

“Oh Jeremy Corbyn” – Will You Chose The Old or The Young ?

Blog 20 July by Chris Rose, <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=1533>



Photo: ParisMatch, [Jeremy Corbyn à Glastonbury](#). [Dylan Martinez/Reuters](#)

Can the UK avoid Brexit ? While nearly all attention focuses on Britain's beleaguered Prime Minister Theresa May, the person who could most easily swing it is the newly popular Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Whether he does or not, may come down to making a choice he'd rather not make, between the old and the young, between the past and the future.

Why so ? Because any of the more plausible routes to Brexit Exit require a significant shift in public opinion, dignified by many MPs after the 2016 EU Referendum, as 'the Will of the People'. Corbyn is in a position to deliver that shift in mood, whereas May is not. This blog explores why Corbyn probably does not want to do that but he might have to.

The Public Mood Is the Will Of The People

Mood is pivotal because political credibility increasingly demands staying on the right side of it. Mood captured in opinion polling (see more later) is an expression of the public will. It's affected by perceptions of events and options on offer, and politicians still have some power to shape those options. As all pollsters and politicians know, people tend not to back options that do not look credible, for instance if nobody in a position of influence seems to back them ('value expectancy' theory), and cannot back options that are not put to them.

There are quite a few possible [variants of 'Brexit'](#), such as whether it involves breaking all ties with the EU, or remaining somehow 'inside' the Single Market, the Customs Union, within the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and within arrangements on freedom of movement, and to what extent, after otherwise 'leaving' the EU, the UK accepts EU rules in order to get trade benefits.

Since the June 2016 Referendum, and especially since the June 2017 General Election, UK public opinion has moved steadily towards the more connected, 'softer' forms of Brexit. May's enfeebled government has started giving way on its negotiating '[red lines](#)', and is [internally split](#) over a range of harder-softer Brexit issues, and the period of any 'transitional arrangements' after 'Brexit'. Brexit no longer just means Brexit but degrees of Brexit.

It is not political 'rocket science' to see that this unbundling could lead to Brexit never happening at all, something which outsiders like [LibDem Vince Cable](#) and ex PM [Tony Blair](#) have talked about but which the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet have avoided mentioning. Perhaps most importantly, [a majority now favour a new referendum \(Second Referendum\)](#) to give the public a final say on whether or not to accept any 'deal' that results from the talks with Brussels. That would of course be a second formalised measure of the 'Will of the People'.

Corbyn could greatly influence all that but the one option which is hardly mentioned, is exiting Brexit, and he is in a uniquely powerful position to create that option, which is probably one reason why he never talks about it.

Why Is Corbyn so Silent on Brexit ?

The most obvious reasons for Corbyn's carefully studied ambiguity over Brexit are that his heart was never really in staying in the EU, his own party is split over the EU, and that his political base is split between Leave and Remain (see more, later).

He and his advisers may also fear that raising the possibility of staying in the EU would enrage the Brexiteers, and might revitalise UKIP. Far better, they may reason, to lie low, let May sail on to become entangled in impossible politics, hit the sands of intractable negotiations, and

take the cannon fire from Brexiteers, as she is forced to jettison one part of their project after another. To be, as one writer put it, '[Brexiteers](#)'.

Even when launching his General Election campaign, Corbyn dismissed Brexit as '[settled](#)'. Yet this may not be a strategy which stands much exposure. The problem for Corbyn is that his new found political success, popularity and credibility is substantially built on the votes of Remainers, and especially, for they are one and the same, the young. He faces many "what-ifs".

- What if, as is quite possible, May resigns ? If she is then replaced by someone who has 'read the runes' and sees that Brexit looks terminally disastrous, she or he might opt to 'revisit' it, perhaps arguing that as the EU has now in some way reformed, it is no longer the same beast we rejected so narrowly in 2016. A suitable chastened and newly sensible Boris Johnson for instance ?
- What if, as is also possible, something happens to erode support for Brexit among those who voted Leave ? If a crisis in the NHS for instance, comes to be seen as caused by the Brexit process (eg involving [recruitment](#) from the EU). This only seems impossibly unlikely because it is not being talked about and a crystallising event has not happened. Recent values-segmented research by Pat Dade from CDSM shows that the Conservative vote in 2016 became spectacularly entrenched within the Settlers, the self same people who formed the core support for Leave. Few of these people voted Labour in 2017 (see more below) but they may have been crucial in some of Labour's 'traditional' seats. The NHS is a high priority for these security driven folk.
- Then what if, the many Remain Pioneer who voted for Corbyn, were to wake up to the fact that he could lead the country away from Brexit but he is not ? That he seems to have taken the young for granted as '[useful idiots](#)' ? As Lord Ashcroft found after the election, some 43% of 2017 Labour voters still wanted Britain never to leave the EU, and that's without any public 'narrative' on the option. Corbyn's star could fall on social media and in the press as quickly as it rose. Corbyn-mania could prove as short-lived as Clegg-mania.

"Oh Jeremy Corbyn", they sang at Glastonbury. Oh Jeremy Corbyn, will you chose the old or the young ?

Glastonbury reacts to Jeremy Corbyn's heroic speech



Credit: Getty



Was this the biggest ever crowd at Glastonbury?

Corbyn Mania, Corbyn Fashion

The thing about fashion is that it is a powerful but fickle beast. In [CDSM](#)'s values model terms, what's fashionable is determined by the Prospector Now People, well represented at Glastonbury, along with their friends the Pioneer Transcenders (of whom more later).

I didn't get a very positive response from most readers when I wrote in a blog in September 2015 ([Jeremy Corbyn: What The Media and Political Classes Don't Get](#)) that: 'I think that Corbynism could do real damage to the Conservatives' ... 'he could reverse the 'hollowing out' of British politics' and 'lots of people, especially young people too young to remember the politics of say the 1960s – 1980s, are hearing such political ideas for the first time. This is generating an air of excitement and youthful energy around a political leader in his sixties whose views the Labour Party had long buried as political suicide'.

I got no reaction at all a month earlier when in a previous blog (August 2015, [Labour Lost the Prospectors, so Labour Lost the Election](#)) I suggested that Corbyn could become fashionable:

'So could Jeremy Corbyn ever appeal to Prospectors ? Not likely on rational analysis ... But what if fashion changes ? (The test of which is the opinions of the Now People). Could Corbyn yet become a sort of political grunge retro fashion icon ? Possibly if he looks popular enough.

He's got a yawning gulf to cross from universalist ethical land to appeal to the power and material wealth brigade, and in the middle of that divide lies ground such as 'showhome', which at first sight looks impossible to traverse.

If he does become Labour leader, their best hope of winning back the Prospector middle ground probably lies in making the Labour Party fun and fashionable around him. It seems unlikely that will be by design. Unite and the other unions are not that sort of Party People. But what if the surge of younger people attracted to Corbyn's Labour, not all of whom are tactical Tories, Trots or other entryists, are themselves part of a social change that could float Corbyn's boat even despite all the conventional Labour ballast ? A tide of New Political Beatniks ?

So don't try to be the trendy vicar Jeremy. Remain authentically unreconstructed and just hope that vicars become trendy. If an interest in radical policy becomes de rigueur post-hipster, Corbyn could yet prove to be an electoral asset. But maybe that's too radical'.

I didn't think it would happen but it did. On June 24 this year, Hannah Marriott, fashion editor of *The Guardian* '[decoded](#)' Corbyn's '[sartorial choices](#)' for the Glastonburyites in an article entitled 'Corbyn fashion: the new face of Balenciaga?' [I had to look up Balenciaga: apparently it is a French luxury fashion house founded by a designer from the Basque country in Spain, which makes nice shoes, handbags and other things]. She wrote:

"Undoubtedly, [Jeremy Corbyn](#) is far too busy with politics to be paying attention to the trends emerging from the men's fashion shows in Paris this weekend. And yet, spookily enough, his outfit today closely mirrors some of the strongest spring/summer 2018 men's looks.

His beaten-up brown lace-up shoes are uncannily similar to those worn by male models on the Balenciaga catwalk a few days ago, in a show inspired by the off-duty looks adopted by office workers taking their kids to the park at the weekend. Balenciaga's design team would appreciate the normcore appeal of his unbuttoned, creased denim shirt, too, while his white trousers are a brave choice for Britain's most filthy festival. This isn't the first time Corbyn has accidentally adopted a high-fashion look. Vogue recently described his aesthetic a "very Vetements", while one of London's hottest designers, Martine Rose, recently used a picture of Corbs in his grey cycling shellsuit as the invitation for her show. Clearly, Corbyn has the fashion vote."

Why am I going on about this ? It is actually important because when fashion coincides with more earnest political currents it is what can carry your boat, message or movement (pick your metaphor), up and out of the usual channel, on a bigger wave. It may not last but it can make a bigger splash.

At any event, probably because Corbyn excited young Pioneers, his brand attracted some Now People and his brand became fashionable, for least one Glastonbury, and with a vengeance.

Corbyn took to the world-famous Glastonbury Pyramid stage and attracted a mainly youthful crowd as big as any rock star has ever managed. All over the site, even in the 'Silent Disco', audiences burst into spontaneous renditions of the song/chant "[Oh Jeremy Corbyn](#)", adapted, [football crowd style](#), to the tune of White Stripes song '[Seven Nation Army](#)'.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1zLoG6YeA4>

Labour's new Anthem sung at Glastonbury

Corbyn is popular with the young. The young overwhelmingly reject Brexit.

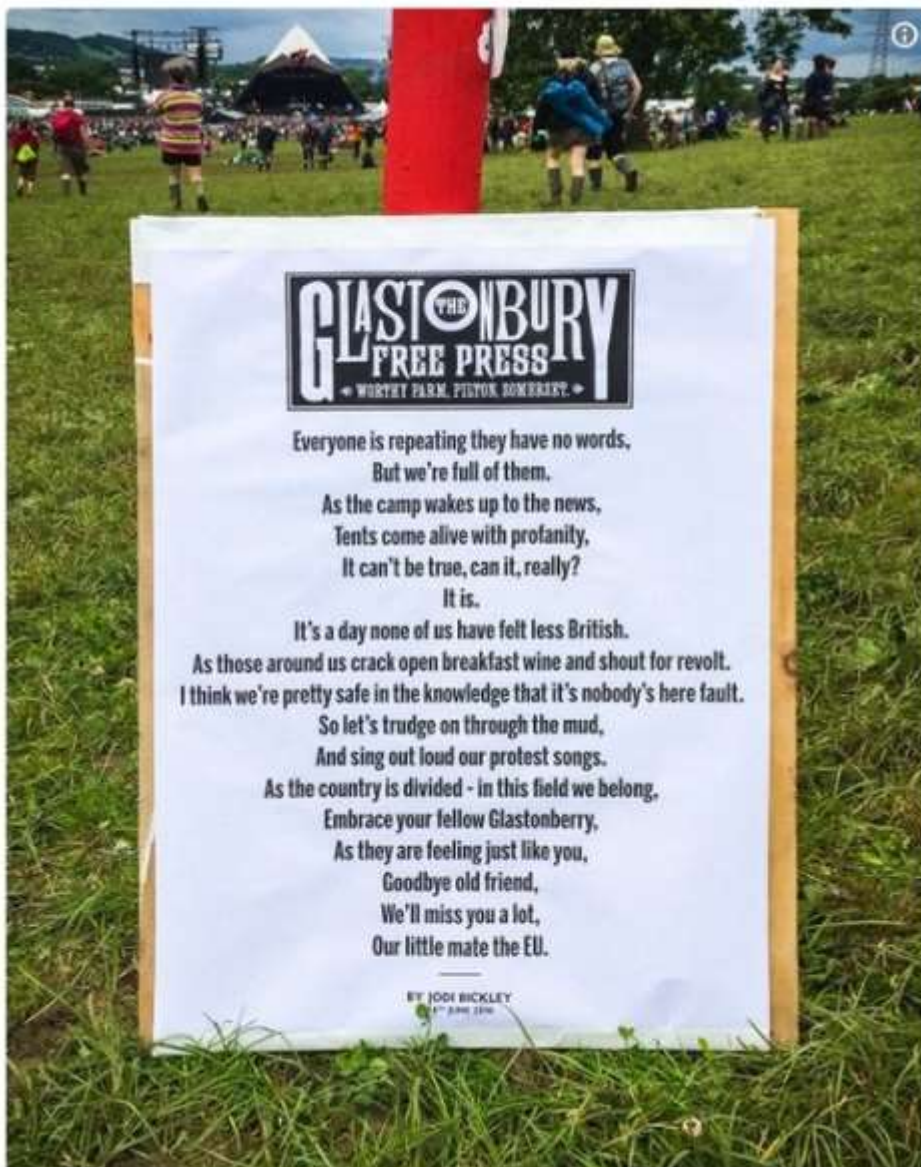
Emotionally, it was a fitting reversal of 2016. Then, when the UK EU Referendum coincided with the Festival, organiser Michael Eavis had urged festival-goers to register, use their vote, and vote Remain.



When news broke that Britain had narrowly voted to Leave, shock and gloom spread over the site. A Glastonbury-veteran friend who was there, remembers:

“everybody was shocked really, crestfallen, the atmosphere ... it was mostly like somebody had died. Terrible. Thoughtful, quiet, not a happy day”.

Showing what an artsy sort of gathering it is, *Glastonbury Free Press*, the official organ of the Festival ... [quickly published](#) a poem, a sort of requiem to Britain in Europe, and posted it up on signs around the camp sites:



Glastonbury 2016: Requiem for the EU relationship

Corbyn's endorsement by the Glastonbury young is the sort of approval which few modern politicians achieve, and still fewer retain. The political choice he now faces, is whether to side with the young Remainers, or with the old Leavers.

What Happened At The Election

Theresa May called the June 2017 General Election to 'make a success of Brexit' by 'uniting' Westminster. She claimed "The country is coming together but Westminster is not." In reality, neither was true.

In practice, Brexit did not much feature in the election because May thought she already had it in the bag, and Corbyn deliberately avoided it. Remainers nevertheless did vote 'for Corbyn' in large numbers, resulting in Labour winning an unexpectedly large numbers of seats in university towns (such as [Canterbury](#)) and urban areas, especially in the South of England and Wales.

Analysts tend to agree that Labour picked up votes because people rejected Conservative economic 'austerity', because of social issues (such as social care, the NHS) and because the more they saw of Theresa May, saw her dodging media questions and avoiding the public while repeating a robotic mantra of Brexit Means Brexit and 'Strong and stable government', the less they liked her. May's personality played a huge role because the Conservatives made her the centrepiece of their election campaign, calling for a 'vote for Theresa May' not for 'the Conservatives'.

Corbyn's campaign focused on social issues, public services, opposing austerity, renationalising the railways and ending tuition fees for students. The Labour communications strategy side-stepped the hostile print press, and created live events based in Labour seats where enthusiastic crowds could be gathered, near to target seats held by other parties, and covered live on TV. They made effective use of this content in video on social media (a lesson for many campaigns).

Corbyn grew in confidence and gave far more polished public performances than he had at the EU Referendum campaign in 2016 (which certainly suggested some media training). May's few faltering steps in the public domain resulted in gaffes such as when confronted on a rare walkabout in Oxfordshire by [Kathy Mohan](#), who had been denied her disability benefits and had to live on £100 a week. On TV she told a nurse who'd had no pay rise in eight years, "[there is no magic money tree](#)". Corbyn in contrast appeared far more empathetic.



Floating off on the ebb tide, morning after the election. June 9th 2016

Pro-European Players

The only two parties campaigning in England which were pro-European and *did* try to criticize Brexit, were the Greens and Liberal Democrats. Following the 2016 Referendum, the LibDems had made a commitment to campaign to stay in or rejoin Europe.

I'm told the LibDem strategy was already in place but it had been designed to run after a long period of Brexit talks in which events would have educated the public about the realities of the UK extricating itself from the EU. As it was, only elite audiences and a small minority really understood anything about factors such as the Single Market or Customs Union before the June 2017 Election, although almost everyone has heard about them now.

LibDem leader Tim Farron never excited the electorate, and when the LibDems launched their manifesto with a 'Second Referendum' as its centrepiece, few people understood that it referred to them having a say on the final outcome of the negotiations, rather than being a re-run of the June 2016 referendum.

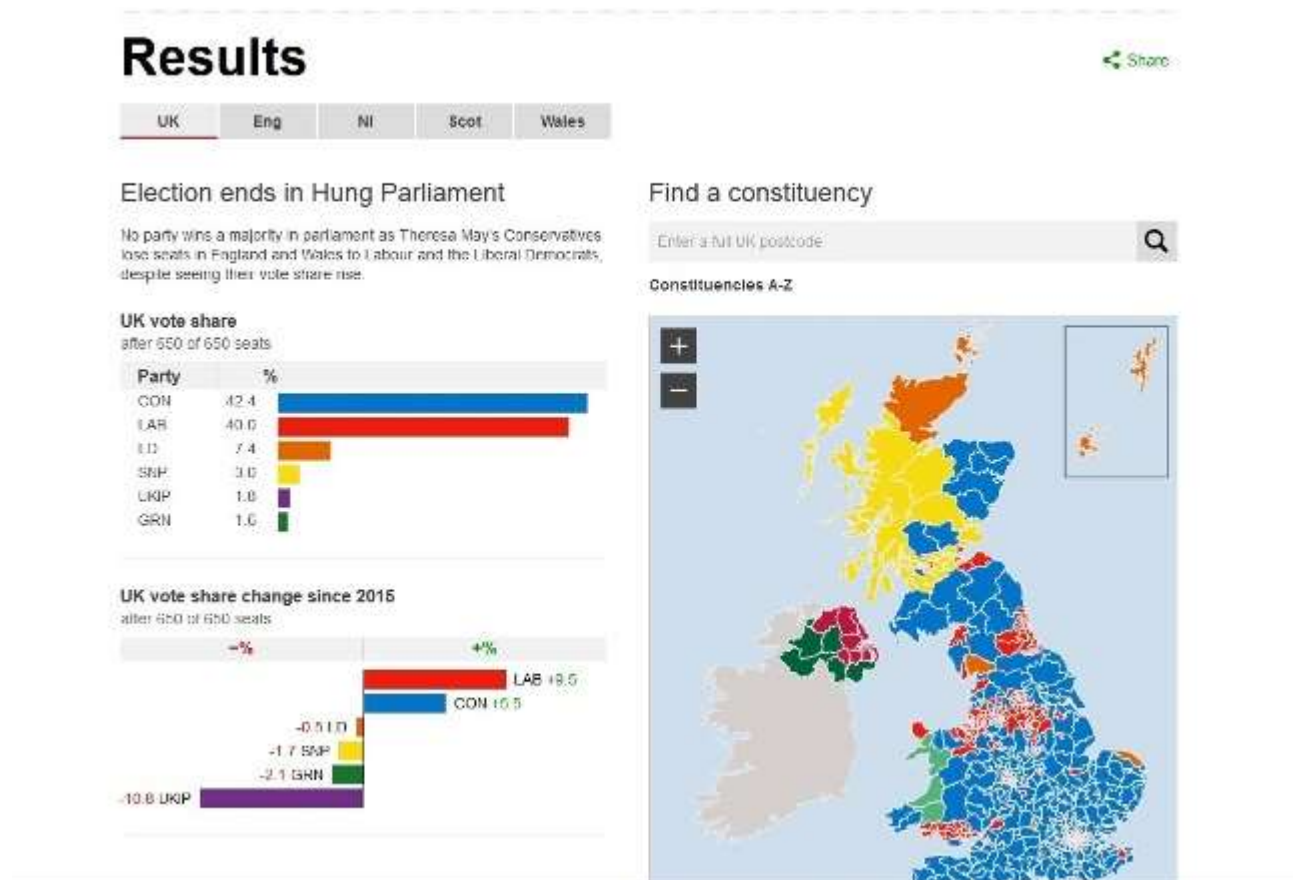
The Greens, led by their only MP Carolyn Lucas, nobly tried to launch a 'progressive alliance' through tactical voting against pro Brexit Tories but in practice, the influence of tribal activists in other parties meant that nearly all the concessions in terms of standing aside to allow 'their' votes to go to a candidate with a better chance of winning, were made by the Greens. Along with other smaller parties, their [vote was squeezed](#) and Lucas remained their only MP, despite proving herself a brilliant communicator.

(For the Best For Britain campaign, see later).

The Result

On June 8, the Conservatives won the most seats but Theresa May lost her majority. (Of 650 seats: 318 Conservative, 262 Labour, 35 SNP (only Scotland), 12 LibDem, 10 DUP (only Northern Ireland) 13 others).

Amongst the main parties the UK vote was split 42.4% Conservative, 40% Labour, 7.4% Lib Dems, 3% SNP, 1.8% UKIP (whose vote had collapsed) and 1.6% Green. Most of the previous UKIP vote [went to](#) the Conservatives.



Leavers and Remainers

Based on a survey of people made on election day but after they had voted, pollster [Lord Ashcroft reported](#):

‘Six in ten of those who said they had voted Leave in the EU referendum backed the Conservatives in the general election; a quarter of leavers voted Labour. Only a quarter of Remain voters voted Conservative; just over half (51%) voted Labour, and a quarter of remainers voted Liberal Democrat.

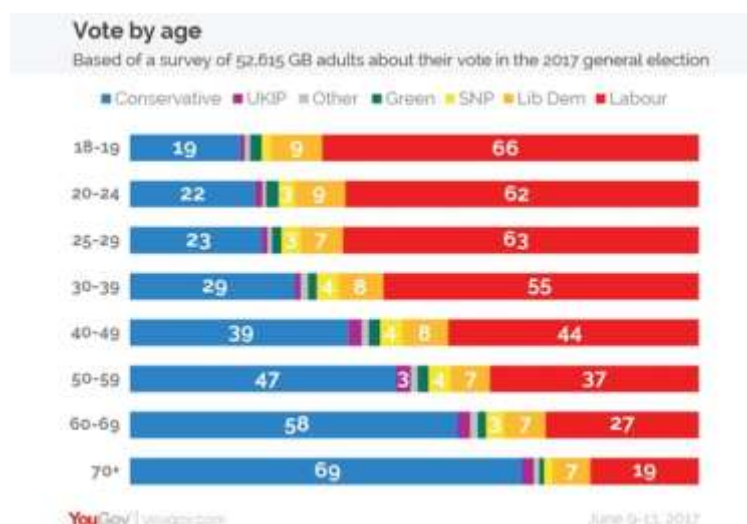
To look at this question the other way round, just over two thirds (68%) of those who voted Conservative said they had voted Leave in the referendum. Just under two thirds (64%) of those who voted Labour said they had voted to remain in the EU, as did nearly eight in ten Liberal Democrats’.

After the election, IPSOS MORI made a very similar [estimate](#) that Remainers had voted 54% for Labour and 26% for the Conservatives, while Leavers voted 65% for the Conservatives and 24% for Labour.

Surveys also found that the younger people were, the more likely they were to vote Labour. Ashcroft’s survey ‘found two thirds of those aged 18 to 24 saying they voted Labour, as did more than half of those aged 25 to 34. Voters aged over 55 broke for the Tories’.

A YouGov [post election survey](#) of 50,000 people showed the same thing:

‘In electoral terms, age seems to be the new dividing line in British politics. The starkest way to show this is to note that, amongst first time voters (those aged 18 and 19), Labour was forty seven percentage points ahead. Amongst those aged over 70, the Conservatives had a lead of fifty percentage points’.



‘In fact, for every 10 years older a voter is, their chance of voting Tory increases by around nine points and the chance of them voting Labour decreases by nine points. The tipping point,

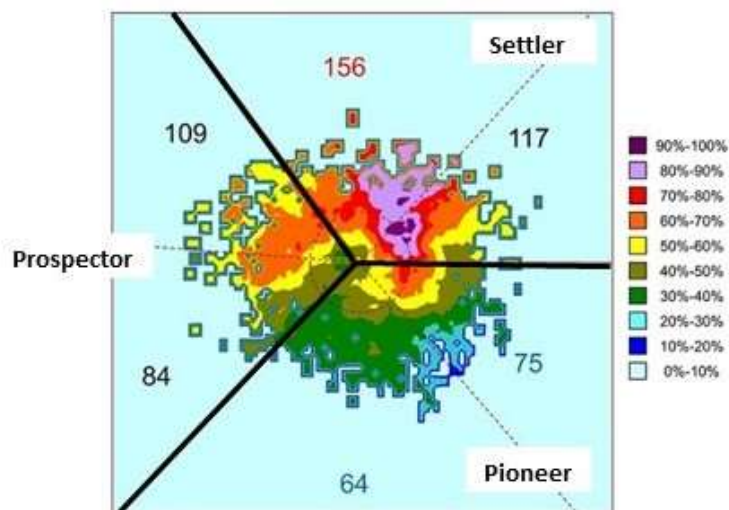
that is the age at which a voter is more likely to have voted Conservative than Labour, is now 47 – up from 34 at the start of the campaign’.

YouGov found that ‘alongside age, education has become one of the key electoral demographic dividing lines’. As in the EU Referendum, ‘while the Conservatives’ support decreases the more educated a voter is, the opposite was true for Labour and the Lib Dems’.

Values

A [recently published](#) values-segmented survey conducted for CDSM shows that Conservative support at GE2017 was strongly concentrated in the [Settler](#) values group, along with some [Golden Dreamer Prospectors](#). This is the self-same profile as those with a high disregard for the EU, and a conviction that there are ‘too many foreigners in the country’, illustrated in pre-Referendum CDSM surveys and reported in previous blogs including [‘The Values Story of the Brexit Split, Part 1’](#).

Pat Dade of CDSM [reports](#) that the Conservative vote was ‘concentrated in older age groups – more than 54% of them were aged 55 or over’. Over 44% were ABs (25% more than the voter population average) skewed to male.

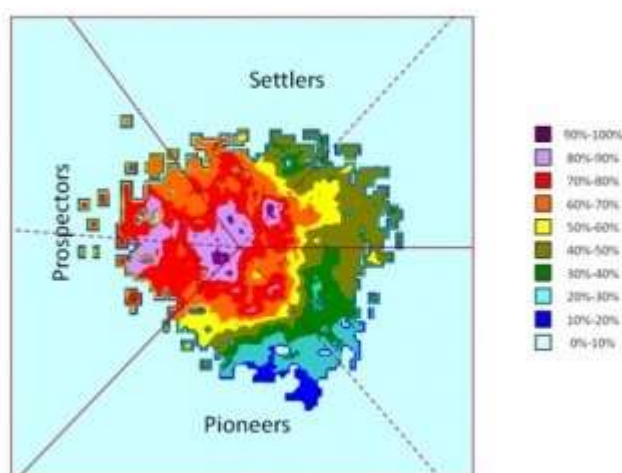


Above: values of the Conservative vote, 2017 General Election

As can be seen from the above ‘heat map’ of the Tory vote, it was concentrated in the Settler ‘Maslow Group’, which accounted for 41% of all Conservative supporters. But also in the Values Mode Brave New World (BNW), with an index of 156 compared to a (voting) population average of 100. BNWs are the Values Mode with the strongest unmet need for identity, and are the most assertive Settlers. This region of the values map was, before their mass desertion at the 2017 election, also where UKIP support was concentrated.

The adjacent Prospector Values Mode 'Golden Dreamer' (GDs) also 'over-indexed' on voting Conservative but at a lower level of 109. The GDs are power-seeking, and looking for immediate opportunities for a better life but retain a Settlerish commitment to rules and conventional routes to success. Conservative support was much lower (index 84) amongst the Prospector Now People Values Mode, a psycho-demographic which [as this previous blog showed](#), David Cameron attracted and helped him win in 2015. May's dour, fun-free and unemotional style, commitment to Brexit and her austere proposition is unlikely to have gone down well with Now People. Amongst Pioneers (also the Maslow Group with overall the highest educational levels and skewed towards AB), Conservative support was even lower.

[This is why, [as YouGov noted](#), 'the class divide in British politics seems to have closed and it is no longer a very good indicator of voting intention'**].



Conservative Support at the 2015 General Election

Dade commented:

'Settlers as a whole represent only 31% of registered voters and slightly less than 25% of the population. Over the last 40 years the Settler segment has steadily declined as a proportion of the population and has gone from being the largest Maslow Group to being the smallest. This is a voter profile that would seem to have a 'sell-by date' all over it'.

Finally, Lord Ashcroft (who does ask a few values-related questions), found that

'Seven in ten Conservative voters said they wanted Brexit to happen as soon as possible. Only 33% of Labour voters said the same; 43% said they would still like to prevent Brexit from happening if possible, as did more than half (56%) of Liberal Democrat voters'.

He added:

'Asked unprompted which issues had been the most important in their voting decision, Conservatives were most likely to name Brexit (as were Liberal Democrats), followed by

having the right leadership. Labour voters, meanwhile, were most likely to name the NHS and spending cuts. Only 8% of Labour voters named Brexit as the most important issue in their decision, compared to 48% of those who voted Conservative’.

Corbyn’s Success Is Built on Remainer Support

So, overall most Remainers voted Labour, and over two thirds of Labour voters were Remainers. Corbyn’s overall success depended on Remain voters. A large part of Corbyn’s success was also down to the young voting Labour, and the young were strongly pro-Remain. Unlike Conservative voters who were also mostly older, more than 4 in 10 of those voting Labour in 2017 still wanted Brexit never to happen, even without Corbyn ever talking about that.

If Corbyn knows about values groups (the Labour Party certainly does as TCC, [The Campaign Company](#), co-sponsors political surveys using the CDSM model and has close links to Labour), he will also know that his recent growth in support has come mostly from the [Pioneers](#), and especially the Transcender Pioneers.

Pat Dade of CDSM hasn’t yet published his analysis of the Labour vote but he tells me that the Transcenders were 44% more likely than the average to have voted Labour in 2017. At the 2017 General Election, the biggest element of the Conservative vote was Settler (40.4%), and the biggest element of the Labour vote was Pioneer (47.3%).

Labour support has shrunk amongst the Settlers compared to its historic base. The Settlers are the most pro-Brexit group, and overall stewed to older. As Pat Dade says, this values-demographic is quite literally dying out, and it’s currently more of a problem for the Conservatives than for Labour.

The old left may still instinctively focus on dreams of rebuilding a working class small-c conservative base but that is not who voted for Corbyn Labour in such numbers at the election. Indeed it appears that most of those voters went for the Conservatives.

Finally, as votes do not directly translate into MPs (seats) in the UK’s first-past-the-post system, Corbyn’s Labour may still worry about losing seats in the more pro-Brexit ‘north’ (the uber-simplified conventional wisdom). After the Referendum much effort went into correlating constituencies (and the attitudes of MPs to Europe), with areas (as Referendum data did not coincide with constituencies). As with the percentage Leave/Remain national Referendum results, this showed that the ‘electorate’ was often more pro-Brexit than MPs, which panicked many pro-European MPs. [One such exercise](#) was by UEA political scientist [Chris Hanretty](#). I asked Chris about the 2017 cohort of Labour MPs but he said that “Given the difference in turnout between 2016 and either 2015 or 2017, I’m not sure a good estimate of that quantity can be produced” and he also pointed out that it has now become more difficult to get a clear indication of where Labour MPs stand on Brexit.

Public Opinion

UK public opinion is moving steadily away from Project Brexit as launched by Theresa May and effectively endorsed by Jeremy Corbyn, yet responses to simple binary ‘right or wrong’ questions about Brexit still hover around a 50:50 result, not far from the 48:52 ratio. For example the long-running YouGov question [‘In hindsight do you think Britain was right or wrong to vote to leave the EU ?’](#).

Opinion on a binary question still sticks stubbornly close to 50:50, even in July 2017

There is a relatively simple explanation for this.

First, such a question effectively asks of those who voted (over 70% of those registered), “were you right or wrong?”. The intuitive (System 1) response to that is “I was right of course”, because to answer otherwise either requires questioning my own rationality when I made that choice, or, it requires use of System 2 to re-analyse the issue (harder to do).

Second, the Brexit ‘problematic’ remains confusing and complex, and voters will now be more aware of its complexity than they were at the Referendum in June 2016. So it’s got harder, not easier to analyse.

Third, it does not reframe the question, even though reality has changed. We can therefore expect this polling question to be a lagging, not a leading indicator of shifts in public opinion.

Fourth, qualitative research in the run up to the 2017 General Election showed that much of the public simply did not want to have to think about the Referendum again (see below).

How People Felt in May 2017

In May 2017 I did some work* for the Best for Britain (B4B) campaign fronted by Gina Miller, the businesswoman who had earlier successfully campaigned to give Parliament a say in the triggering of Article 50 (the mechanism by which the UK could start the process of leaving the EU). This campaign encouraged tactical voting to return pro-European candidates. I was trying to understand what the public understood about the choices around Brexit.

‘Strong and Stable’

Talking to people running focus groups where Brexit came up (almost everywhere it seemed), and looking at research commissioned by B4B, it became clear why the Conservatives had launched with their slogan ‘strong and stable government’, and why the LibDems and Greens faced an uphill struggle.

First, there was a general downbeat mood of anxiety and despondency, even amongst many Leavers. I was told, people are “cross, cheated, frightened, wrong and wronged, anxious,

unempowered, fatalistic and helpless' – one man summed it up with “the word is despondent”.

Many had a sense of scarcely suppressed horror at the divisiveness of the Referendum, and how it had pitched friends, relatives and neighbours against one another. They had blithely voted on many previous occasions confident that whatever they did, it ‘really didn’t make much difference’, and were now horrified to find that something they not given much thought to, really had made a huge difference, although one they still did not understand. Even more worrying, those supposedly ‘in charge’ were also saying they didn’t really know what was going to happen and ‘Brexit’ was already being blamed for higher food prices and uncertainty over credit.

One consequence of this, felt by both sides, was what one moderator called a “rush to the parochial” a desire to focus on smaller, seemingly more tractable issues such as numbers of police. There was a pervasive reluctance to re-engage with any more ‘big issues’, even to express a view, in case as with the Referendum, it also led to ‘the sky falling in’.

What united them, was a desire for a sensible, strict adult to take away the problem and sort it out, without them having to re-engage. Not many had great enthusiasm for Theresa May but even as a distress-purchase, most agreed she seemed like the best bet. She appeared stronger and more definitive than Corbyn, and the LibDems were ‘fringe’. (At that time there were also real worries even amongst lifelong Labour voters, that Corbyn might mean “nutters on the loose”).

Second, as you might expect, they also found that the ‘public’ could be broadly divided into four groups: strong Leavers, weaker more doubtful Leavers, strong Remainers and weaker or more resigned Remainers. The strong Remainers took a “told you so” view. The ‘weaker’ Remainers were resigned or largely reconciled, not seeing any real opposition to Brexit, and some so wanted to see it all settled that they might vote ‘Leave’ if there was a next time, even though they still thought it was wrong, just to ‘get it over with’.

The Leavers felt unfairly ‘blamed’ for the social disaster of the Referendum. The strong conviction Leavers responded with defiance, quickly reaching for dismissives such as ‘remoaner’ and ‘bad losers’ to explain the ongoing division. The ‘weaker’ Leavers opted for withdrawal, fervently hoping that it would all ‘go away’.

If pushed to justify their votes, both sides but particularly the Leavers, solidified into two camps. Weak and strong Leavers simply became “Leavers” (Brexit means Brexit). Moreover, those who had doubts about Brexit (including Leave voters), and instinctively didn’t like the sound of a hard Brexit as it was something UKIP wanted, did not know enough about what it really entailed, to be able to map out alternative options. Only a very few for instance, were even slightly aware that the EU Referendum question had failed to specify what Brexit might mean in terms of the Single Market or Customs Union.

Lacking any way to talk analytically about it (System 2) and identify systematic choices, people deployed a classic ‘substitution’ and reverted to the easier answer offered by the

intuitive System 1, which in this case was, “you were right the first time” (the consistency effect).

So anyone trying to raise the question of whether or not it really was wise to leave the EU, faced three hurdles. First, many people did not want to engage with it, they simply wanted someone to sort out ‘the mess’. Second, few even realised that there could be an opportunity for another say in the outcome. Third, both Labour and the Conservatives, who between them dominated the media, did not talk about it in any detail and did not present options.

The Missed Opportunity

For a moment, take a step back in time to late spring 2016.

Before the EU Referendum, when polls showed Remain would win, UKIP leader Nigel Farage laid the ground for challenging the legitimacy of the result if it was narrowly in favour of Remain. Farage specifically anticipated a 48:52 result, although in favour of Remain. On 16 May 2016 he [told The Daily Mirror](#):

“In a 52-48 referendum this would be unfinished business by a long way. If the remain campaign win two-thirds to one-third that ends it.”



Next day Conservative Boris Johnson echoed Farage and told the [Daily Mail](#) that if there was a narrow Remain win, the result would not be ‘settled’.

In the event, Leave won 48:52. At that point, the Remain camp could have pivoted on Farage’s threat, and declared the result indecisive. To paraphrase that maestro of leadership-by-opportunity, Captain Jack Sparrow: “if you were waiting for the opportune moment that was it” but in practice the moment passed.

Remainer in Chief David Cameron fell on his sword, the official Remain campaign was poleaxed and in shock, and the politicians started fighting amongst themselves.

The Tory leadership competition soon turned bloody. Boris Johnson, a leading Leave campaigner who many suspected had been banking on a Remain result unpopular in the Conservative Party so he could oust Cameron and become PM, was one of the few who raised the 48:52 issue: the result was, he said, "[not entirely overwhelming](#)".



48:52% "not entirely overwhelming"

Johnson also hinted at the possibility of an eventual rethink, emphasising the importance of listening to those who had voted Remain but Boris was on the wrong side to make proper use of this point, and almost immediately afterwards, he was stabbed in the political back by his running mate Michael Gove, and he withdrew from the race to become PM.

In the immediate aftermath of the referendum, Labour was also swamped by political expediency of the most basic kind: not concerned about the country, or the political opposition but real enemies: political rivals. Plus Corbyn was not really committed to staying in the EU, and both the official Leave and Remain campaigns were creatures of the main political parties and were immediately wound down. There was no game plan for what to do in the event of a Leave result as nobody expected it. And nobody to point out that the Referendum was unrealistically limited, misleading, mis-sold (with lies such as the notorious [£350m a week for the NHS](#)) and a national mistake.

Many MPs were terrified that there would be civil unrest and violence if the Leavers were denied or questioned, although they usually referred to this by the euphemism of 'a constitutional crisis', which was nonsense as the Referendum had no constitutional standing. Resistance to Brexit would have to be built up from outside the political establishment (as it turned out, by Gina Miller).

Opinion Since The Election

The unbundling of May's Project Brexit after the 2017 General Election has fractured 'Brexit' into a series of specific debates which people can have views on, without having to confront the question of whether they were 'right or wrong' at the Referendum. Questions framed this way get very different responses.

For instance on June 18, [a poll by Survation](#) for *Mail on Sunday* found a majority wanted to stay in the Customs Union, supported a Second Referendum, and did not support Theresa May's 'no deal' option.

On 15 July the *Mail on Sunday* reported [a Survation Poll](#) finding that voters were now split 50:50 over whether or not the UK should leave the EU, while only 18% expected to be better off and 39% worse off if Brexit happened, and most thought Mrs May should resign. Asked if Brexit had been more 'problematic' than they had expected, 43 per cent agreed and just 12 per cent disagreed.

On 17 July a [time series of polls for Opinium](#) showed views progressively tilting in favour of a Second referendum.

Once we know what terms the government has negotiated, should there be a second referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, where voters can choose between leaving under the terms negotiated or remaining in the EU after all?

	ALL			
	Dec 16	Mar 17	June 17	Jul 17
Yes - there should be a second referendum	33%	38%	38%	41%
No - there should not be a second referendum	52%	52%	51%	48%
Don't know	15%	10%	11%	12%

There is something for everyone here. On the one hand public opinion is still against the concept of another vote on Brexit. However, the gap is now 7 points as opposed to 19 in December. The trend is clear – support for another vote is growing. The cause? Remain voters are increasingly likely to support another vote – as the chart below demonstrates.

	Remain voters				Leave voters			
	Dec 16	Mar 17	Jun 17	Jul 17	Dec 16	Mar 17	Jun 17	Jul 17
Yes - there should be a second referendum	59%	66%	64%	69%	9%	11%	14%	11%
No - there should not be a second referendum	27%	23%	26%	20%	81%	83%	79%	82%
Don't know	14%	10%	11%	11%	10%	6%	7%	7%

However, none of this puts Brexit in immediate danger. The above chart shows that Leave voters are resolute in their opposition to another vote and there is no major political figure (presumably it would have to be a Labour one...) prepared to break ranks and demand one. To suggest that Britain remaining in the E.U. after all is anything more than a long shot would be dishonest.

Yet if I was a Leave supporter I would be nervous.

Also on 17 July *The Guardian* [reported](#) that a YouGov poll conducted three weeks after the election had found Leavers and Remainer strongly divided over the importance of limiting immigration. However when asked in a later YouGov poll to consider a trade-off between limits on immigration and access to the Single Market, opinion started to converge.

Leave voters would be evenly split if the government tried to keep full access to the single market in exchange for allowing a version of free movement that limited welfare benefits for new arrivals ...

But support for a trade-off soars when voters are offered the option of other limitations on free movement that are used by some countries in the single market. Asked to consider a system where EU migrants were sent home if they did not find work, 55% of leave voters said they would be satisfied with this, versus only 25% who would be unhappy. There was only slightly less support for an “emergency brake” option to control surges in immigration.

Such findings clearly show that opinion is not firmly behind the ‘hard Brexit’ and ‘no-deal is better than a bad deal’ proposed by Theresa May. But as *The Guardian* notes, the ‘trade off’ option can be achieved without leaving the EU. Likewise the option Leavers were evenly split on, was the deal already negotiated by David Cameron before the Referendum.

The newspaper also cited a Kings College/Rand study which tested multiple preferences. It reported:

“While our results do show a desire to control movement of people to some extent, we find that this stems from a concern about managing demand for public services, rather than from wanting to limit freedom of movement per se”

Charlene Rohr of Rand said:

“Our analysis indicated that, on average, respondents would prefer a future relationship in which the UK is able to make and interpret all laws itself, but this was considered less important than maintaining free trade or being able to negotiate new trade deals independently.”

Eloise Todd of Best for Britain commented: “a huge majority of people across the country support freedom of movement if they too can keep their own rights to live, work and study abroad ... The picture is much more nuanced than the government has portrayed, with clear support for some limitations on freedom of movement that are already within the government’s control.”

Such polling reflects the true range of views over Brexit, not captured in binary polls. For example the July 17 Opinium poll also asked how strongly people felt:

Which of the following statements best describes your view on Brexit?

- 1. I strongly feel that the UK should remain in the E.U. **34%***
- 2. I think the UK should remain in the E.U. but don’t feel that strongly about it **12%***
- 3. I am open minded on whether Britain remains in the E.U. or leaves **8%***

4. *I think the UK should leave the E.U. but don't feel that strongly about it* **8%**
5. *I strongly feel that the UK should leave the E.U.* **33%**
6. *Don't know* **6%**

'What we can see' said political blogger Keiran Pedley 'is that the public appear to be split into thirds. 34% strongly feel that the UK should remain in the E.U., 33% strongly feel the UK should leave and the rest are either lukewarm in their commitment to either side, don't know or are open minded. Far from there being a '52%' and a '48%', there is in fact a large chunk of people in the middle waiting to see what will happen'.

Expect a lot more polling and a lot more arguing about what it means. Beware of polls constructed in ways that guarantee a misleading result (whether by accident or design). A now notorious example was a [YouGov poll](#) run before the election which was used to conjure up a category termed 're-leavers'. According to YouGov it showed that a majority were now Brexiteers (ie opinion had consolidated behind Brexit as May claimed) and from this it 'explained' how the Conservatives had an election winning strategy. Of course the Conservatives did not achieve a majority.

YouGov's poll committed several cardinal sins in the world of polling construction, most notably because it gave two options which split Remainers and only one for Leaver voters. They then added one of the Remain options to the Leaver response to create a 'majority' of over 60% for Brexit. YouGov's blog was headlined: 'Forget 52%. The rise of the "Re-Leavers" mean the pro-Brexit electorate is 68%', and this conclusion was widely repeated online and in the press. This YouGov poll [was taken apart](#) by Helen DeCruz of Oxford University, who also criticised the loaded wording of the questions. She remarked: 'if you were a sociology student and designed a poll like this, your lecturer would be right to give you a failing mark'.



Why Is Corbyn a Brexit Bystander ?

Speculation abounds. There is no doubt he avoided the subject in the election campaign. What is more, he deliberately described the question of Brexit as 'settled'. At its

the Manchester launch on May 9 2017, Corbyn devoted 44 seconds to Brexit, in a [speech](#) that lasted almost 18 minutes ([video](#)):

*“This election isn’t about Brexit itself. **That issue has been settled.** The question now is what sort of Brexit do we want – and what sort of country do we want Britain to be after Brexit?*

Labour wants a jobs-first Brexit. A Brexit that safeguards the future of Britain’s vital industries, a Brexit that paves the way to a genuinely fairer society, protecting human rights, and an upgraded economy.”

[my emphasis]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9UA5DsoVcA> VIDEO



Jeremy Corbyn: Brexit is ‘settled’

Corbyn pounded the campaign trail talking about inequality, re-nationalisation, the NHS, public sector wages and other traditional issues of the Labour left. Writing in a blog at [The Conversation](#) on 26 June, political scientist Matthew Goodwin and colleagues argued that ‘Corbyn’s Brexit strategy may have paid off after all in 2017 election’. They drew on Hanretty’s analysis of the distribution of Leave and Remain voting in the 2016 Referendum to conclude that while benefitting from a flood of Remain votes elsewhere, in some Leave-leaning seats, such as Derby North, Bolsover and Stoke North, Labour MPs ‘held on with reduced majorities’. They point out that as well as a huge uplift in places where Remainers dominated, Labour achieved an increase of 7.4 points in seats where more than 65% had voted Leave.

Hanretty himself is more circumspect about using the data this way (above) but it seems reasonable to conclude that Corbyn’s strategy was more guileful than many believed. Yes he was talking about the issues he really wanted to talk about but he avoided Brexit to try and

maintain the Labour vote in Leave seats while appealing to other things Remainers liked where they lived.

This leaves unresolved the question of whether Corbyn actually wants Brexit to happen, or whether he was just being opportunistic and pragmatic.

Fighting for Brexit ?

If the former, and he is still [the same Eurosceptic](#) who voted for Britain to leave the EEC back in 1975, and against almost every significant piece European legislation ever since, then he was campaigning against his beliefs in the EU Referendum when he urged voters to accept the EU "warts and all". Plus he also now faces a new dilemma, as public sentiment moves away from Brexit. As Goodwin et al pointed out, "Corbyn's strategy ... [at the election] moved Labour towards the mildly Eurosceptic centre." Will Corbyn have to come out fighting for Brexit ?

If on the other hand, he was being authentic and honest about campaigning for Remain in 2016, and just never found his mojo, then he now faces the problem of migrating away from his declared position that Brexit is 'settled', if a significant part of Labour's new electorate, the Remainers, start to demand that he listens to their desire for Brexit never to happen.

So long as nobody was really talking about Brexit Exit, he could avoid that but now people are, especially of course, in the media and blogosphere which most reflects Remain views. For instance on 18 July over 60 leading public figures in Scotland [called for Brexit to be halted](#). It is stretching credulity to imagine that this idea will remain confined to Scotland.

The reason Corbyn went into the referendum campaign for Remain, is that it was official Labour Party policy, made by the Labour Party Conference. In January 2016 Richard Johnson explained in a [Kings College London blog](#):

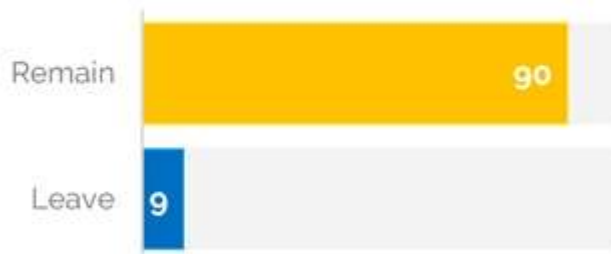
The official position of the Labour Party is unqualified support for continued membership in the European Union. Regardless of the outcome of David Cameron's renegotiation, even if it includes exemptions from EU social and labour laws, the Labour Party 'will be campaigning, and are campaigning now, for Britain to remain part of the EU...[under all circumstances](#)', as Shadow Foreign Secretary Hilary Benn has vowed.

He noted that in 'a YouGov poll taken in November 2015, [83% of Labour Party members wish to remain in the EU, while only 10% would vote to leave](#)' ...While only 10% of Labour members might wish to leave the EU, [polling shows that 27-33% of people who voted Labour in 2015 want to leave](#). ...It seems likely that the one-quarter to one-third of Labour voters who are Eurosceptic are disproportionately drawn from its historic (yet increasingly perilous) working-class base'.

On 30 June 2016, after the Referendum, [another YouGov poll](#) found 90% of paid up Labour Party members had voted Remain.

Labour Members voted "Remain"

How did you vote in the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union?
(% Labour Party Members)



YouGov | yougov.com

June 27-30, 2016

At this point, just after the EU Referendum Corbyn's approval rating had also dropped from +45 to +3 and the majority of Party members did not think he was doing a good job.

Mixed Signals

Right now Labour is sending mixed signals. Like the Tories, Labour is internally split. In June for example, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, told [The Spectator](#) magazine that Labour supported leaving the Single Market.

Then in July Shadow Business Secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey [said](#) the party must "respect the result of the referendum, respect the will of the people in terms of having greater control over our laws, greater control over our borders" and, "If we could negotiate an agreement on remaining within the single market that dealt with all of those issues then that would be fantastic." On the Customs Union, Long-Bailey said:

"Again, the position is very similar. We want to maintain the benefits that we currently have within the customs union – we want to have our cake and eat it, as do most parties in Westminster."

This could be a strategy of remaining deliberately obscure and confusing while creeping along behind the opinion polls wherever they lead, trying all the while to maintain criticism of the Conservatives. It risks sounding just like the Conservatives, who have tried to avoid spelling out where they stand on negotiations over key Brexit issues in Brussels. It is hard to see how it could deal with a straight question about exiting Brexit, or whether Corbyn still regards Brexit as 'settled'. Corbyn could easily find himself once again unpopular with his own party.

Trying to discern what is going on inside Labour is like trying to 'read the tea-leaves' while the tea is still swirling round in the cup. As journalist [James Blitz](#) pointed out at the end of June, although Corbyn has taken against membership of the single market and wants to impose immigration controls, 'Labour has around 50 MPs, MEPs and peers, led by Labour MP Chuka Umunna, who have recently started calling for the UK to remain a member of the single

market and the Customs Union ... standing between Mr Corbyn and Mr Umunna is Sir Keir Starmer, the Brexit spokesman, who is widely respected, but tries to bridge the gap with sometimes impenetrable pronouncements’.

‘The central question for Labour is how long Mr Corbyn will maintain this stance ... unless he shifts in the direction championed by Mr Umunna, he will be unable to exploit the divisions over the Customs Union and single market within Tory ranks’.

But it’s also the Members and new voters Corbyn has to contend with. Never mind the sing-a-longers at Glastonbury, there are critics of his Brexit stance even in the Praetorian Guard of the left, including it seems, within Momentum as an article in [Clarion](#) points out. In it, Sacha Ismail notes the national movement away from hard-Brexit or even Brexit-at-all, and comments:

‘All this is despite a lack of leadership from the Labour Party – and makes Labour’s stance even more objectionable’.

Also from the intellectual left, [an article by](#) Matt Bolton, a researcher, at the University of Roehampton takes Corbyn to task for Blair-like skills in ‘triangulation’ and heaps doubt upon his ‘purported authenticity’:

‘While Corbyn’s much derided [‘0% strategy’](#) on Brexit proved to a be a short-term electoral masterstroke, assuring Red Kippers that he was committed to pulling out of the single market and clamping down on immigration, while allowing Remainers to project their hopes for a softer landing onto him, at some point a decision has to be made’.

‘...Faith in Corbyn’s supposedly unshakeable core beliefs’ says Matt Bolton, ‘is such that his party’s policies on immigration barely register amongst people who would be incandescent with rage if another Labour leader even vaguely gestured towards them’.

There is plenty more discussion in a similar vein, although do not venture in unless you want to explore detail which soon get reminiscent of Monty Python’s [‘People’s Front of Judea’](#) parody of the Left, in *Life of Brian*.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WboggjN_G-4

If the young are paying attention – which maybe they are not, as the holidays approach – they certainly might ask questions of Mr Corbyn. In March 2017 a [poll of students](#) found

The overwhelming majority of students (84%) voted Remain and 99% of them have no 'bregrets' about doing so. By contrast, 9% of the 16% of students who voted Leave regret it. Among students who did not vote, two-thirds now say they would vote Remain, compared to just 13% who would vote to Leave

As a [June YouGov survey showed](#), students have also given their overwhelming support to Jeremy Corbyn's Labour, as have the young in work (many of them Prospectors).

'The Conservatives are 39 points ahead amongst retirees and Labour are 45 points ahead amongst full-time students.

Labour is in fact ahead amongst those in work: 4 points ahead amongst those working part time and 6 points ahead amongst those working full time, illustrating how the Conservatives are increasingly relying on the grey retired vote.'

But far away from Glastonbury, those in the City who follow these things maybe more forensically, perceive a more cynical Corbyn operation. [Watch this video](#) for instance from Bloomberg, featuring Simon Kennedy.

The image is a screenshot of a Bloomberg news article. The title is "What Corbyn's Fans Overlook: Labour Leader Is Still Pro-Brexit" in large, bold, black font. Below the title, it says "By Thomas Penny and Alex Morales" and "5 July 2017, 00:01 GMT+1". There are two bullet points: "→ Young who chanted his name at Glastonbury are pro-European" and "→ But Labour leader is committed to exiting EU single market". Below the text is a photograph of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader, waving. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a red tie. To his left, another man in a dark suit is partially visible. To his right, a man with grey hair and a dark suit is looking down. At the bottom of the photo, there is a Bloomberg logo and a yellow banner that reads "MAY WINS APPROVAL FOR LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM". Below the photo, there is a small text line: "Is Brexit Beginning to Bite the U.K. Economy?".

Bloomberg's Thomas Penny and Alex Morales wrote on 5 July:

Rather than heed the calls of the [pro-European young Britons](#) who backed Labour at the ballot box and chanted at “Glasto,” Corbyn is sticking with a commitment to extract the U.K. from the bloc’s single market -- something the Tories are doing too. In the end, there is not much separating his not-so-secret euroskepticism from the position of his rival.

“He’s ambiguous, he’s not an enthusiast for the EU and never has been,” said Steve Fielding, who teaches politics at the University of Nottingham. “The more clear Brexit becomes, the more clear Corbyn’s position becomes. Potentially it’s going to be more difficult for him than Theresa May.”

[Clarity on Brexit](#) is not something Corbyn is aiming for. A weakened May offers him a path to power and he has everything to gain from staying vague given that the 40 percent of support he drew in June came from both pro-remain London and leave-voting northeast England. Taking one side risks alienating the other.

Conclusion

I can’t say I like Jeremy Corbyn as I don’t know him but I’d like to be able to like him. So let’s settle for a positive explanation of his vacillating mood music and ambivalent position over the European Union and Brexit.

He became Labour Leader largely by accident, and finding himself in a pro-EU party, had to run for Remain in a referendum called by Cameron’s miscalculation, which he did badly. When Remain unexpectedly lost to the shock of all concerned, he may have breathed a sigh of relief, only to have to fight off internal rivals, and unexpectedly, survived.

At the same time a Conservative leadership struggle produced the unexpected result of Theresa May as Leader and Prime Minister. Performing poorly in Parliament, Corbyn looked a no-hoper and trailed badly in the polls, while May rode high as the strong and stable adult who would sort out the post-Referendum mess that much of the public did not want to think about. May then miscalculated and called an election on Brexit, only for Corbyn to do unexpectedly well in the election thanks to votes of Remainers, which ended with a hung Parliament, May as ‘a dead woman walking’, and ‘Europe’ as once again a divisive live issue within the Tories.

As a result Brexit, which Corbyn had declared ‘settled’ in order to placate Settler Leavers who turned out not to support Labour as much as the Tories, and are any way few in number, is unbundled and an increasingly open question.

Consequently, Mr Corbyn’s reluctant support of Remaining is now out of kilter with his new base, and his acceptance of Brexit as a ‘settled’ done deal may leave him stranded if the tide of support for Brexit falls any further, and alienated from his choir.

So far he has not really been called to account over Brexit. What is he to do ?

Corbyn The Great Reformer ?

One thread of consistency which may help him, if we take it at face value, is his desire to reform the EU. In 2015 Corbyn wrote a piece in the [Financial Times](#), entitled: 'The orthodoxy has failed: Europe needs a new economic settlement'.

'Our shadow cabinet' he wrote 'is [also] clear that the answer to any damaging changes that Mr Cameron brings back from his renegotiation is not to leave the EU but to pledge to reverse those changes with a Labour government elected in 2020. Labour is clear that we should remain in the EU. But we too want to see reform'.

Likewise in June 2016, Corbyn said in a Sky TV leaders debate during the Referendum campaign: "I am not a lover of the European Union. I think it's a rational decision - we should stay to try to improve it." John McTernan of *The Telegraph* [wrote at the time](#), 'Jeremy Corbyn wants Labour voters to reluctantly Remain – has he finally captured the mood of the nation?'

It is not too much of a stretch for Mr Corbyn to now fall in line with the changing mood, and argue that given the mess the Tories have made of Brexit, we should maybe put it to the people: should we leave or should we after all stay in, which looks economically and socially the more sensible option, and reform the EU ? If he is looking for a threshold test for such a decision, perhaps he could take a cue from Nigel Farage: two thirds should do it.

Should Mr Corbyn walk away from the hopeful young Remainers, and the future they represent, when they have rescued him from political ignominy, the word which springs to mind, is 'betrayal'.

Ends

(minor updates 21 July)



*In the interests of disclosure this was after I had written my previous blog, which was before I had met anyone from B4B or Gina Miller, who by the way, I think did a great job

** Beats me why the polling companies don't use CDSM's values model seeing as it explains the results somewhat better than the questions they keep asking. But there you are.

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