Part I

British Political Life

The Conservative Party, 1900–1939: From Crisis to Ascendancy

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In recent years early twentieth-century Conservative politics has generated two large interpretative debates. Between 1903 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 a 'crisis of Conservatism' has been identified: fierce internal disputes and three successive general election defeats, which exposed the party's deepest commitments to attack. How is this crisis to be understood? In contrast, between the armistice in 1918 and the onset of the Second World War in 1939 the party secured a remarkable ascendancy. It obtained more votes than any other party at every general election, won three of the largest-ever House of Commons majorities, occupied government after five of the seven elections, and was in opposition for just thirty-six months in total. How was such dominance achieved?[1]

The historical literature on these subjects contains pitfalls for the unwary. The contrast between crisis and ascendancy can be exaggerated, if each condition is overstated and then 'overexplained' as the outcome of social, electoral or organizational structures. Amidst the pre-war crisis the party's popular support remained substantial: in the two 1910 general elections it won nearly as many votes as Liberals and Labour combined. From 1918 to 1930 its position was less secure than hindsight suggests: in most elections it obtained a considerably lower share of the national vote than it had during its pre-war defeats. The Edwardian party's divisions might seem ample proof of weakness, yet internal disputes of similar proportions occurred during the party's interwar dominance. An assumption that divisions within a party are automatically damaging should be resisted, for these bring defeat only if they affect the fundamental concerns of a decisive number of voters on polling day. Otherwise internal differences are a normal – and generally healthy – condition of any political party's life. This is not only because competitiveness is endemic among ambitious politicians. Conservatives were a complex association of different types of members supported by combinations of different types of voters, with various interests and various opinions, agreeing on some broad matters but otherwise with disparate, and often not wholly consistent, concerns. Contrary to many incautious generalizations, they cannot be understood in any straightforward economic or social terms as the party of property owners or the middle classes. Propertied and middle-class groups were also numerous – and their interests given high priority – within the Liberal party and

among its supporters.[2] About half the total Conservative vote in parliamentary elec-

Table 1.1 General election results, 1895–1910

Year	Unionists				Liberal		Labour		Irish Nationalist
	% poll	MPs	(LU)ᵃ	[unoppo]ᵇ	% poll	MPs	% poll	MPs	MPsᶜ
1895	49.1	411	(71)	[132]	45.7	177	–	–	82
1900	50.3	402	(68)	[163]	45.0	183	1.3	2	82
1906	43.4	157	(25)	[13]	49.4	399	4.8	29	83
Jan. 1910	46.8	272	(32)	[19]	43.5	274	7.0	40	82
Dec. 1910	46.6	271	(36)	[72]	44.2	272	6.4	42	84

ᵃ Liberal Unionist MPs, included in overall Unionist total.
ᵇ Total of Unionist MPs unopposed by rival candidates.
ᶜ Most Irish Nationalist MPs were returned unopposed, so their percentage of the poll is meaningless.
Source: adapted from F. W. S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts 1832–1980* (Chichester, 1981).

lapse, to just 157 MPs, considerably fewer than half the Liberal numbers (table 1.1). Difficulties persisted in opposition, even after Chamberlain's withdrawal due to ill health in July. Prolonged doctrinal disputes, rumbling indiscipline and two further election defeats in 1910 constitute an extraordinary phase in Unionist-Conservative politics, contrary to a usually firm instinct for collective self-preservation and pragmatic pursuit of power. A pioneering Conservative party historian, Robert Blake, confessed to being 'baffled' by the Unionists' behaviour, which appeared almost like some 'political death wish'.[4] It has seemed consistent with further remarkable episodes before the outbreak of war in 1914: outright rebellions, Balfour's displacement, and challenges to established political conventions. Nevertheless, although recent interpretations posit a continuous Edwardian 'crisis of Conservatism', conceptually the period divides into two distinct phases, separated in 1910.

Understanding has turned chiefly on tariff reform, as the cause of internal rupture and chief reason for the scale of the 1906 election defeat. The issue is commonly presented as a clash between the two leading Unionist personalities, symbolizing different types of politics. Following the unexpectedly protracted and expensive Boer War of 1899–1902, Chamberlain, as colonial secretary the minister chiefly responsible, became a dangerously combustible figure: he wanted to restore imperial strength, he had lost influence, and he wished to re-establish his authority and reputation. As his tariff reform proposals attracted considerable interest and controversy, he resigned from the cabinet to campaign for their acceptance as the chief Unionist policy. In doing so, Chamberlain reverted to the techniques of his career as a Radical Liberal before 1886: those of a populist cause, a programme and an organization. This new, energetic, radical version of Unionist politics was attractive to many Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, dissatisfied with the older, cooler, mandarin style of the Cecilian leadership. Balfour's efforts to preserve a semblance of unity through sinuous compromises exasperated tariff reformers, free traders and neutrals alike, who all supplied ammunition for an historical verdict that he bore much responsibility for the Unionist collapse. Balfour is blamed for failing to provide clear leadership, perpetuating the divisions, demoralizing government supporters and alienating voters. In contrast, Chamberlain and the tariff reformers are presented as modernizing forces, creating a positive Unionist appeal attuned to the politics of a mass electorate.

Increasingly, a clash of personalities and styles has seemed an insufficient explanation, and wider interpretations have been sought. Tariff reform is now regarded as one reaction to a general anxiety, manifested in all political parties and intensified by the strains of the Boer War, about British 'relative decline': increased commercial and imperial competition from other nations; reduced economic, administrative and military effectiveness; greater demands on government finance; and realization of the chronic poverty, bad health and poor education among much of the labouring population. Tariff reform attracted commitment because it seemed the most definite Unionist contribution to what Geoffrey Searle has called 'the quest for national efficiency':[5] short-term party considerations were outweighed by deeper imperial and political imperatives. To this explanation has been added an emphasis on electoral and party pressures, particularly the delayed effects from the enfranchisement of most male labourers in 1884. According to Alan Sykes, tariff reform was politically seductive because it was flexible, offering multiple appeals and serving changing purposes. Chamberlain's own primary concern was imperial unity, but the programme was extended to embrace protection of domestic agriculture and industries, increased employment, higher wages and social reform, as he and his allies sought wider support from farmers, rural landlords, manufacturers and especially working-class voters. Paradoxically, the 1906 election defeat made the issue of tariff reform seem more compelling, because it now became a positive alternative to 'socialism', as represented by the Labour party's electoral advance and later by the Liberal government's collectivist social policies.[6] In the most comprehensive examination, Ewen Green argued that tariff reform offered solutions to three interrelated problems of political identity. First, Unionist credibility as champions of national and imperial power had suffered from the public anxiety about 'national efficiency'. Second, as the Unionists' social base expanded from the landed interest to 'property in general', tensions developed between traditional rural and newer urban propertied supporters. Third and most seriously, as a combination of property owners the Unionist alliance could suffer from any growth of class politics, which would distance it from the largely 'propertyless' electorate. The function of tariff reform was as 'an economics of political integration', offering a restructured party identity which might consolidate natural adherents and increase mass support.[7]

An identity crisis there certainly was, but questions arise over its definition. Green's account turns on a characterization of the 'Conservative party' as the 'party of property and Empire'. If this really had been so, its internal difficulties would have been fewer and its electoral performance quite different. The Unionist alliance existed to defend the constitutional union with Ireland, while the primary Conservative party purpose – accepted to greater or lesser degree by their Liberal Unionist partners – was to uphold established political institutions and the established churches. Around these fundamental principles further interests and anti-Liberal opinions had assembled since the 1880s, giving the Unionist alliance a broad-based electoral appeal which both bridged and bisected socio-economic distinctions in complex regional patterns. It had attracted many (but far from all) urban and suburban property owners, especially in southern England. Contrary to a common interpretation that its success depended on minimizing the mass vote by exploiting low electoral registration and turnouts, it also had substantial 'working-class' support from the cultures of public houses, mass sports, friendly societies, paternalistic employers and the established

churches; from popular Protestant, anti-Catholic and anti-Irish feeling (notably in Lancashire and west Scotland); and from workers in defence bases and industries, all mobilized with the assistance of Conservative working men's clubs and the Primrose League. The Unionist leadership was not hostile to trade unions, and it had a record of social reform and promised more, including old-age pensions until postponed by the cost of the Boer War. The liberal traditions of Liberal Unionism remained significant in Scotland, the west midlands and south-west England, not just in the number of its own MPs (see table 1.1) but also in lubricating the appeal of their Conservative allies. The advantage of many Unionist MPs returned unopposed by rival candidates (as many as 163 at the 1900 election) arose not only from Liberal weakness, but often from Unionist popular strength. This broad-based support was held together by a widely accepted association of 'Unionism' with 'national' interests and imperial strength, contrasted with the Liberal party's supposed sectional concerns – Home Rule for Ireland, 'faddist' programmes, and puritanical nonconformist efforts to regulate and restrict 'the pleasures of the people', including alcohol consumption.[8]

In the early 1900s this position was reversed – the outcome not of Unionist actions alone but also of intelligent Liberal strategy, especially by injecting a moral charge into leading issues. Unionism was made to seem self-interested and unprincipled; the liberal claims of Liberal Unionism were tarnished; and the Liberal party secured the moral high ground, extended its electoral appeal, and was able to contest many more constituencies. The Unionist government's 1902 Education Act and 1904 Licensing Act were presented as merely partisan support for Anglican church schools and the brewing interest, enabling Liberals to tap an outraged political nonconformity able to provide considerable assistance in organization, funds and candidates. Government hesitation in nullifying hostile legal decisions on trade union rights (especially the 'Taff Vale' case) was exploited with the Liberal–Labour electoral pact of 1903, which assisted many Liberal candidates as well as giving the Labour party a vital boost. Irish Home Rule was relegated from an immediate aim to an unspecified future, which deflated electoral hostility towards Liberals in mainland Britain and removed a leading source of Unionist solidarity. The government's imperial policy was made to seem immoral as well as ramshackle and expensive, with accusations of 'Chinese slavery' (harsh treatment of indentured Chinese labourers) in South Africa reinforcing earlier charges of 'methods of barbarism' ('concentration camps' for Boer families). Above all, tariff reform was presented not just as economically injurious but also as socially, politically and morally offensive, by being relentlessly stereotyped as 'protection' in the sense of advantages given to the vested interests of employers by means of taxes on the food of the masses.

Among Unionists themselves, tariff reform was corrosive for several reasons. Unionist 'free fooders' criticized it on similar grounds to those of Liberals (and some, including Churchill, joined the Liberal party). Balfour and his supporters assumed that electorally it was not 'practical politics', because many labourers would place their immediate concerns as consumers before uncertain promises to them as producers. Still more damagingly, it substituted a new programme for the priorities that had defined the party system since 1886, disregarding the established Unionist identity and the bases of a successful electoral combination. What to tariff reformers seemed a politics of integration was to Balfourites a politics of disintegration, jeopardizing the Unionist function of constitutional defence.

This was a cogent view, one that deserves greater historical respect in the light of Unionist vulnerability amidst the Liberal assault on established institutional arrangements after the first 1910 election. It also goes far towards explaining how, through all the criticism, Balfour so long remained an unchallengeable leader: his determination to preserve the widest Unionist interests, by resistance to activists who unwittingly narrowed the Unionist appeal and played into Liberal hands. The position could not be salvaged before the 1906 election, and afterwards pressures from well-organized Chamberlainite majorities among Unionist MPs and in the National Union obliged Balfour to concede successive versions of tariff reform. Nevertheless, the three years from 1906 to 1909 revealed the possibilities of his strategy of minimizing that issue as far as practicable, while maximizing matters of traditional difference between Unionists and Liberals. Tariff reform, originally a policy of radical change, was subordinated to the priorities of conservative defence. A campaign of selective opposition to the Liberal government was adopted on the public platform as well as by the Unionist majority in the House of Lords – resistance to legislation on non-conformist and radical issues, notably education, licensing and land tenure, but acceptance of less controversial trade union, old-age pensions and other social reform measures, towards which, indeed, many Unionists were sympathetic. Doubts were also raised about the government's commitment to upholding national interests in the world, especially the preservation of naval dominance over Germany. By these means the sectarian interests and sectionalism of Liberals and their allies were exposed, their divisions widened and Liberal ministers demoralized. A series of Unionist by-election victories in 1907–8 indicated a substantial electoral recovery, encouraged greater unity and promised an end to Unionist 'crisis'.

Liberal determination as much as Unionist miscalculation again explains why the eventual outcome was very different. The 1909 'people's budget' brought to a climax the issue of Unionist obstruction of Liberal legislation in the House of Lords – Lloyd George's 'peers *versus* the people' – but at first Unionist leaders considered the budget as not just a vindictive 'socialistic' attack upon landed property, but also an opportunity to force and win an early general election. Almost all Unionists, including earlier free traders, now acquiesced in tariff reform, but only in a further narrowing of its purpose to that of a tactical device and financial policy, offering indirect revenue from imports as the alternative to Lloyd George's increased direct taxes. As expected, the House of Lords' defeat of the budget did precipitate a general election, in January 1910, and while it did not produce a Unionist victory it seemed at first to have created serious problems for their rivals. A large proportion of the 'people' had supported 'the peers', costing the Liberal party its overall parliamentary majority and leaving Irish Nationalist MPs holding the balance of power between Liberals and Unionists (table 1.1). However, the now minority Liberal government arrived at a momentous solution, confirmed at a second election in December 1910, which began a new phase of severe Unionist difficulties.

Recent historical interest in the 1910 elections has concentrated chiefly on the extent to which a 'new Liberalism' captured an emerging 'working-class' consciousness and consolidated the Liberal pact with the Labour party. But this was not their major feature. Nor should the 'class alignment' be overstated. The Liberal government's measures were selective, seeking to retain its own substantial propertied support. While the higher Unionist vote did comprise increased numbers of taxpay-

ers hostile to Liberal financial and social policies, it continued to include many labourers persuaded by Unionist criticisms of the Liberal cabinet and disliking Lloyd George's other new taxes, on popular consumption of alcohol and tobacco. The larger outcome of the two elections did not lie in a social democratic 'Progressive' Liberal–Labour alliance and shift towards class politics. Rather, the main features were a revival of the Radical Liberal–Irish Nationalist alliance of the 1880s and 1890s, and a reinstatement of constitutional issues. Constitutional politics were now conducted with a vengeance – because the Irish Nationalist condition for alliance was a Parliament Bill abolishing the House of Lords' powers of veto, with the effect of re-establishing Home Rule as an immediate and achievable policy. It also cleared the way for other longstanding radical aims, especially another visceral issue for many Unionists, inadequately emphasized in party histories – the nonconformist cause of disestablishment and disendowment of the Anglican Church of Wales.[9]

All this revived the Unionist identity crisis, because it reopened the question of primary purpose – constitutional defence or tariff reform? Forced by the 'Radical government' into a stark choice, the core Unionist identity was reaffirmed: even most tariff reformers ultimately placed the constitution before tariffs. But this reversion to fundamental priorities was even more painful and disruptive than the diversion from them had been after 1902, and it generated a remarkable change in Unionist political style.[10] Many who had reluctantly accepted tariff reform in the hope of defeating the Liberal government now concluded that it had failed and should be sacrificed for the greater cause. But Balfour's attempt before the December 1910 election to sidestep the issue by offering to submit tariff reform to a future public referendum infuriated the 'whole-hog' tariff reformers. Yet Balfour also lost the confidence of many Unionists on the constitutional issue, after another Liberal ministerial coup was revealed: the king's promise, if necessary, to create enough new Liberal peers to overcome Unionist opposition to the Parliament Bill in the House of Lords. Balfour argued that it was better to let the bill pass and rely on the Lords' residual power to delay legislation until a general election than to have Liberals obtain an immediate and enduring House of Lords majority which could endorse radical measures whenever it wished. But his advice was publicly rejected by members of his shadow cabinet and a large contingent of Unionist peers and MPs – the 'diehards' – who were exasperated with yet more compromise, to the extent of trying the high-risk tactic of outright defiance of the government. This in turn caused a further split, as other Unionist peers considered the risks so great that against their personal preferences they voted with the government to save the Parliament Bill.

The significance of these bitter Unionist divisions is not just that they finally forced Balfour's resignation from the leadership, in November 1911. They were manifestations of a more general eruption of Unionist discontent, sometimes characterized as a 'revolt from the right'. Though mobilized in numerous organizations, the shared features included intensified 'national efficiency' anxieties, expressed as ultra-patriotism, imperialism and xenophobia, versions of tariff reform, and desire for stronger armed forces. To these were added hostility towards the rising power of Germany, support for Irish Unionists and especially the Protestant Ulster loyalists, and a populist belief that 'the people' would support all these causes if only they had clear, firm and honest leadership. One group, the 'social-imperialists', were distinctive as doctrinaire Chamberlainites with a contempt for parliamentary politics and a

technocratic belief in government by policy experts. But these were a tiny minority, and it is the larger and more diffuse body of Unionist dissidents that has raised interpretative problems. Gregory Phillips showed that while the 'diehard' peers wanted to preserve the hierarchical social order, they were not fossilized 'backwoodsmen' but men active in public life and often favouring 'national efficiency' military and social reforms. For Searle the impatience with conventional party politics, the extreme language and the advocacy of armed resistance against Germany and Irish Home Rule defined these dissentients as a 'radical right', rebelling against the political structure in a manner similar to the later fascists. In contrast, Sykes explained the dogmatism and intransigence in more limited terms: as reactions to exceptional circumstances, yet serving a conventional purpose – the restoration of traditional conservative principles. The well-known proliferation of political 'leagues' (including Navy, National Service, Budget Protest, Union Defence as well as Tariff Reform leagues) can also be interpreted in alternative ways: as repudiations of the party system; as a clash between 'old' and 'new' politics; or, less dramatically, as single-cause pressure groups that could be accommodated within, and gain new supporters for, the Unionist alliance.[11]

The disruptive potential of the right was gradually contained under Balfour's replacement, Bonar Law. On tariff reform and Ulster the new leader shared their perspectives, but above all he shared their enmity towards Liberal ministers. The intemperance of Unionist politics from 1910 arose less from structural tensions than from specific political acts: the prolongation and radicalization of Liberal government. Without these, Unionist anxiety and anger about national efficiency and policy would have been much less, or not arisen at all. Nor would the political system have been so criticized, for the real grievances were not with party politics as such but with Liberal success and a Unionist leadership unable to check it. The Unionist 'crisis' now consisted of a politics of frustration and desperation, given a still fiercer edge by conviction of Liberal iniquity. Ministers were considered to have sacrificed principle for office; to have surrendered national interests to the sectional ambitions of Irish Nationalists and nonconformists; to have introduced constitutional changes without an electoral mandate; and to have violated constitutional convention by coercing the king, crippling the Lords, and establishing single-chamber government. The ministers were also regarded as hypocritical and corrupt, provoking class envy against landed property owners while flattering the financial 'plutocracy', selling political honours and, with the Marconi scandal, indulging in insider share dealing.

Bonar Law voiced this sense of an illegitimate and amoral Radical coalition, in an abrasive style of opposition which went far towards restoring Unionist morale and confidence in the official leadership. Assisted by reform and unification of the party organizations after the 1910 election defeats and by the common cause of opposition to the Irish Home Rule and Welsh Church bills from 1912, Unionism again seemed an effective force. A parliamentary war of obstruction exhausted Liberal ministers and whips, while public defiance, including Law's ringing endorsement of the Ulster loyalists, tested cabinet resolve to the utmost. Quite how far he was prepared to take opposition – whether the party would depart from its normal commitment to law and order by supporting armed resistance in Ulster – remains debatable. It seems most likely that Law's strategy was less extreme than his rhetoric. He aimed to intimidate the Liberal cabinet into making concessions, accepting a partitioned Ireland that would exclude Ulster from Home Rule, and allowing more generous

treatment of the Welsh church. Above all, he wanted to force a general election that would halt all its radical proposals, including Lloyd Georgian finance and his new campaign for land reform. The measure of the changed condition of Unionist politics came in the winter of 1912–13, when Law and his shadow cabinet proposed to restore tariff reform as party policy. This produced a backbench rebellion, because most Unionists had now finally grasped that tariff reform jeopardized constitutional defence; and when Law offered to resign, tariff reformers joined the movement to persuade him to remain party leader while setting the policy aside.

Edwardian Unionist politics can be epitomized as the rise and fall of tariff reform, connected with a burgeoning class politics. But this misrepresents their character and complexity. A more accurate understanding lies in a different symmetry: an eclipse and revival of conservative Unionism, turning on a constitutional politics which supplied a focus for further conservative interests and opinions. Although economic and social issues were becoming important in party politics, these did not yet define the distinctions between parties. Unionism continued to draw strength from issues cutting across perceptions of class, enabling it to rebuild a broad electoral appeal after the erosions suffered between 1903 and the 1906 election. The new aspect that constitutional politics had acquired was Unionist belligerence, creating a dangerous condition of mutual brinkmanship by the rival party leaders. But by July 1914 the Liberal cabinet had been forced into negotiation over Ulster and was itself divided over Lloyd George's latest budget, while a strong Unionist by-election performance, giving the party thirty more MPs than the Liberals, showed that it was restored to at least equal terms with the Radical alliance.

Interwar Ascendancy

Even if Unionists had won a general election in 1915, their dominance after 1918 could not have been predicted. So great was the change in Unionist fortunes that it has been explained as an outcome of that massive dislocation, the First World War. Some domestic effects of the war undoubtedly helped the Unionist position. The party's anti-Germanism and calls for stronger armed forces, its brand of patriotism and insistence on the value of the empire, even a version of tariff reform – protection of strategic industries – were all vindicated. Its unqualified commitment to the war effort, accepting drastic extensions of state power, matched the predominant public attitude and the demands of 'mass mobilization'. Its leaders agreed to a wartime electoral truce, and although protesting at the enactment of the Irish and Welsh bills in September 1914, the Liberal government's decision to suspend operation of these bills for the duration of the war enabled the constitutional issues separating the rival party leaderships to be set aside. This eased a Unionist return to government as junior partners in the Asquith coalition of May 1915, then as the main constituents of the Lloyd George coalition from December 1916. Most importantly, the Radical alliance disintegrated. The Liberal party split into Asquithian and Lloyd Georgian factions, which fought the first two post-war elections as rival groups. The Labour party decided in 1918 to break with Liberals and become a genuinely independent national party. The Irish Nationalist party collapsed after the Easter rising in 1916, and the MPs of its republican successor, Sinn Fein, refused to attend the Westminster parliament. At the December 1918 general election, Unionists became

Table 1.2   General election results, 1918–35 (main political groups only)

Year	Un/Cons		Un/Cons allies and others[a]		Liberal		Labour	
	% poll	MPs	% poll	MPs	% poll	MPs	% poll	MPs
1918	38.8	382	14.6	141	13.0	36	20.8	57
1922	38.5	344	[9.9	53]	18.9	62	29.7	142
1923	38.0	258	–	–	29.7	158	30.7	191
1924	46.8	412	1.2	7	17.8	40	33.3	151
1929	38.1	260	–	–	23.5	59	37.1	287
1931	55.0	470	12.2	84	[Cons allies]		30.9	52
1935	47.8	387	5.5	42	6.7	21	38.0	154
1945	36.2	197	3.4	13	9.0	12	48.0	393

[a] 1918 Chiefly Lloyd George Liberals (127 MPs).

   1922 Lloyd George Liberals, many elected through local pacts with Unionists (but rejoined Liberals in 1923).

   1924 'Constitutionalists': in addition, there were numerous local electoral pacts between Unionists and Liberals.

   1931 National (4 MPs), National Labour (13), National Liberal (35), Liberal (32, most of whom ceased to be government supporters in 1932).

   1935 National (1), National Labour (8) and National Liberal (33).

Source: adapted from F. W. S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts 1832–1980* (Chichester, 1981).

by far the largest parliamentary party, with nearly as many MPs as in 1900 (table 1.2).

   Yet Bonar Law had not felt his party strong enough to fight alone. The election was won not by Unionists on their own but by the coalition government, with Lloyd George remaining as prime minister and with a continuing alliance between Unionists and his Liberal followers. Even four years later most Unionist leaders wanted to continue this coalition. The war had created problems as well as opportunities for the party – some potentially fatal to Unionist interests. It transformed the political agenda, creating new issues and priorities (as is often and rightly emphasized) without wholly replacing older controversies and values (less frequently emphasized). Mass mobilization, increased state reliance on labour and business, and promises of post-war social reconstruction all elevated economic and social questions into central policy concerns. With the Labour party adopting socialism as the aim of independent working-class politics, and underpinned by a stronger trade union movement, a new rival had emerged and challenged Unionism precisely and fundamentally on the new priorities. The challenge seemed especially formidable given two additional sources of unsettlement: the strains of readjustment to peace, with a vast demobilization which some Unionists feared might generate a revolutionary crisis similar to that suffered in Russia; and the 1918 electoral reform, almost trebling the size of the electorate from 7.7 million (in 1910) to over 21 million, of whom over 70 per cent had never voted before and around (a different) 75 per cent were working-class voters. Faced with an intensification of class politics, Unionist leaders feared that their 'Party on the old lines [would] have no future'[12] and sought safety in a peacetime coalition. Although this combination smothered the Labour electoral threat at the

1918 election, this was plainly only a temporary check. After severe industrial unrest, inflammatory socialist rhetoric and Labour by-election successes, in 1920 Unionist ministers even considered abandoning their party's separate existence by fusing with their Liberal coalition partners in a new anti-socialist party.

One effect of the war's political repercussions did endure – renewed problems of party identity, more profound than those before 1914 and displayed in more frequent internal disputes. Difficulties emerged even under the wartime coalitions. Unionists at all levels did not readily accept their leaders' judgement that new conditions required suppression of earlier commitments. Many disliked their willingness to compromise on Irish Home Rule after the Easter rising in 1916, and were appalled by the Irish Treaty of 1921. Some disliked a Welsh church compromise of 1918–19. Party activists complained at delays in a promised House of Lords reform, to redress the Parliament Act. Post-war pressures on imperial relationships created new areas of disagreement, over responses to nationalist agitations, especially in India. Tariff reform enthusiasts, encouraged by new justifications and new support for the issue generated by the Labour threat and, after 1920, by economic depression and rising unemployment, found the leadership as resistant to their full policy as it had been before 1910, except for a delirious period in late 1923. Above all, the transformed policy agenda and party system required a redefinition of Unionism – yet quite different versions were possible. How should the Labour movement be treated? What should be the relationship towards Liberals? Where should Unionists stand on the new socio-economic issues that now defined party differences? There were no agreed answers. Post-war economic problems and an enlargement of state activity generated considerable discontent in the Unionist electoral heartlands – with inflation in 1919–20, high taxes and rates, increased social expenditure, and what was regarded as excessive coalition government sensitivity towards the unemployed, the trade unions and the Labour party. Discontent was fomented by a new style of 'conservative' mass circulation newspapers, owned by 'press lords' (Northcliffe, Rothermere and Beaverbrook) whose pretensions to political power independent of the party system was a further legacy of the war. The newspapers read by most interwar Conservatives were usually critical of the Conservative party leadership.

The outcome in the early 1920s was a proliferation of business, middle-class, imperialist and taxpayers' associations as considerable as that of the pre-war leagues. Though aimed initially against the coalition government and especially Lloyd George, regarded as undermining Unionist and propertied interests, they increasingly turned against Unionist ministers for remaining loyal to the coalition. A Rothermere-inspired party, the Anti-Waste League, obtained significant support in 1921, and a revived diehard group of peers and MPs ominously claimed in early 1922 to be the true 'Conservative party'. Both sponsored 'independent' parliamentary candidates, in some constituencies capturing local Unionist associations and in others fighting against official Unionist candidates. Consciousness of this backbench and constituency discontent magnified points of difference among Unionist party officials and ministers, until the party was split right up to cabinet level.[13] At the Carlton Club meeting on 19 October 1922, Austen Chamberlain, the party leader since April 1921, argued that fighting the next general election under Lloyd George was the only sure way to resist socialism. Nevertheless, he was defeated by a large majority of MPs, 185 to 88. So intense was the disagreement that Chamberlain and other senior Unionist

ex-ministers, the 'Chamberlainites', refused to serve in a Unionist government – the first in seventeen years – formed by Bonar Law, reluctantly returning from retirement to become prime minister.

The November 1922 general election seemed to vindicate the anti-coalitionist claim that the Unionist party could succeed on its own – and it did so despite its divided leadership. Yet reassertion of the party's independence by no means guaranteed its longer-term dominance. It won the election on a low national vote, just 38.5 per cent. It had not been truly independent, with Unionist–Lloyd George Liberal pacts in 159 constituencies. A large Labour electoral advance placed it on the brink of becoming a party of government. Not only was the Unionist leadership split; major issues concerning the party's stance and policies remained unresolved. Although the leadership did eventually reunite on an agreed strategy in 1924, wider cooperation remained fragile, as became obvious in another party crisis after election defeat in 1929. Again there were rebellions, newspaper-inspired electoral challenges – Beaverbrook's Empire Crusade and Rothermere's United Empire party – and attempts to remove the party leader. What should be asked is not just how Unionist-Conservative dominance was achieved, but also how the party was held together.

In considering the dominance John Ramsden, Martin Pugh and Stuart Ball emphasize a combination of new structures – the balance of parliamentary seats, the composition of the electorate and the party system – and the party's organizational responses, including use of the mass media.[14] The 1921 Irish Treaty confirmed Sinn Fein's secession and removed seventy to eighty anti-Unionist MPs from the House of Commons, leaving ten to twelve Ulster MPs as a Unionist asset. The 1918 electoral reform gave Unionists another thirty to forty safe seats, chiefly by a redistribution of constituencies in favour of suburban areas, bringing a total of some 180–200 constituencies described as 'middle class' or 'agricultural' that were normally Unionist. Ramsden goes so far as to state that this new pattern of seats made Unionists into 'the natural majority party'.[15] Moreover, the largest group enfranchised in 1918 were married or propertied women over thirty, and even after the female franchise was equalized with that of men at age twenty-one in 1928, at each interwar election a majority of women always voted Conservative. During the 1920s these electoral conditions were magnified by an effect of a full three-party system in most of Britain: a high number of three-cornered constituency contests, in which Labour and Liberal candidates could divide anti-Conservative opinion, and so enable Conservative candidates to win with only a minority of votes (table 1.3). These structural advantages were reaped by an organization superior to that of the other parties: the largest individual membership, better financed, more firmly established in more constituencies, with more professional agents. It established a training college for party workers and specialist organizations for new voters, especially women and the young.[16] It published huge amounts of propaganda material, and as early as 1924 employed commercial advertising agencies for election campaigns. It operated a covert newspaper agency, mastered the new medium of radio broadcasts, and was particularly innovative in the use of film.[17] By these various means, the party was more successful than its rivals in reaching and mobilizing members of the greatly enlarged electorate.

These structural and organizational features were certainly important, but without further analysis they are essentially descriptions, assuming rather than explaining Unionist-Conservative strength. Quantity and efficiency of propaganda and media

Table 1.3 Number of three-cornered constituency contests
at general elections, 1900–35

1900	7	1918	211	1929	447
1906	45	1922	212	1931	99
Jan. 1910	46	1923	254	1935	146
Dec. 1910	16	1924	223		

Not all of these interwar contests were Conservative–Labour–Liberal
fights. Some – normally fewer than forty – involved minor party (chiefly
Communist) and independent candidates.
Source: adapted from F. W. S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts 1832–1980*
(Chichester, 1981).

access are to little purpose without effective messages. Good organization and large
membership were as much an outcome as a cause of party strength – and Unionist
candidates could succeed even where there were organizational failings.[18] The reasons
for mass female Conservatism are elusive, while any advantage from the changed
pattern of parliamentary seats depends on the equation of 'middle class' with Con-
servative. Yet the middle classes comprised groups with diverse interests, some by no
means 'natural' Unionist supporters and others unreliable, prone to abstention or
defection to other parties or interest groups. Anti-Waste, the Empire Crusade and
the 'United Empire' each caused difficulties for Conservative associations in some
regions, while the Liberal party, after its reunification in 1923, remained a serious
non-socialist alternative to Conservatism. The three-party electoral effect could as
easily operate against Conservatives as in their favour, because in numerous con-
stituencies Liberal intervention was more likely to divide the anti-Labour than the
anti-Conservative vote. For this reason the Liberal party, though now weaker than
Labour, was the chief electoral threat to the Conservative party. The two interwar
Conservative defeats, at the 1923 and 1929 elections, were largely caused by Liberal
revivals. Moreover, the high number of constituencies described by some historians
as safely Conservative is obtained by a definition of 'middle class' which in some cases
falls as low as 20 per cent of voters: the electorate in such constituencies must there-
fore have been up to 80 per cent 'working class'. Nor were those seats decisive,
because the party had to win over 100 seats with even larger working-class compo-
sitions.[19] If class in an objective sense did account for Conservative party dominance,
the paradoxical conclusion must be that this was less because of middle-class support
than because 'it was the working class party *par excellence*'.[20]

   More fundamental explanations lie in argument, ideology, political culture, strat-
egy and policies. The party did not just organize support placed at its disposal by
structural changes. As Conservatives themselves well knew, other aspects of those
changes might have condemned them to persistent defeat but for the party's own
exertions. It constructed support for itself and turned the new conditions to its own
advantage by capturing previously anti-Unionist interests, identifying itself with
widely shared values, evoking new opinions and creating difficulties for the rival
parties. In assembling a new electoral base, even more socially diverse than that of
1900, the party had two strengths. Although contending versions of Conservatism
jeopardized party unity, they also gave it an unusually broad spectrum of appeals,

from diehard reaction to democratic reform, which could attract an exceptionally wide range of voters. These different appeals – and the different types of party members – were held together partly because its main opponents, the Labour party, aroused greater fears than Liberals had done before 1914, but mostly because Conservative leaders and propagandists exploited and generalized those fears in a peculiarly effective way. Anti-socialism was an instinctive Conservative position which now really could consolidate most propertied and business interests as never before, but it did not automatically appeal to large numbers of working-class, young, female and former Liberal-Radical voters. Here the immediate post-war problems of severe industrial unrest, inflation, high taxes and unemployment helped the party. McKibbin has shown that Conservatives projected stereotypes of male trade-unionized workers as disruptive, greedy and self-interested, in order to marginalize the Labour party as sectional and divisive. This effect reinforced a further ideological manipulation, exploiting simple economic assumptions about the importance of stable money and balanced budgets to stigmatize Labour policies as dangerous to the well-being of all classes. As most workers did not belong to trade unions and were liable to be discomforted by industrial disputes, and as most women were chiefly concerned with home, family and the domestic budget, this hostile representation of the Labour movement reached across objective class distinctions. Conservatives successfully defined themselves in contrast as the party of the 'public interest'.[21]

Yet on its own a negative and aggressive anti-Labour and anti-trade union appeal would have repelled a decisive range of voters – the moderate, liberal, socially concerned or idealistic; those craving social harmony and disliking political provocation; the voter in the many marginal constituencies of a three-party system. Conservative leaders normally understood that success required avoidance of a reputation as reactionary defenders of material self-interest, resisting the cruder instincts of party activists and offering a positive and accommodating appeal. However great their fears of potential mass working-class support for socialism, many Conservatives drew confidence from their pre-war experience of conservative working-class voters.[22] In ideology and presentation the crucial figure was Baldwin, who became party leader after Law retired with a fatal illness in May 1923. Although Baldwin on occasion employed brutal anti-Labour rhetoric – during general elections and the General Strike – he more commonly enunciated an inclusive public doctrine. His rhetoric embraced the new democracy and celebrated liberal political freedoms, while deploying the older politics of constitutional defence as the guarantee of stability and order. He matched industrial unrest with moving calls for industrial peace. He competed with Labour and Liberalism on the moral high ground, presenting an ethic of responsibility and service. Against the challenge of class politics, he cast appeals to a shared humanity, community, love of nature, history, Christian faith and patriotism.[23] While always subtly anti-socialist and Conservative, his messages and his tone usually seemed to be 'non-political', and as such it assisted a process by which Conservatism became identified with 'the public' and with national institutions, and Conservative values became embedded in the innumerable social and cultural associations of rural and suburban Britain.[24] Baldwin commanded unusual respect across party boundaries, and his claim upon shared values was so impressive that he could even embarrass and disarm Labour critics. But his most effective appeal was to many former or potential Liberals, enabling him to play a large part in tying together the disparate 'moral,

industrial, agrarian, libertarian, Anglican and nonconformist bodies of resistance' to Labour.[25]

At an early stage, however, Baldwin stumbled badly. The large Labour party advance at the 1922 election and the persistence of high unemployment convinced him that Labour domination could soon become irresistible, unless pre-empted by a dramatic demonstration of Unionist good intentions towards the working population. He proposed not only to revive the most positive Unionist economic policy – tariff reform, now openly called 'protection' – but also to call an early general election on the issue. Yet as after 1903, so again arguments about production and work were overwhelmed by those about consumption and prices. Although the Chamberlainite Unionists supported the policy, free-trade critics created another, different, division among Unionists. Defence of free trade reunited the Asquith and Lloyd George Liberals and gave them a perfect cause on which to revive their party. Baldwin probably expected a Liberal recovery to neutralize and counteract the Labour challenge, but the general election in December 1923 produced an increase in both Labour and Liberal MPs, resulting in the loss of an overall Unionist majority (table 1.2).

This emphasized the strategic problem of a three-party system and began the first of two phases, in 1924 and 1931, of ruthless Unionist-Conservative actions against their opponents which resolved the problem in their favour, and which enabled the party's other strengths – in electoral structure, organization and ideology – to become effective. Given the aim of assembling an anti-Labour majority, the crucial issue was the allegiance of Liberal voters and 'moderates' or 'mugwumps' committed neither to Labour nor to Conservatives. There were two possible strategies, not necessarily exclusive. As table 1.2 indicates, one strategy – that of 1918, and preserved in constituency pacts in 1922 – was to attract these voters through an alliance with Liberal politicians. But after the 1923 election the reunited Liberal leadership decided to vote against the Unionist government and so allow a Labour government to be formed in January 1924. This ended the Chamberlainites' hope of a restored coalition, and so reunited the Unionist party and helped Baldwin to remain party leader. It also converted all Unionists to the alternative strategy – that of seeking to fragment and crush the Liberal party, while persuading Liberal politicians and Liberal voters to defect to Unionism. Accordingly, while in opposition to the Labour government Unionist leaders both made themselves more attractive to Liberals by dropping protection and offering social reform, and exploited the doubts of many Liberals at their leaders' decision to install 'socialists' in government. When the contrasting impacts of Baldwin's 'non-political' appeal and the party organization's relentless stoking of anti-socialist scares (culminating in exposure of the 'Zinoviev letter') were added, the effect was devastating: a defecting group of 'constitutionalist' Liberals (in Churchill's case, re-defecting), many local Liberal–Unionist election pacts, over 100 fewer Liberal candidates and a Liberal party collapse at the October 1924 general election, producing a huge Conservative victory.

Under Baldwin, with Churchill as chancellor of the exchequer and Neville Chamberlain as minister of health, the 1924–9 government maintained the politics and policies of Conservative accommodation towards Liberal opinion and what were thought to be the concerns of many working-class and female voters: industrial conciliation, minimization of protection, preservation of unemployment insurance, a

large extension of the pensions system, public support for slum clearance and increased house-building, and improved facilities for maternal and child care. But the government could not overcome chronic economic difficulties and mass unemployment, nor wholly resist party pressures for stronger 'conservative' measures, especially, after the defeat of the General Strike, for anti-trade union legislation. Although most Conservatives expected Baldwin's remarkable personal reputation to secure further victory for them,[26] the party was defeated at the May 1929 general election, falling back to 38 per cent of the national poll.

Again, as at the 1923 election, this was largely an effect of a three-party system, with another Liberal revival magnifying a renewed Labour advance amidst the highest-ever number of three-cornered contests (tables 1.2 and 1.3). Even though the second Labour government was again in a parliamentary minority and the Liberal party was considerably smaller than in 1923–4, the effort to address the strategic problem was delayed for two years. The Conservatives were distracted by internal party disputes over tariffs, empire trade and India, during which Baldwin's efforts to remain sensitive towards 'moderate' and Liberal opinion nearly cost him his leadership, amidst tides of diehard, imperialist and protectionist criticism. The party-political problem was further complicated by the onset of deep economic depression from late 1929. At first it seemed that the Labour government's inability to cope with a mounting economic, unemployment and financial crisis and a broad shift of opinion towards protection and public expenditure cuts would restore Conservatives to government, assisted as in 1924 by Liberal defections – since a group of Liberal MPs led by Simon was now prepared to accept tariffs as an emergency measure.[27]

In the event, however, the second phase in the destruction of the three-party system took a different and far more dramatic form. The August 1931 sterling and budget crises fatally split the Labour cabinet, but the circumstances created a serious difficulty for Conservative leaders. Instead of winning the next election on the issue of protection, they might lose it if they formed a government imposing cuts in unemployment benefits, social services and public service salaries and wages, and were opposed by a united Labour party presenting Conservatives as the party of the rich and comfortable minority imposing increased hardship on the poor or hard-pressed masses. Fearing dangerous repercussions for Conservative interests from such an explicit form of class politics, the Conservative leaders instead chose what became a more successful and prolonged version of the 1918 strategy. They proposed a coalition under the existing prime minister, even though MacDonald was a socialist; they accepted alliance with the Liberal leaders, together with MacDonald's few remaining Labour supporters; and they improved upon 1918 by calling the result a 'National government'. This government was intended as a temporary emergency arrangement, but during September 1931 most of the Labour movement went into outright opposition, shifted sharply towards the socialist left and resorted to class arguments, while the government failed in its declared aim of defending the value of sterling and faced the prospect of political humiliation. In these circumstances, Conservative ministers agreed to maintain the atmosphere of 'national crisis' and to preserve the political security of the National government at a general election, rather than run any risk of defeat by their party fighting independently. The Conservatives, Liberals and 'National Labour' together arranged hundreds of electoral pacts – crucially reducing the number of three-cornered contests (table 1.3) – and mounted a fierce anti-Labour

campaign under a 'National' cause. The October 1931 general election produced the largest election victory and the largest number of Conservative MPs of modern times.[28]

Here, in the party-political manoeuvres, the creation of a 'National' coalition and the massive anti-Labour electoral and ideological alliance of autumn 1931, lie the chief reasons for the Conservative party's interwar dominance, because the National government continued until 1940. So attractive was this government to Conservative leaders that they went to remarkable lengths to preserve it. When half the Liberal party and some National Labour ministers refused to accept Conservative insistence on the final introduction of protection in February 1932, an 'agreement to differ' allowed them to criticize the policy publicly yet remain in the government. When these ministers eventually did resign in September 1932, rather than form a purely Conservative government Baldwin persuaded MacDonald and the Simon Liberals to continue. Even after Baldwin succeeded MacDonald as prime minister in 1935, a National Labour and National Liberal presence was preserved. The National government was continued by Conservative ministers because it allowed them to pursue policies – of economic intervention, preservation of social policies and Indian reform – which, given attitudes in the Conservative heartlands, would have been difficult for a purely Conservative government to undertake. Above all, the National government enabled their version of Conservatism to command much Liberal and 'moderate' support, and so created an apparently impregnable barrier to socialism. At the next general election, in 1935, the main threat came not from the Labour party but from a possible alienation of 'liberal' peace opinion which disliked the government's programme of rearmament against the military threats of Germany and Italy, as likely to encourage an arms race that would cause, rather than prevent, another war. Yet Baldwin's political touch was now so sure that he had little difficulty making rearmament palatable as vital to the preservation of peace, by underpinning collective security, the League of Nations and defence of freedom against totalitarianism.[29] Only after the Munich crisis of September 1938 and under the less ideologically sensitive premiership of Neville Chamberlain did the government face effective pressure, as groups of Conservative, Liberal and Labour critics of his policies of 'appeasement' began to coalesce into a 'national' opposition. Nevertheless, the first opinion polls organized in Britain, dating from early 1939, indicate that the National government would have defeated the Labour party if an election had been held in 1940. A second total war, however, had the reverse political effect to that of the first, with Labour rather than Unionists reaping the benefits of not being the party in power at the outbreak of war. As in 1915–16, so in 1940 conditions of 'total war' produced a new coalition government, under Churchill's premiership but with Labour leaders as equal partners to the Conservatives – occupying positions from which they assisted a movement of the ideological and policy agenda towards collectivist economic and social policies, and towards the largest defeat of the Conservative party since 1906.

NOTES

1   The best party history is J. Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin 1902–1940* (London, 1978). Useful introductions are S. Ball, *The Conservative Party and British*

Politics 1902–1951 (London, 1995) and J. Ramsden, *The Appetite for Power: A History of the Conservative Party since 1830* (London, 1998).

2 See e.g. the table of socio-economic backgrounds of MPs in Ramsden, *Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, pp. 98–9.

3 The word 'Tory' was rarely used by Unionists or Conservatives themselves, certainly not in reference to the whole party: it properly described a particular constitutional or paternalistic tradition. The term was most commonly employed by opponents, with pejorative meanings – a use perpetuated by some historians. Unless given an accurate historical meaning, the word is best avoided.

4 R. Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill* (London, 1970), pp. 181–4.

5 G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (Oxford, 1971).

6 A. Sykes, *Tariff Reform in British Politics 1903–1913* (Oxford, 1979).

7 E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism* (London, 1995).

8 J. Lawrence, 'Class and gender in the making of urban Toryism, 1880–1914', *English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), pp. 629–52; M. Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics 1867–1939* (2nd edition, London, 1993), chs 3–4; I. G. C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832–1924: Parties, Elections, Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986), ch. 7.

9 See K. O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868–1922* (Cardiff, 1970) and G. I. T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869–1921* (Oxford, 1987).

10 Indeed, the earliest historical conceptualizations of a 'crisis of Conservatism' placed it in 1910–14, with events since 1903 given only as context: see Searle and Sykes in note 11 below. In Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, 'the crisis' reaches as far back as the 1880s.

11 G. D. Phillips, *The Diehards* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); G. R. Searle, 'Critics of Edwardian society: the case of the radical right', in A. O'Day, ed., *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability 1900–1914* (London, 1979), pp. 79–96; A. Sykes, 'The radical right and the crisis of Conservatism before the First World War', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp. 661–76; F. Coetzee, *For Party and Country* (Oxford, 1990).

12 Bonar Law in 1917, quoted in Ramsden, *Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 118. For the ambiguous political effects of the war, see J. Turner, *British Politics and the Great War* (New Haven, Conn., 1992).

13 The classic account of these Unionist difficulties is M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920–1924* (Cambridge, 1971), chs 2–4, 6–9, 11.

14 Ramsden, *Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, pp. 121–3, chs 10–11; Pugh, *Making of Modern British Politics*, pp. 236–44, 249–52; M. Pugh, 'Popular Conservatism in Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (1988), pp. 254–82; Ball, *Conservative Party*, pp. 75–9, and see Ball, chs 5, 7, in A. Seldon and S. Ball, eds, *The Conservative Century* (Oxford, 1994).

15 Ramsden, *Appetite for Power*, p. 235; also Ramsden, *Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 121.

16 See esp. N. McCrillis, *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage* (Columbus, OH, 1998).

17 R. Cockett, 'The party, public and the media', in Seldon and Ball, *Conservative Century*, pp. 547–64; T. Hollins, 'The Conservative party and film propaganda between the wars', *English Historical Review*, 96 (1981), pp. 359–69.

18 I. G. C. Hutchison, 'Scottish Unionism between the two world wars', in C. Macdonald, ed., *Unionist Scotland 1800–1997* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 79–80. For a good review of the problems, see D. Jarvis, 'The shaping of the Conservative electoral hegemony 1918–39', in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor, eds, *Party, State and Society* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 131–52.

19 Pugh, *Making of Modern British Politics*, p. 243; Ball, *Conservative Party*, pp. 77–8. The shared source for calculations of 'middle-class' seats is M. Kinnear, *The British Voter* (London, 1981), pp. 122–4.

20 R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 95, 287–8.

21 'Class and conventional wisdom: the Conservative party and the "public" in inter-war Britain', in McKibbin, *Ideologies*, pp. 259–93.

22 Cf. D. Jarvis, 'British Conservatism and class politics in the 1920s', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), pp. 59–84.

23 P. Williamson, 'The doctrinal politics of Stanley Baldwin', in M. Bentley, ed., *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 181–208, and more fully, Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999).

24 R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918–1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 96–7, 529–30; Hutchison, 'Scottish Unionism between the wars', pp. 80–3.

25 Cowling, *Impact of Labour*, p. 421.

26 P. Williamson, 'Safety first: Baldwin, the Conservative party, and the 1929 general election', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), pp. 385–409.

27 S. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929–1931* (New Haven, Conn., 1988).

28 For the politics of August–October 1931 and the character of the National government, see P. Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government* (Cambridge, 1992), chs 9–12, 14.

29 M. Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler* (Cambridge, 1975), chs 1–3; P. Williamson, 'Christian Conservatives and the totalitarian challenge 1933–1940', *English Historical Review*, 115 (2000), pp. 607–42.

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