 1906, when the landslide reduced the core of moderates upon whom Balfour had been reliant to less than a quarter

of the parliamentary party, and the tariff reformers now accounted for over a hundred of the 156 MPs in the new House.³¹ Balfour could not survive without accepting what he had hitherto avoided, and in the 'Valentine letters' exchanged on 14 February 1906 he accepted that tariff reform 'is, and must remain, the first constructive work of the Unionist Party'. This factor may also help to explain the degree of hostility to the Liberals over Home Rule in 1912–14; even though this was an issue about which Conservatives felt strongly, the tone and methods of the opposition were taken to unprecedented levels.³² It was also a significant development after the 1929 defeat, when the 'die-hard' wing of MPs had greater prominence and gave strong support to Beaverbrook's campaign for a full tariff policy.³³ However, it was less apparent in 1945 due to the extensive turnover in Conservative candidates in all types of seats; many of the sitting MPs had entered the House between 1918 and 1924, and because there had been no election since 1935 an unusually high number were reaching retirement age and stood down. Their younger successors had mostly fought in the war and so had been exposed to a much wider range of views and experiences, and they were also more aware of the wartime unpopularity of the party. To a lesser extent something similar occurred in the 1960s, with sufficient MPs feeling that the party had an outdated image, to counteract any pull to the right. After 1974, there was tension between the right of the party and the pragmatists and moderates, whose normal claim to competence had been undermined by the failure of the Heath government.³⁴

The final factor to affect both Conservative defeats and recoveries was the role of the third party in mainland British politics. Before 1914 this was the Labour Party, and the electoral pact which it had made with the Liberals in 1903 was significant in the elections of 1906 and 1910. Although the pact broke down in some of the by-elections between 1910 and 1914, resulting in Conservative gains, it would have been in both Liberal and Labour self-interest to maintain their 'progressive alliance' if the 1915 general election had taken place. Labour were the most dependent upon the pact, a fact fully realised by their leaders and headquarters, and in December 1910 they had succeeded in imposing better observation of the agreement upon their local parties. If the Lib–Lab pact had operated again, it would have curtailed any further Conservative progress, and almost certainly some of the by-election gains could not have been held against a single 'progressive' opponent and would have reverted to their previous allegiance. From the early 1920s the Liberals were the third-placed party, but their activity had an opposite effect. The presence of a Liberal candidate diverted some of the votes which would have been obtained by the Conservative in a straight fight with Labour, and this was often enough to result in a Labour win. The high proportion of three-cornered contests contributed to the Conservative defeats of 1923 and 1929; in the latter case, the number had doubled since the victory

in 1924, and 159 seats were lost.³⁵ In addition, Liberal revivals were often the product of troughs in Conservative popularity, and this was the case in 1923 (due to the tariff issue) and in 1929, 1964 and 1974 (after Conservative governments had lost direction and encountered stagnant or poor economic conditions). Conversely, the pattern of relative Liberal weakness after periods of Labour government has assisted Conservative recovery. In 1924 Liberal disarray and financial problems resulted in many fewer candidates being nominated, whilst in 1931 the Liberals were allied with the Conservatives in the National government. In many constituencies the Liberals lacked a candidate or stood down, and the result was an effective anti-Labour front from which the Conservatives benefitted the most. One part of the Liberal Party withdrew from the National government before the next election in 1935, but it was only able to run 161 candidates in comparison to the 457 of 1923 and the 513 of 1929; furthermore, the other section, led by Sir John Simon, remained in electoral partnership with the Conservatives. The fall in the number of Liberal candidates from 475 in 1950 to 109 in 1951 was a crucial factor in Churchill's return to power with an overall majority of seventeen seats. Since the Liberal revival in the 1960s the number of candidates has generally remained high, but the Conservatives have benefitted from returns of support. In 1970 the Liberal vote fell by only 1 per cent, but this was enough to cause the loss of six of their twelve seats. The 5.3 per cent fall in the Liberal vote in England and Wales in 1979 contributed significantly to the 8.1 per cent increase in the Conservative share of the vote, and to the recovery of many seats that had been lost to Labour in 1974.

In conclusion, how effective has the Conservative Party been in opposition between 1906 and 1979? The elements which play a part in this are the state of the party in the wake of the defeat which begins the period in opposition, the degree of understanding and acceptance of the causes of that defeat, the cohesion and morale of the parliamentary party, organisational initiatives and their effectiveness, the development of a new programme or image, and most important of all the problems of the government. The Conservatives were in the greatest disarray after the 1906 defeat, and this persisted with factional strife over tariffs up to 1910 and then bitter division over the Parliament Act in 1911. Although unity was restored by the primacy of the Home Rule issue in 1912–14, the party's stance remained entirely negative and there were potential pitfalls in the extreme position adopted in defence of Ulster.³⁶ In 1923 the first difficult few weeks were followed by a quick recovery of unity, partly because of the advent of the first Labour government. The 1929 defeat was followed by a party crisis which occupied most of the next two years, and little was achieved by the opposition despite the Labour government's minority status and mounting difficulties.³⁷ The party organisation in the country was at its lowest ebb in 1945, but there was no disunity in the parliamentary party. As well as restoring the

organisation and raising substantial funds, the new structures of the Advisory Committee on Policy and the Conservative Political Centre were introduced, improving communications between leaders and followers.³⁸ Between 1964 and 1970 there were criticisms of Home's leadership and doubts about Heath, but much attention was focused upon the extensive reappraisal of policy. Apart from the leadership contest in 1975 and the glowering presence of Heath, the stresses of the period from 1975 to 1979 were mainly hidden from view.

Analysis and response to the causes of defeat was most effective after 1923, 1945 and 1974, and least after 1906 and 1910. The Conservatives were most united and effective as a parliamentary opposition in 1924 and 1949–51, and fairly effective in 1978–79 and 1912–14. Organisational changes have been adopted after every defeat, but those of 1906–10 made matters worse until the reforms of 1911 introduced new institutions and effective management.³⁹ The most successful changes were in 1945–51, particularly the Maxwell Fyfe reforms which emphasised a meritocratic approach to candidate selection and helped to refurbish the party's image.⁴⁰ The enquiries and initiatives of 1964–70 and 1974–79 were intended to improve efficiency and reach out to areas where party support was weak, but they were hampered by financial stringency.⁴¹ The reappraisal of policy and the development of a fresh, distinctive and relevant programme was carried through to greatest effect in 1923–24 and 1947–51. The latter became the model to follow, but it was less successful in 1964–70 when the visible activity obscured the failure to tackle some crucial issues, and there were problems in conveying the message to the public.⁴² The reappraisal of 1975–79 asked more fundamental questions, but at the price of creating divisions and tensions. In 1929–31 resistance to attempts from the 'diehard' and protectionist right to force a change of programme on the leaders caused a serious party crisis, and this was only overcome when the effects of the slump moved public opinion away from free trade and eroded the standing of the government. It is the latter which remains the crucial governing factor. The Conservatives made little impact upon governments which were performing even moderately well, as in 1908–14, 1924, 1929–30, 1945–49, 1964–67 and 1974–78. Their fortunes improved when governments were struggling, whether this was due to political ineptitude, exhaustion or economic depression. It was various combinations of these three elements which accounted for the brighter Conservative prospects of 1907–8, 1930–31, 1950–51, 1967–69 and 1978–79, but which were absent in 1997–2001.⁴³

A comparative analysis

The second section of this chapter uses an experimental approach to compare the different periods in opposition. Any assessment has to consider the

fortunes of both the government and the opposition, and needs to reflect the fact that the actions of the government have much greater impact than those of either the governing or opposition parties. A range of factors has been identified and given a numerical ranking as an indication of the extent to which they were present in each of the periods (see Table 1.1). However, to reflect their greater importance, the elements of the government's performance are scored on a scale from 0 (low) to 10 (high), whilst all other factors are scored on a scale of 0–5. The values allocated are of course a personal judgement: they are a method of expressing analysis rather than statements of fact. Nevertheless, whilst there would be differences of view over precise grades, it is likely that this would tend to cancel out and that a reasonable consensus could be arrived at. The exercise of determining a value causes one to reflect and to compare, assessing both the criteria in general and the significance of the factor in each election. This could also be done by using a scale of words or descriptive phrases, but the advantage of using numbers is that it makes possible a cumulative assessment of each period and facilitates comparisons between them. Judging different factors on the same scale is in one sense artificial, as this gives them an equal weighting which they may not have had. However, the aim is to assess the degree to which a factor is present, rather than to determine its precise relative importance.

There are three different aspects to the position of the government, each of which can be separated into a number of factors. First, there is the security of tenure which the government possesses – to put it simply, a government with a large majority in the Commons is much harder to defeat than one which does not have a majority at all. The larger the electoral mountain that the opposition will have to climb, the greater the swing back in public support which will be needed. Being in office gives some benefits of prestige, and this is measured by including the number of years that the government has been in office. The second aspect is the effectiveness of the government's performance, and this is assessed under five headings. Four of these concern the main areas of responsibility: the health of the economy (assessed by factors which most directly affect or concern people, such as unemployment and living standards); social stability and industrial relations; welfare provision; and response to any concerns about the external situation. To these are added a fifth factor, the extent to which the government holds out the promise of an attractive future programme, or whether it seems to be exhausted and simply clinging to office. The third aspect considered for the government is the condition of its supporting party, and this is assessed in terms of the quality of its leadership, its unity and image, and the strength of its party organisation.

Three aspects are also considered for the opposition party, but there are only two factors in each of these and they are scored on the scale of 0–5. The first aspect is the public image of the opposition, and the two factors

Table 1.1 Factors in Conservative recoveries, 1910–79

<i>General election:</i>	1910	1924	1931	1950/51	1970	1979	Total
GOVERNMENT							
<i>Security and inertia</i>							
Years in office (number)	4	1	2	6	6	5	24
Size of majority (0–5)	5	0	0	5	4	1	15
Sub-total	9	1	2	11	10	6	
<i>Performance (0–10)</i>							
Promise for the future	7	6	0	3	2	1	19
Social order, ind. unrest	6	5	4	6	4	1	26
Economy, unemployment	8	5	0	7	6	3	29
Welfare provision	7	5	3	10	5	6	36
External security	5	7	8	8	6	6	40
Sub-total	33	28	15	34	23	17	
<i>Governing party (0–5)</i>							
Leadership	4	4	0	2	3	4	17
Unity and image	4	5	0	3	4	3	19
Organisation	4	4	2	4	3	2	19
Sub-total	12	13	2	9	10	9	
Total	54	42	19	54	43	32	
OPPOSITION							
<i>Image (0–5)</i>							
Appeal of leadership	1	5	4	3	2	2	17
Unity and vigour	2	4	3	4	3	4	20
Sub-total	3	9	7	7	5	6	
<i>Programme (0–5)</i>							
Distinctiveness	4	3	4	4	3	3	21
Attractiveness	1	4	4	4	3	2	18
Sub-total	5	7	8	8	6	5	
<i>Organisation (0–5)</i>							
Effectiveness	2	3	3	5	3	4	20
Resources	2	3	4	5	3	4	21
Sub-total	4	6	7	10	6	8	
Total	12	22	22	25	17	19	

here are the appeal of the leadership and the degree of unity and vigour displayed by the party. The second aspect is the programme which is put forward, and this is assessed for its distinctiveness and its attractiveness – in the latter case, to voters whose support the party lost when it was defeated

and to uncommitted or 'floating' voters. The final aspect is the strength of the party organisation, assessed in terms of its effectiveness and of the level of resources which are available to it.

The results of this analysis may contain few surprises, but they highlight a number of issues. The first of these is that the fate of a government lies in its own hands. The highest scores for the sub-heading of government performance are in 1910 and 1950–51, and although four general elections are involved these are the most limited Conservative recoveries. They show the lowest increases in the Conservative share of the vote, despite the fact that they follow a landslide defeat: in January 1910 the Conservative poll increased by 3.4 per cent over 1906, and in 1950 by only 3.9 per cent over 1945. In January and December 1910 the opposition was unable to displace the Liberal government, and after a similar experience in 1950 the majority attained in 1951 was by far the lowest of any Conservative return to office after a period in opposition. The next highest score under this heading, of twenty-eight in 1924, saw the Labour Party lose a relatively small number of seats after its first minority term in office, and the large Conservative victory was mainly the result of the collapse of the Liberal Party. Although the overall government score in 1970 is slightly above that in 1924, this is mainly due to its longer spell in office and the size of the 1966 majority; on performance it is five points behind 1924, and the image of the governing party is also poorer. At the other end of the scale, the lowest government total is, hardly surprisingly, in 1931.

Table 1.2 Conservative electoral recoveries, 1910–79

<i>Date of election</i>	<i>MPs elected</i>		<i>Total votes received</i>		<i>% share of vote</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gain</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gain</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gain</i>
January 1910	272	+116	3,104,407	+683,336	46.8	+3.4
29 October 1924	412	+154	7,854,523	+2,339,982	46.8	+8.8
27 October 1931	470	+210	11,905,925	+3,249,700	55.0	+16.9
23 February 1950	298	+88	12,492,404	+2,520,394	43.5	+3.9
25 October 1951	321	+23	13,718,199	+1,225,795	48.0	+4.5
<i>1950–51</i>		<i>+111</i>		<i>+3,746,189</i>		<i>+8.4</i>
18 June 1970	330	+77	13,145,123	+1,726,668	46.4	+5.4
3 May 1979	339	+62	13,697,923	+3,235,358	43.9	+8.1

Note: The figures are comparisons with the previous general election, and the number of seats gained therefore does not take account of by-election results in the intervening period. The table includes an additional comparison of the combined outcome of 1950 and 1951 with the 1945 result shown in italics.

Within the factors of government performance, the most obvious correlation is between economic performance and a rise in the opposition poll. In

the worst crisis, in 1931 the Conservative share of the votes cast increased by 16.9 per cent, and in 1979 it increased by 8.1 per cent; this is slightly surpassed by the 8.8 per cent increase of 1924, but the latter was assisted by the absence of Liberal candidates from many of the seats which they had fought in 1923. However, in the ranking of factors in the analysis above, the weakest element for the government has not been any part of its record but rather its promise and prospects for the future. This may be due to two reasons: firstly, that governments which have a poor record in office will lack credibility in seeking a further term, and, secondly, that voters need to have confidence in the future programme of a government as well as recognising its achievements. The latter was a factor in 1951, when the employment, welfare and external policies of the Labour government enjoyed widespread approval, but the exhaustion of the government and Cabinet splits over future direction weakened its appeal. A further conclusion which can be drawn is that potential Conservative voters are particularly influenced by threats to the social fabric and by industrial unrest, as this is the second lowest score overall amongst the elements in government performance. Not far after this is the third lowest factor, economic performance, and it must be remembered that recessions affect the self-employed, the shopkeeper, the businessman and the middle class generally as well as the working class. However, the totals above suggest that effectiveness in welfare provision does not save a government if other factors are telling against it, and this is true not only of Labour in 1951 but also of the Conservatives in 1929 and 1974. This factor may also be of less appeal to Conservative supporters, who prize self-reliance and regard dependence on state handouts as a humiliation. Finally, and less surprisingly, it is clear that success in foreign policy cannot outweigh domestic difficulties.

Whilst the scores of the government play the decisive part in these elections, the effectiveness of the opposition is a variable which can either add to or detract from the result. It made a considerable difference in the outcomes of 1910 and 1950–51, despite the very similar scores for the Liberal and Labour ministries: the weakest opposition score is found in 1910, and the highest in 1950–51. In both these periods, the first election sees the recovery of the most surprising losses in the previous landslide defeat, but the outcome of the second is different. A more unexpected feature of opposition performance is that a distinctive programme and effective organisation are more important than the appeal of the leadership. Churchill was at least a mixed blessing in 1951, as his wartime prestige was balanced by vulnerability over his age and the suggestion that his belligerent attitudes would be a danger to peace, and neither Heath in 1970 nor Thatcher in 1979 were considered to be personally appealing figures, especially to moderate opinion. The attractiveness of the Conservative programme – considered in terms of the key issues of the election – was at its highest in 1924, 1931 and 1951,

and at its lowest in 1910 and perhaps in 1979, when the sixty-two seats regained is less than might be expected given the difficulties of the government. However, the 1979 opposition performance is helped by strength on the organisational aspects, which is exceeded only by 1951.

As a whole, this analysis underlines the extent to which the fortunes of the opposition depend upon those of the government. However, the opposition can be either hindered or helped in making the best of its opportunities by the effectiveness of the three elements of leadership, image and organisation. A conclusion which can be drawn is that before there can be a Conservative return to power, rather than just a limited ebbing of the tide in the style of 1910, the party will need to find a new message rather than just recycling the old. It will need a distinctive voice, and one which can reach beyond its core support and encourage the return of the members and voters lost since 1992. This is the crucial difference between the periods after the two other major Conservative defeats of this century, and without it the party is likely to repeat the sterility of 1906–14 rather than the recovery of 1945–51.

Notes

- 1 As was the problem with statements by Portillo and Lilley after 1997.
- 2 The former was significant in preserving Baldwin's position after the 1923 and 1929 defeats: see Lord Derby's diary entry, 17 December 1923, in R. Churchill, *Lord Derby: King of Lancashire* (London, Heinemann, 1959), pp. 558–9; S. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929–1931* (Yale, Yale University Press, 1988), Chs 4–6.
- 3 The exceptions were after the defeats of 1964 and February 1974, as the outcome meant that another election would not be long delayed.
- 4 D. Dutton, *His Majesty's Loyal Opposition: The Unionist Party in Opposition 1905–1915* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1992), pp. 34–5, 37.
- 5 D. R. Thorpe, *Alec Douglas-Home: The Under-rated Prime Minister* (London, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996), pp. 378, 387–8.
- 6 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 159–61, 189.
- 7 This was reflected in Thorneycroft's decision not to contest the leadership in 1965, J. Ramsden, *The Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath, 1957–1975* (London, Longman, 1996), p. 236.
- 8 Such as the Shadow Cabinet discussion with Baldwin of 25 March 1931, Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 150; concerns over Churchill's absenteeism and unpredictability in 1945–47 led to 'half-hearted' hints that he might consider retiring, but no concerted pressure, J. Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden 1940–1957* (London, Longman, 1995), pp. 178–80.
- 9 Opinion research summaries, Conservative Party Archive (CPA), Bodleian Library, CCO/180/27/9; L. Johnman, 'The Conservative Party in opposition 1964–1970', in R. Coopey, S. Fielding and N. Tiratsoo (eds), *The Wilson Governments 1964–1970* (London, Pinter, 1993), pp. 202–3.
- 10 S. Ball, 'The national and regional party structure', in A. Seldon and S. Ball (eds),

- Conservative Century: The Conservative Party Since 1900* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 206–7; Dutton, *His Majesty's Loyal Opposition*, pp. 128–30.
- 11 Lord Brooke's Committee of Inquiry into Organisation of the Cities, Minutes and Report, 1966–67, CPA CCO/500/1/42. Macleod Report on Young Conservatives, and Party Chairman to Heath, 29 October 1965, CPA CCO/20/47/1; *Conservative New Groups: The Young Approach* (London, Conservative Central Office, 1968); S. Ball, 'Local Conservatism and the evolution of the party organisation', in Seldon and Ball (eds), *Conservative Century*, pp. 300–1.
 - 12 See the account by its Director, A. Rowe, 'The Community Affairs Department, 1975–1979: a personal record', in S. Ball and I. Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London, Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 200–17.
 - 13 This assumption colours many personal accounts of 1945–51, in particular Lord Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1971), pp. 136–7, 143–53.
 - 14 Butler, *Art of the Possible*, p. 135; Ramsden, *Age of Churchill and Eden*, pp. 138, 142.
 - 15 A. Taylor, 'Speaking to democracy: the Conservative Party and mass opinion from the 1920s to the 1950s', in Ball and Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism*, pp. 85–8.
 - 16 D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, *The British General Election of 1970* (London, Macmillan, 1971), pp. 66–8; Johnman, 'Conservative Party in opposition 1964–1970', p. 187.
 - 17 Johnman, 'Conservative Party in opposition 1964–1970', pp. 189–90.
 - 18 R. Behrens, *The Conservative Party from Heath to Thatcher: Policies and Politics 1974–79* (London, Saxon House, 1980), p. 126.
 - 19 Dutton, *His Majesty's Loyal Opposition*, pp. 256–76.
 - 20 S. Ball, 'Failure of an opposition? The Conservative Party in Parliament 1929–1931', *Parliamentary History*, 5 (1986) 94–5.
 - 21 N. Blewett, 'Free-Fooders, Balfourites, and Whole-Hoggers: Factionalism within the Unionist Party 1906–10', *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968) 113–19; A. Sykes, 'The Confederacy and the purge of the Unionist Free Traders 1906–1910', *Historical Journal*, 18 (1975) 349–66.
 - 22 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 168–71.
 - 23 Johnman, 'Conservative Party in opposition 1964–1970', pp. 198–9, 200–1; Ramsden, *Winds of Change*, pp. 306–7.
 - 24 Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, pp. 63–5, 174.
 - 25 Behrens, *Conservative Party from Heath to Thatcher*, p. 124.
 - 26 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 28–9, 56, 75, 77.
 - 27 Ball, 'Failure of an opposition?', pp. 85–6, 94; P. A. Bromhead, *The House of Lords and Contemporary Politics 1911–1957* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 151–9, J. D. Hoffman, *The Conservative Party in Opposition 1945–1951* (London, MacGibbon & Kee, 1964), pp. 239–40.
 - 28 National Union, Executive Committee, 16 July, 3 and 22 October 1929, 14 January 1930, CPA NUA/4/1/4; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 31–3 and Appendix 1.
 - 29 For a fuller analysis, see A. Seldon (ed.), *How Tory Governments Fall: The Tory Party in Power since 1783* (London, Fontana, 1996), pp. 453–62, and *passim*.
 - 30 The difficulties of this were acknowledged by Angus Maude before the 1964 defeat, in the *Spectator*, 15 March 1963; Johnman, 'Conservative Party in opposition 1964–1970', p. 185.
 - 31 Analysis of factional strengths in *The Times*, 30 January 1906; Blewett, 'Free-Fooders, Balfourites, and Whole-Hoggers', pp. 96–8.
 - 32 J. Smith, *The Tories and Ireland 1910–1914: Conservative Party Politics and the Home*

- Rule Crisis* (Irish Academic Press, 2000), Ch. 7; Dutton, *His Majesty's Loyal Opposition*, pp. 226–7.
- 33 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 23–4.
- 34 Behrens, *Conservative Party from Heath to Thatcher*, Chs 2 and 5.
- 35 S. Ball, '1916–1929', in Seldon (ed.), *How Tory Governments Fall*, p. 264.
- 36 E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party 1880–1914* (London, Routledge, 1995), pp. 297–306.
- 37 Ball, 'Failure of an opposition?', pp. 90–6.
- 38 J. Barnes and R. Cockett, 'The making of party policy', in Seldon and Ball (eds), *Conservative Century*, pp. 364–7; P. Norton, 'The role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945–1998', in Ball and Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism*, pp. 183–99.
- 39 R. B. Jones, 'Balfour's reforms of party organisation', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 38 (1965) 94–101; J. Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin 1902–1940* (London, Longman, 1978), pp. 45–62, 68–9.
- 40 Hoffman, *Conservative Party in Opposition 1945–1951*, pp. 83–127; Ramsden, *Age of Churchill and Eden*, pp. 109–37.
- 41 Ball, 'The national and regional party structure', pp. 191–2.
- 42 Johnman, 'Conservative Party in opposition 1964–1970', pp. 196–7, 202–3.
- 43 This is not to suggest that the Blair government made no mistakes, but rather that these did not significantly erode its public standing.