Preface and acknowledgments

This book explores aspects of David Cameron's efforts to renew the Conservative Party after becoming leader in 2005. After an intensive and controversial time of modernising initiatives in the early period of his leadership, Cameron's priorities were reshaped by the global fiscal crisis of 2008, leaving critics to question what, if anything, had survived of the early radical approach to changing the Conservative Party. In power between 2010 as head of a coalition government, Cameron necessarily seemed somewhat detached from the process of reformulating the Conservative Party's appeal. Nevertheless, a shrewd and well-organised election campaign saw the Conservatives returned to power in May 2015 with a small overall majority, despite the predictions of the polls. The victory raised the question of how far Cameron's strategy for Conservative revival had been successful and whether, quietly and indirectly, he had achieved the changes necessary to make it electorally competitive again. It also raised the question of how far the leader's relationship with his Party was so marked by factionalism and internal opposition that it would constrain his ability to develop a new style of Conservatism in office. In fact the loss of the EU referendum in June 2016 precipitated Cameron's resignation and brought to an end a leadership which had successfully brought the Party back to power but without completely overcoming problems of internal disunity and diminished electoral appeal.

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