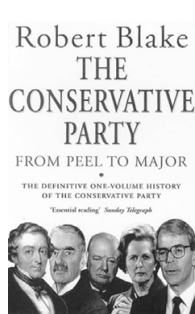


Lees eerst de opgave voordat je naar de tekst gaat.

What to read to understand the Conservative Party

The Tories, to borrow a phrase from party leader Winston Churchill, have buggered on regardless for 200 years or so, scattering opponents in the process. In the 20th century they held office for longer than any other party in Britain. How do they pull it off? A relentless appetite for power and a commensurate willingness to change have helped, spiced with a savage streak of political ruthlessness. The following books explore the DNA of this apex political predator.



The Conservative Party from Peel to Major. By Robert Blake. *Faber and Faber*; 480 pages; \$17.99 and £16

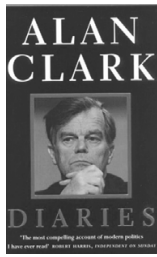
The classic history of the Conservatives by one of their own. Blake was a Conservative peer and the biographer of Benjamin Disraeli, the party's outstanding leader of the 19th century. This remains the most readable and cogent account of how the party has prospered over time. Policies may have changed since the 1820s, but not, Blake argues, the essential beliefs of a Conservative: that Britain, "especially England", is usually in the right; that the rights of property should be upheld; and that ancient, independent institutions (such as the monarchy) should be maintained. Equally, Conservatives share a healthy distrust of overbearing government and "doctrinaire" intellectuals – that is, socialists. Belying their name, Conservatives will embrace inevitable change – indeed, it is key to their survival – but only, as Disraeli put it, if it is "carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws and the traditions of a people".

The Conservatives since 1945: The Drivers of Party Change. By Tim Bale. *Oxford University Press*; 384 pages; \$44.95 and £32.99

A more contemporary, objective and analytical take on the party by a political scientist, first published in 2012. Among several books Mr Bale has written on aspects of the Conservative Party, this is probably the most comprehensive. He runs the rule over the party's finances, organisation and personnel. His is also a useful reminder that for all the puffed-up pre-eminence of the Tory leaders in parliament, the party is still, to a great extent, run by voluntary membership in local associations. This matters. Mr Johnson's successor, and thus the next prime minister, will be chosen by the 180,000 or so party members – and they will have decidedly different views on what



constitutes a proper Tory prime minister than the bien pensants at Westminster.



Diaries. By Alan Clark. *Weidenfeld and Nicolson*, 416 pages; £9.

Conservatives profess to believe that government is a noble business, requiring the utmost probity and an unselfish interest in the public welfare. Self-righteous twaddle, according to the diaries of Alan Clark, a junior minister in Lady Thatcher's governments. The first volume of his diaries caused a sensation when it was published in 1993, lifting a veil on the dark underbelly of Tory politics, the petty jealousies, seething ambition and endless back-stabbing. Douglas Hurd was memorably skewered for behaving as if he had "a corn cob up his arse". The philandering Clark also reveals the misogyny and predatory sexual politics of Westminster, on display again during Mr Johnson's doomed premiership.

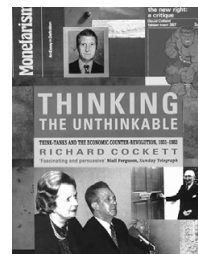


Falling Down: The Conservative Party and the Decline of Tory Britain. By Phil Burton-Cartledge. *Verso*; 336 pages; £18.99

This is the book for ideological opponents of the party, written by a Labour-supporting lecturer in sociology – just the sort of man to get Tory danders up. Mr Burton-Cartledge has a good point to make: one of the reasons for the Tories' continuing success is that their opponents never take them seriously enough. Left-of-centre thinkers assumed that the Tories would be swallowed whole by the "materialist conception of history", only to be repeatedly disappointed. Mr Burton-Cartledge may fall for some of the old traps, such as dismissing Tories as merely "self-appointed defenders of privilege", but at least offers some original analysis. Indeed, he claims to have spotted a reason for the long-term demise of the party in its failure to connect with younger voters. But even he is not entirely convinced. "No one got rich betting against the Tories," he concludes. Quite.

Thinking The Unthinkable; Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931-1983. By Richard Cockett. *HarperCollins*; 416 pages; £25

The book chronicles the fightback by free-market economic liberals against Keynesians and Socialists after the second world war, leading to electoral victories for Thatcherism in Britain and Reaganism in America. The Conservative Party was transformed in the process, and Britain too.



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