

**Populists in Mainstream Parties:  
How Jeremy Corbyn Failed to Manage Dissent in the Labour Party**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines how populist faction leaders in mainstream political parties manage dissent by studying how they deal with the other factions within their party that disagree with them. The analysis thus provides a link between the literature on populism and on party politics, filling gaps in those literatures about how mainstream parties deal with populist leadership.

The investigation examines the Labour Party under the populist leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, who was elected on a manifesto promising to empower the membership over party elites. The thesis employs a qualitative research design focused on interviews and archival work, using over 200 interviews with figures at every level of the party.

The thesis applies two main theoretical frameworks. Within the party politics literature the thesis builds on Robert Michels's framework, which treats mainstream parties as oligarchic structures whose success depends on placating elites. Within the populism literature the thesis draws on Cas Mudde's definition of populism as a thin-centred ideology depicting politics as the struggle between a virtuous people and a corrupt elite.

The thesis finds evidence from the case study that populist factions will ignore the norms and constitutional rules that exist to maintain a level of unity in the party and consider their mandate as derived directly from the membership, which overrides the need to placate other party factions. Populist leaders will exacerbate trends to give the membership more power even if it increases chaos within the party.

Moreover, marginalised elite groups may provide support to the populist faction, allowing it to win votes and change the party constitution in a transactional exchange for heightened influence. These findings challenge ideas about how factions operate within mainstream parties and it has wider implications for the study of political parties at a time when parties have increasingly enfranchised their membership, which leaves them open to a populist takeover.

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## **Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the Ph.D. degree from the University of York is solely my own work, other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others. All sources are acknowledged as References. The work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

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None of the research presented in this thesis has been published.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

A key part of the study of political parties is factionalism. Most of the writers who have defined the study of political parties, such as Robert Michels, Maurice Duverger, Gunnar Sjöblom, and Jean Blondel, have featured factions in their texts. However, apart from a theoretical underpinning by the founding fathers of party politics mentioned above, and some isolated case studies (mainly of the UK and the USA) there has been little work examining the ways factions work and cooperate on a comparative level. This is particularly true of populist factions, which can exist across the entire political spectrum and can often feel bound by different norms and rules from other factions and may choose to engage differently within the party and with the general polity.

This thesis will first examine the literature on factionalism and populism. It will provide a definition of populism and discuss the initial literature around this topic, explaining how mainstream parties have populist elements within them. After this it will focus on the literature around political parties, providing a framework informed by Michelsian literature, framing them as elite organisations vesting a lot of power within an internal oligarchy who are primarily office seeking, with most of the power residing in the hands of elected deputies and bureaucrats rather than the rank and file membership. It will then also identify a growing trend within parties, particularly social democratic parties, to give more power to their membership, which has coincided with increasing extremism within their membership, leading to a greater chance of populist leaders emerging who may be more willing to clash with the other elites. It will then study the work on factionalism and provide a clear definition of what a faction is and set out some established rules and norms for how they work within the framework of a political party. It will first identify what a faction is, providing a clear definition to use, so that factions can be clearly identified. Afterwards it will discuss how factions by and large operate according to ground rules within the party in order to maximise their gain without damaging or compromising the party. It will then discuss how factions are able to gain control of a political party and how a faction in the

leadership must manage other factions within the party and the ways most of them have done so. To back up the points it will then examine two case studies on the Conservative Party after 1997 and the Republican Party under Gingrich and during the Tea Party's rise, which show that populist factions do not accept the same ground rules that mainstream factions bind themselves by and may choose to express themselves differently once in the leadership. It will then identify what a populist faction within a political party is, providing a clear definition for such a grouping. Finally, it will identify and address the gap in the literature, where it will set out the lack of literature on the ways populist factions behave when they secure the leadership. It will focus on three main questions. First, how do populist factions gain the leadership of mainstream parties? Second, how do populist factions manage dissent from and involve traditional factions in the running and platform of a political party once they have taken control of the leadership? Third, once in power within the party, do populist factions abide by traditional norms and practices when managing factional rivalries? The thesis will then state the main hypotheses.

The main empirical focus of this thesis will be a single large case study of the British Labour Party during the period of 2015 and 2019 when Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader to the 2019 election defeat. The case study will be used to answer the three main questions. The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn is an example of a mainstream social democratic party that had a populist faction in the leadership. Therefore this thesis will examine how Corbyn's faction managed dissent within the party, compared to how other factions have done so in the past, and whether his method was different. Through discussing populist parties as a whole it will demonstrate that the scope for a takeover of a mainstream left party by populists was quite rare and that examining such a takeover and the implications of factional management of the party is a new area. It will also examine the circumstances for his leadership election victory and how he managed to gain control of the party over the objections of most parliamentarians (a situation that would normally prove fatal to leaders in any other party). The thesis will then explore in subsequent chapters his

relationship with the membership at large, elected officials, and trade unions. The thesis will find that populists in mainstream parties tend to draw their mandate and legitimacy from the membership and do not prioritise their relationships with party elites or develop effective strategies to manage dissent. The thesis will then draw conclusions and discuss whether there are differences from how mainstream factions manage parties in the way populist factions behave when they have the leadership of a political party and what this means for the way we study factionalism and political parties and how this might differ between the left and the right both in how these factions take over and how they manage dissent and what this indicates for how we view mainstream parties.

Political parties have since their inception contained factions who vie for power and influence through contesting internal elections and other forms of power struggle. In order to manage factions and maintain a level of unity and cohesion within political parties, most mainstream political parties have developed an oligarchic structure, creating rules and norms for each faction to follow. Chapter 2 shows that factionalism has existed in all forms of party, from the strongly centralised to the highly decentralised, as a tool for elite cohesion (Verge and Gómez, 2011). The ability to manage factions and maintain unity is an essential skill for any leader. For example, in the Conservative party, leaders who fail to manage dissent and alienate enough of their colleagues are forced out, as seen by Margaret Thatcher (McSweeney, 1999). As Müller (1997: 299) points out, for some parties 'party chairmen ... had made their career via parliamentary and governmental channels and had never held positions directly involving them in questions of mass organization. This demonstrates how for many political parties the main important structure is the oligarchy and elites, rather than the membership, even in a mass party. Factions play roles in determining party policy, candidates for elected office, the leadership of the party, and the overall manifesto for government, meaning they are a natural part of the party (Polk, and Kölln, 2016). Moreover, in decentralised parties, factions may often play roles in sub-divisions of the party and will use decentralisation to their advantage (Verge and Gómez, 2011) meaning that for every party elite, even decentralised ones, there will be factions existing and vying for influence within the party. Therefore, any party leader will need to be able to manage these factions and deal with any

dissent from them. Visible disagreements can hurt a party's prospects for election. However, across mainstream parties, there has been a considerable move away from these elite structures and the empowerment of the membership as a whole, which began in the 1980s and has accelerated across many political parties, allowing members to become a tool in factional fights and be used by factions in general (Ferreira da Silva, 2019).

The greater empowerment of the membership has changed the dynamics of political parties particularly with regard to factions. Potential leaders now have to be more sensitive to the wishes of the membership lest other intra-party factions weaponise the membership in their interests. Therefore, potential leaders have to pitch their causes and benefits to the membership rather than satisfying the elites within the party oligarchy, a shift that can generate dissent. Members of political parties may regard their voices as being more important than those of the elites since they theoretically make up the bulk of the party. Thus, a faction that may struggle to be heard within the party oligarchy may aim to weaponise the membership by appealing directly to them and their newfound democratic power against the oligarchy as a strategic way of gaining power. Therefore, paradoxically, the empowerment of membership is a destabilising factor for political parties, as it removes the incentive for some factions to negotiate in the hope of gaining full control of the party by utilising the membership, which is challenging for the party oligarchy's position as the main vehicle for resolving differences and providing the appearance of unity across the party. However, the party membership, at least in mainstream parties, does wish to see their party enter into office and therefore may be loathe to support a faction that they can see will sow division and disunity within their party. The concept of the oligarchy not being troubled by member empowerment has been largely accepted (Scarrow, 2015) as even with the foundation of mass parties that empowered their membership more than in the existing parliamentary-based parties, elites still ended up having a large amount of power and making the main decisions (Michels, 1968). Therefore, most party scholars still argue that the party oligarchy remains a strong actor and factions still understand its important role in creating a viable political party that can win elections (e.g. Chambers, 2008, Druckman, 1996). However, in recent years there has been an increase in success in intra-party competitions of factional leaders who do not seek to manage dissent, as evidenced by leaders like Benoît Hamon, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump either gaining the leadership or doing well in intra-party competitions over the objections of the



party elites and on an intra-party platform that did not seek to manage dissent. Members of parties seem therefore to be demonstrating that they may not wish to see a leader who can manage dissent and are less worried about party stability.

This trend has been exacerbated recently by the existence of aspirants to party leadership who have only made their pitch to the membership and have attempted to portray themselves as the champion of the membership against a corrupt oligarchy. Conversely, members seem increasingly not to follow the usual trend of other empowered elite groups by demanding more patronage and leveraging their support for more power (Pappas, 2009). Instead, when pushed to by a leadership candidate, members have increasingly shown a willingness to erode the oligarchy and aim for a party that is truly built from the grassroots up, regardless of how destabilising that would be (Katz, 2001). This attempt to set the party members against the oligarchy of a party seems to mirror the anti-elite ideology of populism that has also been growing since the turn of the 21st century. Populist factions have tended not to be studied for this reason, as they have been marginalised by the oligarchy, but are now becoming more influential within parties necessitating further study. The main studies of populist factions within mainstream parties have been within the United States, which is drawn upon in Chapter 2, as the Democrats and the Republicans were amongst the first parties to begin enfranchising their membership and their party structure is looser than conventional European parties. There has also been work on how enfranchising members exacerbated factional strife in the Conservative party even between mainstream factions, which also served as a prototype for this thesis.

Party politics remains an integral part of our political institutions but has been subject to changes in the way they function and engage with different stakeholders, particularly with the recent trend of enfranchising their membership. 'The importance of party democracy as a goal is expected to vary across parties but also within parties across time depending on electoral or other party strategic goals' (Borz and Janda, 2018). There is a stable and growing literature about party democratisation and factionalism and its effects on modern-day parties (e.g. Blondel, 1978, Boucek, 2009, Duverger, 1954, Gherghina, et. al., 2019, Ignazi, 2017, Ignazi, 2018, Michels, 1968, Sjöblom, 1968, Scarrow, 2015, Ware, 1996).

Often missing from the literature on intra-party democracy is a discussion of the increased role of populism. Populism is on the rise in the 21st century and many populist parties have seen strong results in national elections, and have even been invited into government in coalition with parties that until recently would have subjected them to a *cordon sanitaire* (E.g. the True Finns were largely ignored by the Finnish mainstream parties for most of their existence but were invited to join a coalition government in 2015). The success of populist parties has had implications for mainstream political parties. The effect of populism on the wider body politic is confirmed by many studies (Marzouki, et. al., 2016, Mudde, 2002, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, Rosenfeld, 2018) which all show how populism has increased in the 2000s and 2010s and how it is relevant to mainstream parties. Yet, the literature on the effect of populism on the mainstream organisation of a political party is scarce (exceptions include Bartolini and Mair, 2013, Gervais and Morris, 2018, Mudde, 2009, Rosenfeld, 2018). While issues of party polarisation through membership have been explored (e.g. Cross et. al., 2016, Gauja, 2017, Scarrow, 2015, Wuttke et. al., 2019), analysis of how factions who aim to empower the membership as a whole (pitting the membership against the party structure) use intra-party populism is surprisingly scarce, particularly within long-standing mainstream parties.

Even less literature has examined how party elites have dealt with this increased polarisation and conflicts emerging from the empowerment of the membership, an action that often goes against their office-seeking nature which seeks to catch all groups. Similarly, the anti-elite nature of populism interacting with the oligarchic structures of a political party has not been really analysed apart from the aftermath of when it fails (Bale, 2016a). Chapter 3 will explain how increasingly populists have gained control of mainstream parties and have utilised the membership to gain control of the leadership. Understanding how populists in mainstream political parties are able to gain control of a party and the actions of the membership in doing so is an important and underdeveloped field.

However, understanding why populists gain power in mainstream political parties alone is not sufficient to explain the trends in mainstream political parties or the trends of the 21st century. We also need to understand the problems and obstacles that populists face in these parties

regarding how they manage dissent and work with the party oligarchy. In other words, do populists face issues in managing dissent in mainstream parties that other factions do not? Given that populists seem to stand against elites and for what they view as the people, they will be particularly loathe to follow an oligarchy. If they see what they view as a hostile and unrepresentative elite stifling their decision and weaponising the party's rules and norms against them they will react harshly. Similarly, if the constitution of a party is designed to entrench the elite in order to avoid factional strife and stifle any major changes that do not have wide-ranging factional agreement, populists will seek to change the constitution. Populists will therefore need some allies when it comes to managing the party in order to make these changes and challenge the oligarchy. Populists thus need to restructure the arguments in their party and the more successful ones are able to frame their changes as necessary for the party through heresthetics (Riker, 1962). A growing literature highlights the way factions work in parties to restructure debate and push for victory within their party rather than accept mere coexistence (Bloch Rubin, 2017, Bolleyer, et. al., 2016, Ceron and Greene, 2019, Close and Gherghina, 2019, DiSalvo, 2012, Mair, 2002, Riker, 1982).

However, the literature focuses mainly on the way that this is done by mainstream factions within the party, rather than intra-party populist ones. While it can be argued that all factions devote themselves to a level of populism, long-established factions within the parties aim that populism more outside the party and have respect for the rules and norms of the party. Given that populist factions are more likely to aim for unilateral and far-reaching changes this is a serious omission. Furthermore, the literature concentrates on the aftermath of these factions taking over rather than examining the effects they had during their leadership. Nor does the literature examine the relationship between a populist leadership and different stakeholders in the party often going for a more overarching idea. Therefore, the thesis has three research questions:

1. How do populist factions gain the leadership of mainstream parties?
2. How do populist factions manage dissent from and involve traditional factions in the running and platform of a political party once they have taken control of the leadership?
3. Once in power within the party, do populist factions abide by traditional norms and practices when managing factional rivalries?

The main focus of study of the thesis is therefore managing dissent in a political party, and the thesis seeks to explore how populist factions in particular face different challenges when trying to do so. The methodology through which this will be explored is outlined in the next section.

## Research Design

This thesis adopts a qualitative methods approach (see Walter, 2019), drawing on literature on populism and on party politics, particularly factionalism. It employs the use of semi-structured interviews across a range of members of the Labour Party in the UK by engaging in layered sampling (Jamshed, 2014). The thesis thus employs the tactic of taking a deep dive into the Labour Party covering all layers of the party and ensuring that there is a diverse sample of people for each type of affiliation in the Labour Party. Having such a large number of interviews allows for a more holistic view of the case study and avoids the dangers of ‘deception, recall error, reasonableness bias, intentionality bias, and single-motive bias’ (Small and Cook, 2021: 8). Interviewees were selected by choosing various areas around the country and contacting all candidates that ran for local council to ensure a random sample and avoid researcher bias (King, et. al., 2012). Interviews began as being more structured but moved to a semi-structured method as that yielded better results and allowed more creative freedom for the interviewee (Jamshed, 2014). As Jamshed points out ‘The questions in the interview guide comprise of the core question and many associated questions related to the central question, which in turn, improve further through pilot testing of the interview guide’ (2014: 87) allowing for more divergence on topics that an interviewee was more knowledgeable about. Initially, the comparative method was meant to be employed, more specifically the Method of Agreement (Mill, 1843) as two case studies were initially selected based on having diverging characteristics with similarities on the dependent variable.

The two case studies initially chosen were the UK Labour Party and the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) as examples of mainstream parties that had recently experienced a populist takeover. Both were parties in different party families (Labour are Social Democrats and the ÖVP are Christian Democrats), in systems with different electoral rules, and with one country being mainly unitary

while the other was federal. Therefore, the link of having a populist leader take over a mainstream party was worth exploring, especially since those takeovers both happened in the second half of the 2010s. Given the PhD was conducted at a British University and the researcher is a member of the Labour Party, the interviews with Labour Party members were done first with the plan being to spend the summer of 2020 collecting data in Austria for the second case study (there was even the offer of a research desk in Salzburg). Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic rendered that purported case study to not be feasible and the thesis was redesigned as a single-case study of the Labour Party.

The single case study is often used for party politics (see Elman, et. al., 2016, Gerring and Cojocaru, 2016). When utilising this methodology one tends to select a case that can be examined closely but where conclusions can often be generalised, requiring a deep institutional knowledge of the relevant case and the ability to find a large number of interviewees from various different parts of the case to have a well-rounded and empirically strong case. Using a single case study 'can help to revise the existing theories and methods (...) develop and function varies according to different combinations of temporal and spatial settings' (Demirkol, et. al., 2018). Consequently, a single case study of the Labour Party should provide the opportunity to revisit and revise the theories of political parties at least in a British context.

A viable case study needed to be a party in a democratic system that regularly contests elections and whose elites were primarily office seeking, meaning that they acted like a mainstream political party whose main goal was to create a united front between all factions and get into government. The party could not be a fringe or populist party and ideally should have government experience. Most political parties are office seeking and make an offer to the electorate that covers a multitude of policies and seek to campaign across the country with the goal of getting in government. However, there are some parties that are non-office seeking, who either focus on a single issue exclusively (such as the Brexit Party) or who oppose the existence of the government or the state and therefore exclude themselves from government, such as the Joint List in Israel. These parties who do not seek to form a government are excluded on the basis they are not mainstream parties. Therefore, the Labour Party was chosen for this thesis. Labour is a long-standing political party that has led the government in the United Kingdom on multiple occasions

and whose elected officials seek to do so again. As a party it works in a primarily oligarchical system with parliamentarians, trade unions, local government, and the membership all having constitutionally protected roles. Additionally, it is a party that has a presence in every region of Great Britain (it does not contest elections in Northern Ireland) and therefore can be said to be a truly national party. Furthermore, as a party it has enfranchised its membership largely in line with the trend since the 1980s of political parties giving their membership more power. Indeed, Labour is probably more internally democratic than many other mainstream European parties. Moreover, Labour as a party has always had a history of factionalism, with clear divisions between leaders like Hugh Gaitskell and Nye Bevan in the 50s (Crowcroft, 2007), sharp differences between several high-profile members in the 1980s (Heppell and Crines, 2011), and even in the 13 years it was in government between 1997 and 2010 there was a well-known factional conflict between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown (Cowley, 2005). Therefore, many of the internal structures of the party are designed for leaders to be able to manage dissent and prevent open factional conflict in the name of winning elections and promoting the image of unity within the party (Quinn, 2018). Thus, Labour has many elements that allow for us to observe the effects and changes coming from the introduction of the dependent variable.

However, the use of a single case study does provide some obstacles. Firstly the Labour Party is in the United Kingdom and operates in a plurality system, which means that exit costs are high, for dissenting elites, since a new party will struggle to win parliamentary seats due to lack of organisation on the ground and thus the viability of an exit cannot be assessed. In proportional systems the exit costs tend to be lower, meaning that elites whose dissent is not managed may leave the party and form a new one, which the thesis would not cover. However, many proportional systems, like Israel, do have anti-defection laws which raise exit costs, meaning that the thesis is relevant to those systems (Nikolenyi, 2019). Secondly, Labour is a party on the left and may be governed differently from those on the right. Thirdly, the UK, and by extension Labour, is a unitary system and therefore the power of regional or provincial parties may be weaker and the existence of dissenting parties in federal subdivisions is not measured. Additionally, the time period of the 2010s and 2020s provide a different framework to other periods of populism, such as the 1930s as it operates under a framework where intra-party democracy has been strengthened meaning that the manifestation of populism is not merely

voter-facing but also intra-party. Finally, this thesis covers a European democracy and thus may not necessarily cover the dynamics of hybrid regimes that are outside Europe. However, many of the questions and hypotheses can be generalised.

The search for appropriate interviewees involved either searching for designated contacts for organisations affiliated to Labour or searching for those who ran for council in different locations. Over 200 interviews were undertaken for this thesis ranging in all regions of England. Table 1.1 shows the locations and people who were interviewed for this thesis. Initially many of these interviews were face to face but when the distances were too great or during the COVID-19 lockdown, they were held on Skype and then Zoom. All interviews were held individually and alone with the interviewee, with two exceptions where a husband and wife were interviewed and both sets of spouses were in the room both for their interviews and for the interview of their spouse.

Most of the direct sources of the thesis come from the 276 semi-structured interviews conducted in the period May 2019-April 2021. Interviewees included local Labour Party members, Union political officers, local councillors, council leaders, factional leaders, members of Parliament, and even shadow ministers (for a full list see Table 1.1). The interview technique was initially meant to be structured but then moved to be semi-structured when that yielded better results building on Dexter (2012). In addition, particularly in local areas, snowballing was used to gather more sources, using initial sources to find other notables in the area and even secure audiences with more elite figures as done by others (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, Dexter, 2012). Interviews are a strong tool in qualitative analysis that allow the interview to 'deepen the inside knowledge of the community under study' (Bray, 2008), allowing the researcher to gain a richer understanding of the case study as well as confirm previous inferences based on the literature (Hancké, 2009). During interviews notes were taken and particularly interesting quotes were listed. Every interview had a number, as seen in Appendix 2, and each interview had a file with notes determining which areas were of particular interest and what the main points of the interview. Thus, when writing the PhD it was simple to find the relevant transcript and search for the relevant quote. This system allowed for a simpler way of finding quotes, though it could have left some quotes by the wayside or perhaps favoured some of the later interviews. Given the number of interviews, however, this

was the only viable method as a thematic analysis of the interviews would have taken too long and since there were not many questions that could have been quantified, meaning that coding the responses would have been difficult. There was some attempt at thematic analysis, such as quantifying how members and councillors voted in the leadership election as seen by the figures in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Table 1.1: Distribution of Interviewees**

Area	Number of Interviews	Breakdown of Interviewees
Cambridge	34	17 Councillors (and ex-councillors), 17 Activists
South Cambridgeshire	7	7 Activists
East Cambridgeshire	7	7 Activists
Fenland	3	2 Ex-councillors 1 Activist
Cambridgeshire Other	6	5 Activists 1 Councillor
Parliament, European Parliament, Mayors, Police Commissioners, and Devolved Assembly Members	26	3 Former MEPs 10 MPs (3 Shadow Cabinet) 3 Lords 4 Former MPs 2 MEP Candidate 1 Mayoral Candidate 1 Police Commissioner 1 London Assembly Candidate 1 London Assembly Member
Leicester	4	4 Councillors
Labour Employees	1	1 Former Staffer at HQ
York	12	8 Councillors (and ex-councillors) 4 Activists
Coventry	5	4 Councillors 1 Activist
Faction Leaders	8	1 Labour First 2 Progress 3 Momentum 1 Labour Together 1 Open Labour
Liverpool	10	9 Councillors (and ex-councillors) 1 Activist
Torridge	1	1 Activist
Councillors Other	16	12 Councillors 4 Council Leaders
Exeter	3	3 Councillors (and ex-councillors)



Area	Number of Interviews	Breakdown of Interviewees
Reading	8	6 Councillors 2 Activists
Bracknell Forest	7	1 Councillor 6 Activists
Unions	12	1 NUM 4 GMB 2 Unite 1 FBU 2 CWU 1 USDAW 1 TSSU
Vale of White Horse	3	2 Activists 1 Ex-Councillor
Cherwell	2	1 Ex-Councillor 1 Activist
Oxford	6	4 Councillors 2 Activists
NEC Candidates	6	1 Left NEC Candidate 5 Moderate Candidates
Guildford	3	1 Councillor 2 Activists
Epsom and Ewell	4	2 Councillors 2 Activists
County Durham	8	6 Councillors 2 Activists
Darlington	4	4 Councillors
Mole Valley	1	1 Activist
Nottingham	7	7 Councillors (and Ex-councillors)
Devon Other	2	1 Ex-Councillor 1 Activist
Teignmouth	1	1 Activist
Torridge	1	1 Activist
Westminster	6	4 Councillors 2 Activists
Stafford	6	3 Councillors 3 Activists
Staffordshire Other	3	1 Councillor 2 Activists
Newcastle-under-Lyme	2	2 Activists
Stoke-on-Trent	6	2 Councillors 4 Activists
Staffordshire Moorlands	9	2 Councillor 7 Activists
South Staffordshire	1	1 Activist
Wokingham	2	2 Activists
West Berkshire	6	6 Activists
Windsor & Maidenhead	2	2 Activists

Area	Number of Interviews	Breakdown of Interviewees
Slough	2	2 Councillors
Mid Devon	1	1 Activist
Surrey Heath	3	1 Councillor 2 Activists
Waverley	1	1 Activist
Reigate and Banstead	2	2 Activists
Other	2	2 Activists
Camden	1	1 Councillor
Runnymede	3	1 Activist
	281	

Given that this thesis required members of the party to pass commentary on the leadership, there were potential ethical issues about keeping the participants safe from retaliation for sharing their views. Additionally, there was a potential issue about interviewees not knowing exactly what they were being interviewed about and what the aims of the project were, meaning they could feel like they were being deceived. In order to combat this, the project offered anonymity to all participants as well as the chance to read and confirm the transcript of the interview and make edits and redactions either to ensure that the interview was what they truly meant to say and to ensure that they could not be even accidentally identified. Furthermore, in order to keep the data secure there was a consent form for all participants, and all audio files were placed on a secure, password protected server, as were the interview transcripts, to ensure that only I could see them once they were finalised. Ethical approval was sought from the Economics, Law, Management, Politics, and Sociology Ethics Committee of the University of York in 2019 and was received. Furthermore, due to the number of interviews it became necessary to contract transcribers for paid transcription work. In order to ensure that they maintained confidentiality they were made to sign a form that had been approved by my supervisors which mandated that they not speak of the interviews to anyone and destroy the audio files and transcripts upon completion of the task and payment.

As Beach and Brun Pedersen (2016:838) argue, with single case studies 'the focus is on selecting cases that are as representative as possible of the rest of a causally homogeneous population', in this case that population being political parties, of which Labour is representative. Echoing this, Elman, et. al. (2016) also agree that a case study must be emblematic of a larger population of cases. Despite some of the differences noted above, Labour is still seen as a standard mainstream political party and thus the findings here can be generalised to other political parties and could be observed in other mainstream political parties.

The thesis has a contemporary focus and is restricted to the period of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership between 2015 and 2020. This was a time in Europe where populist parties were seeing strong electoral results (such as the Front National, Alternative für Deutschland, SYRIZA, and Podemos) and mainstream parties were seeing membership revolts against elites, which were exploited by populists within their parties. During this time Corbyn became leader of the Labour Party and was faced with the challenges every leader faced, to manage dissent from other factions and institutions like the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO), the Labour Group Local Government Association (LGA), and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), and during his leadership faced major issues like Brexit and Anti-Semitism along with four sets of local government elections, two general elections, two elections to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, and numerous internal elections within affiliated bodies in particular trade unions like UNITE. These challenges and events happened during a time where there was a large and visible element of dissent within the Labour Party particularly aimed at the leadership. This period therefore allows us to cover the time that Corbyn was leader and can help us map how his leadership evolved and how his attitudes towards managing dissent changed.

To examine the above research questions within the time frame discussed, primary and secondary sources have been called upon. The investigation and analysis are backed up by secondary sources, including academic literature, media coverage, internal party briefings, and other documentation.

In order to understand the current case study, other contemporary case studies of political parties (Bale, 2016a) are used to assess the importance of managing dissent. Additionally, other examples of populist leaders in mainstream parties on both the left and right are used in chapter 3 to demonstrate that the thesis addresses research questions with wider relevance than a single party. These cases also paint a picture of the new ways in which populism is rising in the 21st century, enabling a clear theoretical understanding of the differences between the populist movements of the 1980s and those flourishing today.

The assumptions and rules of the Labour Party that underline this thesis are based on various sources. The functioning of the LGA and its relationship to the national party in Chapter 5 was drawn from the annual report of the LGA (2019). The rules of the Labour Party both before and during the Corbyn leadership were drawn from the Labour Party Rulebook (2020), building on the work of the Collins Review (Collins, 2014). The rate of enfranchisement of members and the relative extremism of those members was based on Scarrow's (2005) seminal work on the changes and decline in numbers of party membership, correlating with an increase in the rights and power of the aforementioned membership. This also fits in with other work on gaps in political participation (Dalton, 2017). All this work provides a clear lens for which to view the atmosphere that the Labour Party was operating in and to understand the oligarchical framework of that party. Results of internal elections for bodies like the National Executive Committee and leadership elections were taken from the Labour Party website (The Labour Party, 2020).

Given that I am a member of the Labour Party, and consider myself on the moderate side of the Labour Party I also had to ensure that my own personal biases did not enter into the thesis. I personally did not support Jeremy Corbyn in either leadership election, having voted for Yvette Cooper in 2015 and Owen Smith in 2016, and remained critical of him particularly over the issues of anti-semitism in the Labour Party, as well as supported moderate slates for the NEC. However, I sought to make this research as empirical as possible and focus on the facts of how Corbyn managed dissent. I ensured interviews would focus on areas that Corbyn was also seen as strong on, such as his engagement with the membership, his economic stance, and the way he brought new members into the party. Furthermore, I sought out interviewees that were pro-Corbyn as well as those who were sceptical and ensured that their voices were heard. Finally, in

the interviews even those who were supportive of Corbyn never really argued that he was good at managing dissent, they just didn't feel he needed to, meaning that there was no real disagreement where my personal biases would need to play a role in arbitrating.

## The Argument and Theoretical Approach

The thesis makes the following arguments which are based on the sources and methods above:

In response to the first research question, Chapter 3 theorises that populists in mainstream parties often weaponise discontent with the leadership by the membership in order to get into power and take advantage of the trends to enfranchise the membership. This is more apparent on the left than on the right, where it is theorised that party elites on the right are more willing to allow populist factions to take over if it appears that they may be more able to win elections and guarantee the party's position in power, as seen in nations like Austria, with the ÖVP and France, with Les Republicains, but also this means that those factions can more easily be removed. Chapter 4 helps support this theory on the left by demonstrating that many members did feel upset by the PLP and saw Corbyn as a chance to reclaim power or at least have a leader who could hold the elites to account, and that their main goal was to force a change in the attitudes of the PLP and move the party to the left and Corbyn's campaign promised to listen to those views and validate them. In contrast to other factions who often try to promote themselves as a unifying force who can bring the party together in order and win an election, Chapter 4 shows that a populist faction is willing to ignore the ideas of electability and unity altogether and considers the membership of the party the only constituency it has to win or please and that its authority comes solely from that membership over any other body. This challenges the Michelsian view of an oligarchic party and shows that the methods by which populists gain power are destabilising for the party.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 largely discuss the second research question and identify the issues that a populist, namely Corbyn, had managing dissent from other factions. Chapter 5 demonstrates that local councillors were sceptical of Corbyn and that instead of working with them he initially appointed the loyalist Jon Trickett to the local government brief that they did not trust and then

appointed someone they could work with but who he ignored. Additionally, Chapter 6 shows that when it came to the PLP Corbyn often undermined different factions by making statements that ran against the policy they had developed. This led to increased anger between him and his Shadow Ministers, who felt that they had a leader who was ignoring established party policy even when he had allowed them free reign to develop such policy. Finally, Chapter 7 demonstrates that he ignored unions that disagreed with him. As such these chapters show that a populist leader will not prioritise managing dissent from other factions in their party or the need for a united front. Rather, it demonstrates that populists will ignore factions and marginalise bodies they do not see as loyal to them regardless of how destabilising that proves to be.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 also work to answer the third research question about how once in power a populist faction will respect the traditional norms and practices when managing factional rivalries. This is connected to the second research question as often norms exist in parties in order to manage dissent and maintain the loyalties of other factions. Consequently, a leader who is uninterested in managing dissent would be less willing to accept the norms and rules that keep other factions from being disloyal. Chapter 6 in particular demonstrates how Corbyn was willing to ignore concepts like collective responsibility, often outlining positions that had not been agreed in the Shadow Cabinet. Moreover, these positions were often out of step with what the relevant Shadow Cabinet member believed, which goes against the idea that in the short-term, until an official policy is made by conference, the relevant Shadow Cabinet member has authority over their policy. Additionally, Corbyn did not regularly attend meetings of the PLP Executive, a weekly event that every other leader had regularly attended. This demonstrates that Corbyn did not value the norm that a leader must have the support of their Parliamentarians and work *primus inter pares* with the Shadow Cabinet. This was confirmed when despite losing a vote of no confidence from the PLP Corbyn refused to resign as leader. It is also not clear that this disregard for these norms actually was beneficial to achieving his aims since Corbyn did not actually make many meaningful changes to Labour Party policy, particularly in foreign policy, despite all the rancour his actions caused and the destabilisation of the Labour Party – a notably different outcome from the success of the hard left in the 1980s. The same can be said for local government, where Corbyn ignored the legitimate body of Labour councillors, the Labour group of the LGA, and

forces loyal to him attempted to set up a parallel structure and he even tried to force changes to the rules making Labour group leaders elected by members not councillors, despite clear opposition from councillors. Therefore, with local government Corbyn did not listen to established bodies. The same happened with trade unions, where Corbyn ignored bodies like TULO in favour of bilateral relations with the unions who backed him directly, demonstrating that the norms of consulting unions as a bloc was no longer valid with his leadership.

The analysis of the Labour Party that is presented throughout the thesis demonstrates the challenges present in a mainstream party for populist factions. Based on interviews with 276 members and elites within the Labour Party the above arguments regarding the member-led view of intra-party populists, their disregard for dissenting voices, and disdain for norms that stabilise the party are tested and demonstrate the relevance of the research questions for other case studies. Based on the findings of this thesis, the argument is developed that populists in general do not value managing dissent, and neither make reference to it when standing for the leadership, nor do they follow the norms and rules that the party values in order to manage dissent and maintain unity.

Although the thesis is looking at one party in particular and evaluating how populists managed dissent within that particular party, the lessons from this thesis can apply to other parties. Even on the right, where populist leaders are sometimes brought in by elites to win elections, those leaders also don't place a strong premium on managing dissent or norms and rules within the party. The anti-elite attitude of populism is one of its defining characteristics and therefore a resistance to elites and the rules that maintain harmony amongst elites is endemic to populists, as demonstrated by the decision by Sebastian Kurz in Austria to have the party's electoral list chosen solely by him, or Donald Trump in America's moves to launch primary challenges against Republicans who opposed him, rather than through elite agreement as was the tradition within the ÖVP. Likewise, with Corbyn, the ÖVP elite was happy for any excuse to put Kurz behind them and bring back a leader who was more willing to respect the norms and other factions and not view themselves as being above all other groups or deriving their mandate solely from members or voters. Thus it is argued that the findings of this thesis apply to populist factions in mainstream

parties all around the world and are not just specific to the Labour Party, or the UK, or even to left-wing parties, majoritarian systems, or even parliamentary systems, but instead can be found in any democratic system. Significantly, this finding awards populist ideology a clear and key role in explaining the troubles certain factions have when it comes to managing dissent in a mainstream party, and why those factions often struggle to hold onto power.

## The Origin and Contribution of the Thesis

Most of the existing literature on populism has focused on the external effect of populist parties on the body politic and on electoral competition, but there is very little literature about the effect of populism *within* mainstream parties. Additionally, there is not much research in party politics about the effect of factions that reject the oligarchic framework most parties operate in.

Therefore, this thesis provides an original contribution to both fields by providing an examination of populism within a mainstream party. By combining the populism literature with the party politics literature this thesis represents a synthesis of the two which helps answer the research puzzle. Furthermore, the thesis helps fill gaps in both the populism and the party politics literature. More broadly, by focusing on factionalism within mainstream parties, the thesis fills a gap in the party politics literature, which focuses on factions that tend to follow norms and rules in a party and aim to get power through them rather than upending the entire system. Further, by investigating the effects of a populist faction on a mainstream oligarchic party, rather than an autocratic party which populist parties tend to be, it fills a gap in the populism literature which mainly focuses on populist parties.

Chapter 3 takes a theoretical approach to populism and examines how it has grown in the 2010s and the differences with its previous iteration. Many of these features have been identified in the previous populism literature and were even identified as emerging trends in the 2000s in major studies of populism (e.g. Mudde, 2009), but have tended not to be used to make comparisons with mainstream parties. Although scholars like Rooduijn and Akkerman (2015) have examined the desire of mainstream parties to embrace a populist discourse, this is about populists gaining control of the leadership. By examining one case study covering a mainstream party, however, this thesis helps to provide clarity on the effects at all levels of a party of a populist faction taking



over and the impact of their anti-elite ideology on what is an oligarchic body. Furthermore, Chapter 3 makes a significant theoretical contribution to the field by discussing reasons for why populists across the political spectrum would struggle to control mainstream parties over a long period.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 make a significant empirical contribution to the field, by exploring the different stakeholders in the Labour Party and their reactions to a populist leader. Furthermore, as an analysis it is unique in holistically examining the way a leadership manages dissent at all levels of the party. As such, it makes a novel and original argument. Importantly, the argument of the thesis is strengthened by the theoretical analysis in Chapter 3, which supports the idea that this is not a phenomenon that is localised to one party or that this was a unique occurrence but instead is something that may happen across other nations. By using a large number of interviews to delve into the various intricate aspects of the Labour Party this thesis establishes a method for researching disruptive changes across different political parties across the world.

Given that the 2010s saw an increase in populist movements around Europe on both sides of the political spectrum rather than just on the right, we can surmise that intra-party populism is something that affects both sides of the mainstream political spectrum and thus the findings of this thesis are potentially generalisable to the right. The findings of this thesis thus also feed into the growing literature on populism around the world and demonstrate the continued importance of this ideology for understanding electoral and party politics in Europe (Marzouki, et. al., 2016, Mudde, 2002, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, Rosenfeld, 2018). Additionally, as mainstream parties are being affected by populism then the thesis also demonstrates the relevance of mainstream parties and the oligarchic framework that still defines the structure and organisation of mainstream parties (Blondel, 1978, Boucek, 2009, Duverger, 1954, Gherghina, et. al., 2019, Michels, 1968, Sjöblom, 1968, Ware, 1996). Finally, parts of the party political literature include and build upon literature that refers to factionalism and oligarchic organisation more generally rather than specifically to political parties. As such, the thesis provides an important contribution to the literature in the party political field by focusing on the issue of populism in mainstream

parties specifically, and providing a clear distinction between the structure and actions of mainstream parties and populist parties.

The thesis also makes a contribution by feeding into the wider literature on engagement with party politics by the general public (see Achury, et. al., 2018, Dalton, et. al., 2013, Mair and van Biezen, 2001, Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010, Whiteley, 2010,). By examining the membership changes in mainstream parties this thesis allows us to examine how representative mainstream party membership is of voters. By finding that party members are more likely to support populist leadership that is not aimed at supporting unity, the thesis demonstrates that the question of how parties will develop with an enfranchised and more extreme membership remains quite unanswered. Similarly, the thesis provides contributions to the growing academic debate about changes to political parties and the evolution of parties towards the cartel model (Bardi, et. al, 2014, Katz and Mair, 1995, Koole, 1996).

Finally, the overall argument of the thesis - i.e. that populist leaders in mainstream parties will struggle to manage dissent more than other factions and will ignore the oligarchic organisation and norms of the party in favour of what they view as a mandate from the membership - mirrors that of previous work which points to the importance of managing dissent in a party (e.g. Bolleyer, et. al., 2019, Kaltenecker, et. al., 2019). Where the thesis makes a novel argument is in the identification of populist factions as facing particular challenges in terms of managing dissent. The thesis thus also helps to shed light on the extent to which norms within a party can be broken and on the potential trouble involved in reconstructing them. The thesis also provides contributions to British politics literature, particularly the studies of the history of the Labour Party, in examining the reasons why Corbyn failed as a leader.

## Outline of the Thesis

The thesis contains eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 examines and analyses the existing literature that this thesis draws upon for its investigation and demonstrates where the thesis sits within that literature. The chapter consists of three main sections: the first outlines the existing literature on political parties, the second then identifies populism, while the

third outlines factionalism and the importance of managing dissent across all factions. It then introduces the issue of populist factionalism and how it affects our dependent variable, managing dissent.

The third chapter presents a theoretical framework for populism in the 2010s in order to continue situating the thesis and the reasons why populist factions in particular struggle to manage dissent. Chapter 3 engages in a theoretical discussion of populism on all sides of the political spectrum and the responses of mainstream parties when facing the rise of populism. A key finding of this chapter is that mainstream parties in the 2010s were more likely to work with populist parties and invite them into government rather than subject them to a *cordon sanitaire*. This result underlines the fact that populism has become more accepted in the 21st century than it was in previous incarnations and mainstream parties are more open to it. Moreover, it then explores how populism has made its way into mainstream parties with examples of populist factions in mainstream parties gaining control or having a stronger say and how the reasons for this differ between the left and the right. The chapter then discusses the potential issues for populist factions operating in a mainstream party that runs in an oligarchic manner.

The fourth chapter begins the empirical analysis of the Labour Party as a case study, and in particular looks at the membership dynamics under Corbyn's leadership, dealing with the theory that they were the most supportive group. The first section examines the composition of the membership in the Labour Party and why the membership was inclined to support Corbyn and his populist campaign in the face of strong opposition from other party elites. The following sections then explain the membership's relationship with parliamentarians and how that evolved under Corbyn's leadership, and then focus on how Corbyn engaged with the membership as leader. It will be argued that Corbyn considered the membership to be the most important part of the Labour Party and aimed to support their views over any other constitutional body in the party, and this led him to directly engage with members in a way that other leaders had not done so before, and sought to use the membership as a way to guard against other elites in the party who were more sceptical of Corbyn. However, not all members agreed with this direct engagement and there was always a sizeable cadre who wanted Corbyn to engage with the oligarchy of the party.

The chapter therefore argues that Corbyn's engagement with the membership was largely with the members he agreed with and was selective in engaging with those who would back him over the PLP, which ignored a sizeable number of the membership. The final section provides an overview of what members thought about his policies and actions, particularly on economics, Brexit, and anti-semitism.

Turning to the party elites, Chapter 5 examines how Corbyn managed dissent from local government in the Labour Party, by interviewing both local councillors and leaders on the Labour Group of the LGA. It provides an overview of where councillors saw themselves in the party, as an elite, and how they were initially sceptical of Corbyn. It then shows how this scepticism was never managed and how Corbyn, faced with it, ignored local government and placed a sceptic in that portfolio and then ignored it, while marginalising the LGA by using groups loyal to him like Momentum to set up parallel structures for councillors that were loyal, and tried to give the membership more power over councillors, which only inflamed dissent.

Chapter 6 looks at the most famous dissenting group in Corbyn's leadership, the PLP. The first part reviews the set of circumstances that led Corbyn to win the 2015 leadership election, over the opposition of much of the PLP, and the reaction by Labour's parliamentarians to having a leader like Corbyn. The relationship with his Shadow Cabinet and how that became undone is then examined and analysed in the second section and found to have largely been defined by chaos, due to Corbyn's unwillingness to work with them, despite in the end allowing them to set Labour policy. Looking at this relationship with the wider PLP, the third section explores the various issues that Parliamentarians had with Corbyn. They saw a leader who would not engage with them, only sporadically going to PLP Executive Meetings, something every other leader had done on a weekly basis, and feeling that he was unelectable at large. Additionally, there was considerable outrage over his mishandling of Anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, and how he had done nothing about the increasing scandals. The final section of the chapter contextualises Corbyn's inability to manage dissent with his populism, demonstrating how he didn't care for the norm that a leader must have the support of his parliamentarians. Due to him viewing his mandate as coming from the membership he didn't feel bound by rules like collective

responsibility and sought to change the PLP to be more loyal to him instead of meeting them halfway.

Chapter 7 examines the role of trade unions within the Corbyn leadership, as a body that was traditionally seen as supportive of Corbyn by lay-members but with those in the know indicating the relationship was more nuanced. Therefore, a closer examination of the relationship was needed. By speaking to a variety of political contacts in most trade unions, the chapter uncovered a largely transactional relationship between the Corbyn leadership and the unions that supported him who had been out-organised by moderate unions. The first section situates unions in the Labour Party before Corbyn became leader and explains how the reduction of their power meant that Corbyn had a more sympathetic audience with them. The second section then examines how Corbyn worked with the unions who had supported him and how those unions were smaller with the exception of UNITE who had traditionally been out-organised in the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO). The third section then looks at the issues sceptical unions had and the fourth section concludes. The trade union chapter supports the idea that populists will often struggle to manage dissent with established elites, as the unions that were more pro-Corbyn were the ones who didn't benefit from constitutional structures like TULO. Moreover, the chapter reveals that unions largely saw their relationship with Corbyn as transactional, with unions like UNISON deserting him over his attempted rule changes to the party which would have watered down the influence of trade unions and thus weakened their position, something that unions who did not have a strong position, like Unite, were less concerned with. This finding largely confirms the theories in Chapter 3, that elites who support a populist faction do so for transactional reasons and accept that such a faction will not manage dissent. As such, this chapter brings forward another conclusion about populists in mainstream parties and the reasons that some elite groups have for allying with them, which also demonstrates a continued weakness, as elite support is predicated solely on an ability to fulfil a transaction.

Chapter 8, the conclusion, re-examines the main findings and research of the thesis and situates them in the broader political party and populism literature. The first section re-iterates the substantive findings of the thesis and the overall argument. The second section then explains the

wider relevance and generalisability of the thesis, and then the third section discusses the limitations therein. The fourth section explores potential avenues for research and then the final section concludes.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Political Parties are not static bodies, instead they change through the course of their existence. William Riker describes them as being 'quasi-permanent...coalitions' (Riker, 1962). Most parties seek to win power, and are in effect a method of uniting different factions – who have broadly the same ideology – into a form that can do so. However, often these factions wish to gain the upper hand in their party and support issues that are close to them. Riker (1962) discusses this in his study of Heresthetics or structuring the discourse so one side can win, where he uses the ideas of Arrow's Impossibility Theorem to demonstrate that there can be no truly accurate way of ordering preferences and salience on issues when the number of issues up for debate is more than two. Therefore, if a faction can control the agenda in a debate or demonstrate the importance of an issue and ensure that the party supports that issue, it can induce the party to follow its lead (Riker, 1982). We can conclude that factions in political parties will attempt to set the agenda and structure the party, and hopefully society, in a way that allows the faction to exercise a measure of control over the agenda.

To cement that structure and balance these factions, political parties must develop rules and establish conventions. These rules become institutionalised, and the party institutions that emerge become the primary mechanisms for decision-making (Riker, 1980). These mechanisms become necessary to maintain order within the party and prevent – or limit - any conflicts over agenda setting from spilling over into the public. However, it may be the case that some factions do not wish to play by these institutionalised rules and conventions, which they may see as tools to keep them down and prevent them from executing their preferences and policy aims. Some factions may seek to change the party without obtaining the consensus of other factions and stakeholders. Additionally, the rise of a more active member class, enfranchised to play a role in the party's constitution and selection of leaders, may lead to the ending of the monopoly of power of the party elite.

Factions that wish to change the party without obtaining agreement from their rivals may be able to do so by directly appealing to the mass membership to overrule the party leadership. These

factions are primarily populist factions within the existing structure of the mainstream party. While other factions that are out of power may seek ways to gain power this is often done through the party machinery, rather than by directly using the membership, as populists are keen to do. These populist factions are not often discussed within the literature on political parties: there is extensive scholarship examining factionalism and populism, but not populist factionalism in mainstream parties. Most of the populist literature focuses on fringe parties and explicitly populist parties such as the Rassemblement National, Golden Dawn, PVV in the Netherlands, etc. Authors like de Lange (2012) write books about radical right populism but do not focus on populist elements within mainstream political parties. When any literature discusses mainstream parties that have become populist, like the Austrian Freedom Party, it is presented after the fact, without a discussion of how these factions came to power, or how they managed dissent within the party. Additionally, most literature on factionalism is written through the lens of mainstream factions in political parties, such as Thatcherism and the One Nation Tories in the Conservative party, the various factions in the LDP in Japan, or between Barry Goldwater and Nelson Rockefeller in the Republican Party. Most authors, like DiSalvo, assume that factions operate within the oligarchic framework of the party, and do not seek to overturn the rules and norms of the party. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature concerning populist factions in mainstream parties and how they manage dissent and the oligarchic framework of the party.

This thesis will explore how populist factions in mainstream parties manage dissent. To do so, it will examine the Labour Party in the UK. It will explain how Jeremy Corbyn and his populist faction gained power and identify intra-party obstacles as their main method of managing dissent. By examining a mainstream party like Labour it will be able to draw conclusions on how populists manage dissent in mainstream parties as Labour is a mainstream social democratic/socialist party and has a strong moderate faction within it as well. This literature review will examine the theories behind party politics, populism, and factionalism that are relevant in this thesis in the first three sections. The next five sections will examine the issues with factionalism in mainstream parties and the potential problems that factionalism may cause within a political party, and will include two contemporary case studies. The next two sections will then discuss the gap in the literature when addressing populist factionalism and why it is a relevant topic for a thesis to discuss. The



penultimate section will discuss the hypotheses before the final section covers the case study used in this thesis.

## Political Parties

Representative bodies have tended to naturally form political parties. Groupings of like-minded legislators have stuck together for protection and to make common cause at the start of early parliaments. Over time, this has coalesced into the model of political parties that we have today to the point where 'all relations between governments and members of parliament...take place within a context dominated by political parties' (Gallagher, et. al, 2011: 197). Duverger notes the birth of political parties as a natural process, stating that they first form in parliament and then through their attempts to get like-minded people elected form bodies to do so, and the connection of those two groups (the parliamentary grouping and the mechanism for election) creates the political party (Duverger, 1954). Groupings of like-minded members of the body-politic were noticed in Ancient Athens and the Roman Republic had proto-parties in the form of the Optimates and the Populares (Ignazi, 2017). The first main parties to be noticed were the Whigs and Tories in England after the English Civil War. 'The recognition of different attitudes and positions (and even the positive acknowledgment of passions) together with the identification of a *locus* - the Parliament - where political opinions could be expressed quite freely, took hold. The 'normality' of political divisions *inside the Parliament* offered the opportunity to think of politics as a plausible and non-harmful activity' (Ignazi, 2017: 24).

During the early 20th century parties in Western Europe moved from being mainly parliamentary groups with an election apparatus to larger membership-driven bodies, particularly with the rise of social democratic/socialist parties, who notably started outside parliament and then later gained parliamentary representation. The members allowed parties to campaign and promote important issues alongside the traditional office-seeking role of the party. Additionally, once in office, parties maintain loyalty by providing members with government posts through patronage and supporters with benefits to encourage clientelism. Therefore, parties are a key area for study and observation and even today are 'a core unit in the analysis of social science research' (Döring and Regel, 2019: 97). Aldrich and Griffin go even further in this and state that 'Effective democratic governance

arises consistently in the presence of regularised party competition for control of the offices of government' (Aldrich and Griffin, 2018: 13). These writers make a normative case that parties are a good thing for a well-functioning democracy.

Parties attempt to gain election to parliament by campaigning and attempting to push the electorate towards their point of view. Most mainstream parties act strategically in order to gain election by staking out a space on major issues where a large portion of the electors find themselves closer to them than any other party. Parties do not depend on "natural" changes in the electorate but are seen to bring about these changes themselves. They want to be the ones who lead 'in shaping the political discourse...in putting issues on the agenda which get picked up by other players' (Maier et al., 2017: 168). The requirement is that they identify new and winning issues and they popularize these issues and themselves accordingly (Mair, et. al., 2004). Therefore, most parties will enact policies to encourage voters to support them. In order to define the issue space, parties often end up crafting ideologies along the political spectrum. Mair identifies several 'party families' (Gallagher, et. al., 2011: 327), including, but not limited to, liberal parties, socialist parties, agrarian parties, Christian democratic parties, and conservative parties. These party families all have particular areas of issue-space that they define as their own, and they can broadly be seen to exist on a spectrum going from those 'that favour individualism, open society, and risk taking as against those who prioritise security within the homogenous... environment of the...community' (Mair and Zielonka, 2005: 5). Over time parties have changed in both structure and purpose. Katz and Mair (1995) noticed the evolution of parties from being autonomous parts of civil society meant to represent cadres, to mass parties aiming to energise people from outside politics, to catch-all parties that aim to forge the widest possible electoral coalition, to cartel parties which are inseparable from the state. The effects of this evolution will be discussed in the next paragraph, however, based on the system they operate in, and the number of parties, they continue to serve as a basis to provide people with a series of programmes to choose from. However, given the finite number of parties, in the end, rather than offering voters a variety of choices, there is a tendency for 'the capacity of...party systems to

constrain voter choice' (Mair, 2002: 9). Given the constraints on choice parties are able to define issue space to the electorate largely on their own terms.

In the first political parties, the leadership was inseparable from the parliamentary group. Given that the parties arose from Parliament, it made sense for the leadership to be the leading deputies within the party. 'Their leadership is in the hands of their parliamentary representatives and is very markedly individual in form: real power in them belongs to a particular group revolving around the parliamentary leader' (Duverger, 1954: 63). They initially were groups of legislators who banded together with the idea of sharing a common goal and passing legislation that they would want. These legislators would find others who shared their ideology and formed 'an ideologically close party that can help push their preferred policies' (Radean, 2017: 141). In order to win elections and maintain power these parties formed an organisational machine which was seen as subordinate to the legislators who governed and decided the party's policy.

These parties have been amongst the slowest to democratise. For example, in parties like the British Conservatives, the leadership was entirely decided by their members of parliament until 2001 with no say by the membership at all. Even to this day the responsibility for electing the Conservative leader lies mainly with the parliamentary grouping, which narrows the choice down to two MP candidates, with only the final choice going to members. However, even this limited enfranchisement of the membership is unusual within right-wing political parties. Some, such as the Austrian ÖVP or French Les Republicans, still have not extended the franchise to their members and choose their leaders through party conferences where the result is often a foregone conclusion. Often the main criterion for choosing leaders is electoral success. Additionally, the method for removing leaders is simpler. The UK Conservative parliamentary group, for example, can remove the leader without consulting the membership: Iain Duncan Smith was removed by fewer than 100 MPs (which was over half of the Conservative parliamentary group) even though he had the support of 60% of the Conservative grassroots, indicating the Conservatives accept that their parliamentarians can overrule their members.

Social democratic parties often aspire to a more democratic outlook. Given their extra-parliamentary origins and mass-membership models, these parties initially aimed to be more than just a vehicle for election. Therefore, these parties have opted for a more democratic structure, with a stronger bureaucracy, alongside the parliamentary leaders. 'The personal aspect in leadership becomes less important: a system of complicated institutions grows up...with an authentic "separation of powers". In theory, election is the rule at all levels' (Duverger, 1954: 26). However, as both Duverger and Michels before him note, socialist parties also tend to exhibit elite leadership. 'The reelection demanded by the rules becomes a pure formality. The temporary commission becomes a permanent one and the tenure of office an established right. The democratic leaders are more firmly established in their seats than were ever the leaders of an aristocratic body' (Michels, 1968: 63). Therefore, we can establish that most political parties are mainly run by some form of power elite that can effectively control the levers of power and that this is not a phenomenon exclusive to the right or the left. Additionally, 'party members are more directly affected by the performances of party leaders than regular voters' (de Vet, et. al., 2019: 693) since they have only a limited choice, and can only make an infrequent contribution, meaning they have to pay special attention if they wish to institute a change.

Most mainstream, office-seeking political parties in the days of mass suffrage aim to represent main cleavages in society. This is what mainly distinguishes them from fringe or populist parties; the fact that these parties seek to enter government and therefore engage in pluralist rhetoric to build a broad church (Norris, 2020). While some populist parties do seek to be in government, they can be regarded as less office-seeking as some of them seek to influence the discussion of key issues from an extra-parliamentary position, or do not seek to enter government in any sort of coalition, meaning they are less office seeking (Riera and Pastor, 2021). The goals of a mainstream party, in a democratic system, are to be the political representation of such cleavage groups (e.g. the working class, Roman Catholics, or specific nationalities). They aim to do more than represent single-issues, while still giving a concentrated appeal to their partisans to support them. 'Their range of activities is broad and they cannot therefore rely on associational support alone; but they need a very long time to build the type of communal support which tribes

or churches enjoy' (Blondel, 1978: 47). Their goal is to establish themselves within the community by linking themselves to key support structures in those places like the church or trade unions and relying on those structures to build support and identity within those communities. Over time, those cleavages will identify with the party and 'more people become conscious of its role and purpose, and relate directly to it' (Blondel, 1978: 51). This can settle into forming a party brand which voters can identify with. There is a premium on parties to have strong brands as that creates a solid message for voters to support. 'The stronger the political brand equity, the more the brand will be recognizable to voters as a point of differentiation in the party' (Grimmer and Grube, 2017: 269). A mainstream party therefore is defined as a party that seeks to represent a large portion of the population and focuses on issues with high relevance and seeks to lead a government (Meyer and Wagner, 2013).

Political cleavages create a stable partisan base for the political party and therefore create a system of political education where individuals identify their political worldview with the national party. Martini and Torcal also state that partisanship is not just people providing support to the party, but also 'a powerful lens through which to interpret social reality and make reasonable choices' (Martini and Torcal, 2016: 128). Parties will stake out areas of the political ground with 'positions on broad ideological "bundles" like the left-right and authoritarian-libertarian dimension' being the most relevant (Ruedin and Morales, 2017: 303). On issues that may seem external, or not directly linked, to the initial cleavage, they will follow the party's lead. Given that cleavages form around certain first-order issues (economic or social for the four main cleavages, centre-periphery, rural-urban, church-state, and owner-worker) and second-order issues exist and must be dealt with for governance, party policy will be adopted by the mainstream members since 'public opinion is less concerned about second political dimensions' (Pardos-Pradu and Sagarzazu, 2019: 51). 'People root their policy issues in their parties and adopt the positions held by their political party' (Sheagley, 2017: 402). For example, on issues like foreign policy which are less obviously governed by cleavages, partisans and supporters will support the position of their

party. 'International issues have been much more integrated into the programs of left and right mainstream parties across issue dimensions' (Whitefield and Rohrschneider, 2019: 26). They also then are expected to serve as the brunt of the party's membership and be loyal partisans for the rest of their lives. 'We know that persons who identify with one of the parties typically have held the same partisan tie for all or almost all of their adult lives' (Abbott and Rogowsky, 1978: 29). Partisans were relied on as votes and money for political campaigns. Some of them would even attempt to become elected members and leaders. Membership was thus a major part of most political parties and the members, while still ruled over by political leaders, were still an important part of political parties.

During the 1960s and 1970s the increase in wealth saw a level of de-alignment both on class and partisan lines. As the middle class grew and education became more available voters started focusing on new issues, in particular environmental and social issues (Inglehart, 1977). This caused voters to no longer identify with the party that represented their initial cleavage and therefore saw parties losing membership. This increased in the 1980s and 1990s where people began to leave political parties, continuing the erosion of the mass party model. 'In the late 1980s and early 90s membership...stabilized at historically low levels...individual enrolment had fallen to levels not seen since the 1920s' (Scarrow, 2005: 177). The low membership seems to coincide with a time of partisan de-alignment where traditional identities being linked to political parties began to fray. This coincided with a period of de-industrialization and the emergence of social issues climbing up the list of party priorities, with the establishment of environmental, feminist, and far-right movements. Citizen and pressure groups encouraged this shift towards social issues as well as encouraged people to leave parties to join pressure groups that solely focused on their chosen issue (Inglehart, 1977). This, combined with increasing internationalization, has led to people leaving parties and not seeing the differences between them, creating a 'mobile electorate' (Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei, 2017: 153). Pietro Ignazi concurs, describing the new electorate as 'free to change their choice at any time' (Ignazi, 2018: 10). This trend has appeared in multiple countries with parties who regularly would poll between 30%-45% now

would consider 25% a good result and governments are led by parties who have a lower percentage of voters than previously considered. For example, in Spain the Socialist PSOE formed a government after the 2019 election despite getting one of the lowest shares of the vote in its history and in Ireland Fianna Fail, a party that traditionally never fell below 40%, now struggles to even be the largest party in the Dail and in the 2020 election owed its status as the largest party to the failure of Sinn Fein to stand enough candidates. As noted by Marsh et al. in 2017 with the example of Fianna Fail, children do not feel the same pressure to vote as their parents and this has led to the fragmentation of the party's base (particularly in a catch-all party like Fianna Fail but it is noticeable elsewhere). 'If the root causes that generated electoral divisions have disappeared parental and other socialising transmission of political preferences does not extend to emotional depth and conviction with which these preferences are held in later generations' (Marsh et al., 2017: 47). In fact, in modern times not only has party identity weakened but some academics describe the idea that party loyalty even exists for voters as 'not only unrealistic but theoretically problematic' (Plescia, 2017: 59). Combined with mass media and, later, the internet, party members could no longer be relied on to be follow the party doctrine and to start pushing for a role in policymaking. However, political parties still rely on members to serve as foot soldiers for their campaigns, meaning that this loss of membership presents a clear challenge as 'members are still an important asset for party organizations in order to strengthen their electoral performance and competitive advantages' (Lisi and Cancela, 2017: 390).

The idea of mass parties only representing cleavages has begun to decline recently. 'The decline of industrial production started reshaping class structures, increased educational attainment heightened independence and analytical capabilities of voters, and the proliferation of diverse media greatly diversified the potential sources of information' (Rovny and Whitefield, 2019: 7).

These issues began to open a rift with traditional party members as party leaders (particularly on the left) took a liberal position which may have been at odds with their more traditionally-minded base (Dalton, 2018). Additionally, with the rise of the populist fringe movement, right-wing parties have also seen the appeal of populism as a vote-targeting strategy and have agreed to empower their populist factions in an attempt to win elections, as the ÖVP did with Sebastian Kurz by

offering him the leadership, providing elite buy-in for his populist faction. As a result mainstream parties tend to look for new issues to build a winning coalition overall. They may try to 'engage new political issues so as to incorporate them into their profile' (Rovny and Whitefield, 2019: 7), with examples being the environment and LGBTQ rights on the left and immigration and abortion rights on the right. This may be akin to the evolution of church-secular cleavages to employer-worker cleavages as we saw in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries where parties mapped one cleavage onto another. It may be that as was the case then, it is the same now, where 'historical divides...are replaced with novel political contests' (Rovny and Polk, 2018: 14). The emergence of new parties also led to greater levels of instability in the political system, with more parties competing for votes.

In proportional systems, where new parties face fewer obstacles to electoral success, alliances and mergers became more common. Party members and supporters found that 'the electoral alternatives on the ballot are no longer fixed or presented as such...but need to be actively sought out and cognitively constructed instead' (Marinova, 2017: 37). This has exacerbated the departure of these traditional constituencies from the party membership ranks as parties faced the choice of either maintaining their support amidst 'the decline in the industrial working class and the labor movement' (Rovny and Whitefield, 2019: 8) and risk becoming irrelevant or attempting to reinvent themselves to new cleavages which runs the risk of alienating their bedrock support and causing those to leave the party. Therefore, parties attempt 'to strategically affect the way the public responds' in response to these changes (De Vries and Solaz, 2019: 72). To do this they 'avoid pure partisan campaign strategies and campaign instead...to mobilise as many voters as possible' (Borges and Turgeon, 2017: 193). They attempt to create these new coalitions which may lead to their existing membership leaving them, as seen by the defection of many German Social Democratic Party activists to the Left Party during the Chancellorship of Gerhard Schröder often for new parties that emerge or break away from existing ones.



One outcome may be is that a cycle forms, of parties merging and splitting off from each other, which amplifies the power of the political elites that are instrumental to such mergers and splits. In the case of a party merger there are multiple sets of elites (one from each of the parties that are merging) who will determine the nature and platform of the new party, and thus such a platform will be built on compromise. Elites that do not get their policy preferences brought in the new platform may also play a large role in splitting these parties. In this new environment 'regular citizens need to do more of the work in acquiring, attributing, and processing electoral information' (Marinova, 2017: 67) due to the volatility of parties merging and splitting more frequently. Since the existing political parties are in a more unstable area and cannot rely on large bases of support, with party members 'able to leave without pain or regret' (Ignazi, 2018: 10), they change and with that citizens who previously used the parties to point their political compass must seek other options, leading to further removal of parties from politics and a further exodus of members.

In this age of relatively lower party memberships, where even the comparative heights of British Party membership in the 1950s, Scarrow notes that, interestingly, at the same time the rights of party members were growing. 'Individual party members have been gaining political rights at the same time that numerical strength is eroding' (Scarrow, 2015: 2). Due to these changes, political parties are moving away from their original models of being leadership-based with their membership expected to turn up and get out the vote, which has been the traditional Michels and Duverger based view, of an elite-dominated and oligarchical party, to what Scarrow describes as a 'more individualistic model' (Scarrow, 2015: 207). The members now have more power, over leadership (e.g. the Conservative Party allowing their membership to vote on the final two candidates in their leadership election), policy formulation (e.g. Refounding Labour), and party direction. These new members are few and demand more of a say within the structures of the party. This is particularly present on the left, which has been more pro-active in enfranchising their membership than the right, especially within Western European nations. For example, after the 2013 election, the Australian Labor Party enfranchised their members to vote in subsequent leadership elections, a right that had previously only been entrusted to their parliamentarians.

That is not to say, however, that party elites still don't hold power, especially over policy formation. Yet, the elite's ability to choose the leadership and the elected individuals of the party has weakened. The tension between the leadership, who must listen to members, and the other parts of the party oligarchy has led to reforms to party structure. Gauja (2017) notes that while the rank-and-file membership on its own cannot overcome the party elite when leaders themselves are committed to reform then the changes are more likely to happen. However, since elites are so dedicated to holding onto their power the changes end up providing members with more power over choosing the leader as the leader may seek to use the membership to settle factional disputes. Cross et al (2016) argue the membership's power over choosing the leadership is identified as 'the principal, and sometimes the only way in which members actively participate in public life' (p. 121). They go on to state that 'through candidate and leadership selection, party members are able to engage indirectly with policy development' (Cross et al., 2016). Therefore, choosing leaders and elected officials becomes a major way for party members to determine or change the direction of the party. This provides an opportunity, particularly on the left, for fringe or populist movements within the party to gain power, by championing discontent with the current leadership and promising either further enfranchisement, or a policy platform that is more palatable to the rank and file. Additionally, since reform can only be enacted if it has the leader's blessing members are more likely to elect a leader who appears to support the changes they call for but cannot enact themselves (Gauja, 2017). It is also possible to see this on the right, particularly within the British Conservatives, but since right-wing parties are more hesitant about enfranchising members, populists within their parties must find different ways of taking the reins. Additionally such changes to parties often transform the way these parties are organised and the relationships between the rank and file and the elites, which can produce 'secondary effects on attitudes and behaviours of party members and elites' (Wuttke, et. al., 2019: 817). Therefore, leadership contests can often be more about intra-party infighting than electoral considerations.

These new individualistic members tend to be from the extremes of the political parties, for example in France the membership of the Parti Socialiste picked the more left wing Benoît Hamon over the establishment Manuel Valls for their Presidential Candidate in 2017. Rather than entering

political parties reflexively due to cleavages and societal pressure (e.g. working class people joining a social democratic party through their union or middle-class churchgoers joining a christian democratic party), they are actively deciding to get involved. Their values have brought them to these parties and they wish to play a role in leadership selection and policy formation. Dalton described this as 'mobilization at the extremes' (Dalton, 2017: 198). These members, both on the left and on the right, tend to be from the upper-strata of society, having the resources to involve themselves in the party and may be engaged in other forms of civil activism; their 'participation in social groups may be extensive' (Dalton and Sin, 2008: 91). Gomez and Ramiro agree, noting that 'members are a group of disproportionately resourceful individuals, who are more likely than members to belong to civil society organizations, and to be male, highly educated, better off, and working in the public sector of the economy' (Gomez and Ramiro, 2017: 536). However, instead of being active in the party and engaging in the behaviour of traditional membership (canvassing, getting out the vote, telling at polling stations, etc.), they seek only to influence the party by choosing the candidates and the leadership. The abandonment of these 'traditional local party activities' (Dalton, et. al., 2013: 63) that 'have been undertaken virtually since the introduction of mass political campaigning' (Dalton, et. al., 2013: 63) has increased the divide between party elites, who seek election and engage in these traditional activities, and the new membership who do not and may be more ideological. Party elites therefore face a difficult choice between maintaining their party structure which allows them to campaign and not alienating the electorate in the process. 'Without organizations and activists, voters could never realise their electoral preferences. On the other hand, changing preferences, beliefs and attitudes among voters lead to opening of new organizational units' (Kawalerowicz, 2017: 228). Parties therefore find themselves in the position where the selection of candidates is in the hands of a small group of ideological extremists who therefore may pick candidates who are not in a position to maximise votes and gain office, and due to the increased powers that they are given, will exercise those powers against the wishes of the party elites.

Despite this broader trend to give members more power, 'these initiatives may create new conflicts within party organisations, not least because the new forms of affiliation are layered on top of traditional membership structures' (Scarrow, 2015: 207). Despite the new individualistic member model that Scarrow discusses, many of the party structures tend to be based in the old oligarchical system, largely to maintain the party as an effective office-seeking organisation. According to Michels and Duverger, this oligarchical system is a necessary condition of the party seeking power and therefore, the party will naturally be reluctant to shed it. However, with members demanding more of a say and having more influence to change the party this causes a natural tension between the party leadership, who may favour the oligarchical model, and the membership, who wish for a more democratic structure.

Additionally, elites, who wish to maintain the party as an office-seeking organisation and thus favour vote-maximisation may seek to take policy positions that are opposed by the bulk of this new, active membership. Given that party elites will always be looking to the next election the party must appeal beyond their base as 'a stable base of partisans never constitutes an electoral majority' (Lupu, 2016: 252) they must prioritise 'short term, national electoral gains' over 'long-term repercussions for the party brand' (Lupu, 2016: 252). This is especially true in the modern day, where unsuccessful parties leaders who seek to lead the government are expected to resign. The membership may react by seeking different leadership choices who will be closer to their (more extreme) views and will at least pay lip-service to taking those ideas on board, given that the party elites are still unwilling to let them have any meaningful say. Given that these parties lack the ability to respond to this frustration due to their need to secure a broad-ranging coalition the membership becomes increasingly frustrated at this lack of power which will then lead to 'a new dimension of political choice' (Evans and Mellon, 2019: 80). Factions who are excluded from the leadership and find themselves at odds with them may rise to prominence by mobilising these groups and changing the debate to one about party democracy and the influence of members. By presenting a populist discourse and allying themselves against the party elite, they can gain votes and support and therefore – ultimately - the leadership of the party through the promise of a truly democratic party. This is particularly true on the left where members have tended to be more enfranchised, meaning that leadership contests in left-wing parties are the main area where intra-

party tensions can be aired, and excluded factions may use such contests as a way of furthering their agenda on the back of intra-party tensions between the elite and the rank-and-file membership. The first obvious case of the membership imposing a candidate on elites was in 1972 where Democrats through the primary system picked George McGovern, a marginalised figure in the party due to his more extreme stances, due to him appealing directly to the membership over elites.

Dissatisfied members will see a leadership election with a figures speaking directly to them as an opportunity to remove what they see as these unrepresentative elites. Birch and Dennison describe such leadership elections as a chance to protest as 'an expression of dissatisfaction with the political elite's consensus on certain issues and/or with the perceived manners, lifestyles, and attitudes of incumbent politicians as a group' (Birch and Dennison, 2017: 111). As seen in the Democratic primaries of 1972, this can be a compelling strategy that leads to overall victory for these populist factions. George McGovern made a platform of immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, amnesty for draft evaders, and defence cuts, in the face of the party elite who were worried such actions would further alienate voters in the Deep South. Furthermore, his supporters made a virtue of his outsider status, his lack of connections to big money, and his different nature to other politicians. His campaign was able to draw on the dissatisfaction with the Democratic establishment, who were accused of parachuting candidates in, of fixing contests to their liking, and his supporters believed that he would be different. As a result within the Democrats, but also in other mainstream parties, 'the gap between party camps is increasing on issues that are at the core of contemporary political debate' (Dalton, 2013: 48).

With the increased power of members tending towards the more frequent election of populist leadership candidates, and polarization of political parties, as seen in nations like America where even the most conservative Democrat is to the left of the most liberal Republican, support for mainstream parties may drop. The traditional voters of the party, who may not be the same as the new membership, may feel disillusioned and stop actively supporting the party. Ignazi points out 'the inclusion of larger numbers of members (and even supporters) in the

selection process has not increased the attractiveness of the party, either in terms of membership, or in terms of higher involvement, or, finally, in terms of confidence' (Ignazi, 2018: 13). Their perception of the party and its leadership may be that it is no longer the party they initially supported, and that it is spending its time on issues that are not close to their hearts, or may even be against their interests. The party must therefore contend with building a different coalition of supporters that is more volatile and able to change. They find themselves 'regularly redefining and remobilizing new networks of activists and supporters' (Carty, 2015: 31).

In this situation, we may see an increase in citizens who do not have a natural political party with which they can closely identify. This creates a cycle, where voters feel less attached to their traditional political party and thus do not get involved, those who do get involved are politically more extreme, demand power from the leadership and use that power to select leaders who are not in step with the average party voter, leading more of the latter to become disillusioned and even disengage in the political process. For example, going back to the example of 1972, George McGovern won the Democratic primaries through the aforementioned activist support in a backlash against the establishment, but went down to a historic defeat against Richard Nixon. 'The decline in political support has been accompanied by decreasing involvement in the electoral process' (Dalton, 2007: 174). This is compounded by the increasing importance attached to political leaders. With the decline of knee-jerk, cleavage-based political support elections are becoming more presidential in scope and leaders are placed under increased scrutiny. This is exacerbated by changes in coverage, both with the rise of social media putting more focus on the leaders of parties over the parties themselves, and with mainstream media also covering elections as contests between leaders. Dalton argues that people 'build leader personalities into their voting calculations' (Dalton, 2011: 147). Therefore, the importance of the leader will not just be from a Michelsian party elite view, where the leader is dominant due to the party's control by its elites (which a party leader must, by definition, be), but from an electoral standpoint and membership standpoint due to the view that the leader is the standard-bearer for their party. Therefore, an extreme leader will give the impression to the typical identifying voter that the party has become more extreme and less representative. Additionally, a leader who has captured the

hearts of the party electorate will be able to mobilize them in support of their agenda as they can present themselves as the fighter against the entrenched party elite, and the representative of the views of the membership. Therefore, leaders, as figures elevated above the status of first amongst equals, both in the eyes of the public and with the party membership, may be able to force their ideas upon the party over the objections of party elites. This allows further weakening of the idea of parties as a group of factions where all views have to be balanced.

Therefore, as we explore party factions and the effects of populist factions, we have to use this new framework, of alienation of members from party elites, and of polarising political parties catering more to members than to their target voters to examine their actions. Parties now tend to have a smaller and more extreme membership who eschew the traditional roles of party members and seek far more of a say in the mechanisms of policymaking and leadership selection, as demonstrated by Scarrow (2015). Even recently, when parties have stated that they have seen growth in their membership, the numbers still are smaller than they were in the 1950s and 60s, though in the 2010s there was a trend of growth to levels even above the 1980s (though below the historical peak). These more extreme members have worked to exacerbate the divide between party memberships and party voters, against the wishes of the more elite-driven party apparatus that has existed traditionally within parties, which tends to be vote-seeking, causing issues between those who wish to win majorities and members who wish to see certain policies regardless of how popular they may be. The tension between the party membership and party apparatus has empowered populist factions who have not been traditionally involved in party decision-making to forge an alliance with these members and use the new powers of the membership to gain control and empower their leaders once they gain control.

## What is Populism?

Populism in the main public discourse and debate is a term that is used regularly but is often ill defined. Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser describe it as a 'contested concept' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017: 7). To many observers, it conjures images of extreme parties (mostly on the right), for instance the Front (or *Rassemblement*) National in France, and it is often used as a pejorative term. 'Most authors...link populism to negative aspects of politics such a

demagoguery and opportunism, and stress the negative effects of populists on contemporary liberal democracies' (De Lange and Mudde, 2005: 480). The phrase has re-entered the political lexicon largely due to 'the rise of the New Right and flash parties in Europe, especially those headed by charismatic party leaders' (Dalton, 2014: 103). Indeed, some definitions regard populism as 'a specific form or style instead of a specific ideology...to distinguish modern from traditional parties of the extreme right' (Mudde, 2002: 21). Mudde and Emma Ambrose note that populism has now been used in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to describe what was called the extreme right in the 1980s and radical right in the 1990s (Mudde and Ambrose, 2015). Yet, populism is also found on the far left as well. 'Elements of social populism can also be found in some of the "orthodox" communist parties' (March and Mudde, 2005: 36). In fact even after March and Mudde's work left-wing populist parties emerged in the aftermath of the global recession of 2008, including Podemos in Spain and SYRIZA in Greece. This seems to recognise populism is not exclusively a product of the radical right and that the definition above is not fully describing this phenomenon. A different description is 'non-ideological politicians and parties who seem to be driven by...the quest to tell voters what they want to hear' (Eatwell and Mudde, 2004: 86). This definition seems to decouple populism from the radical right, by stripping it of an ideological centre, which goes some way to reconcile its existence on the hard left.

Despite the potential for ideological decoupling, Mudde and Roveira Kaltwasser insist on using an ideological lens for populism and state that such a view is most commonly used in academia. Therefore, their description of it is 'a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite" and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (Mudde and Roveira Kaltwasser, 2017: 9). The elites are described as the enemies of the people 'charged with being, at best, distant from the people and incompetent (and at worst, downright corrupt)' (Marzouki, et. al., 2016: 19). This definition allows for an ideological lens to be applied to populism, while reconciling the idea that it is found on all parts of the political



spectrum. Populism can be found anywhere and 'can be easily combined with very different... other ideologies including communism, ecologism, nationalism, or socialism' (Mudde, 2004). Yet, what it has as a common core is a disdain of elitism. Mudde elaborates on his definition by saying 'the ideological feature of populism can only be studied through its anti-elite or anti-establishment side' (Mudde, 2010: 1168).

Mudde and Roveira Kaltwasser also mention that most populist parties are new and largely leader driven. Even populist parties on the left, such as Podemos, who attempt to avoid personalism still see a large level of control by their leaders who instead of being given absolute power in the party statute, rely on knowledge of the rules to implement their power: 'the "rules" are always chosen and imposed without discussion by the leader himself: they are therefore a means by which he maintains command over the party' (Tronconi, 2015: 130). However, alongside new populist parties that have burst on the scene, Mudde and Roveira Kaltwasser also mention the 'increasingly common trajectory' of populist leaders taking over nonpopulist parties and transforming them, such as Jörg Haider with the FPÖ in Austria, Christopher Blocher with the SVP in Switzerland, or Viktor Orban with Fidesz in Hungary (Mudde and Roveira Kaltwasser, 2017: 28). Bergmann agrees that 'Some of the populist parties finding success...were established before, sometimes initially as mainstream parties, only later turning populist' (Bergmann Einarsson, 2017: 37). Given that current literature does not differentiate between parties that have always been populist, such as the FPÖ in Austria, and those who have become populist, such as the Rassemblement National there is a gap in how previously purely mainstream parties become populist. In doing so, instead of seeking to cover a variety of issues that had high salience these parties followed a model of appealing to their core electorate and weaponising anti-elitism. Given the important role of factions based around leaders, as detailed by Michels and Duverger, examining populist factions in mainstream parties may provide some insight as to how parties transition to being outwardly populist.

This ideological view of populism allows for clear case studies to be made and definitions to be drawn. All political parties to some extent indulge in promises that may be seen as populist.

Therefore, the ideological view allows us to define groups as populist using criteria other than policies. As recognised by Mudde and De Lange, the term 'populist' is often levelled at any political figure as a way of demonising them. At the same time defining populism as being merely a phenomenon of the extreme right seems to ignore other examples. Therefore, faced with the need to define populism and its existence across the political spectrum, the definition given by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser probably is the best one to utilise. This allows the research to cover different areas of the political spectrum (left and right) and allows us to more easily identify leaders within a political party (leaders who may have factions, in line with the Michels and Duverger view of factionalism) as being populist or not, and therefore be able to isolate populist factions as opposed to non-populist ones.

The Mudde definition is not without its detractors, such as Aslanidis (2015) who argues that the idea of a thin-centred ideology allows too much leeway and is too general to provide a clear discussion of what populism is. In fact Aslanidis argues that populism is more of a discourse than an ideology. As an even stronger disagreement with Mudde scholars like Ernesto Laclau (2007) even describe it as a speech form or method of articulating politics. This non ideological view seems to believe that populism is a tool rather than a belief of those who follow it, a means to gain power rather than a view of how politics and policy should be applied. While these views have their own merits this thesis prefers the Mudde definition as it is the most widely used one and most accurately reflects the actions of populist parties. While it may be true that politicians may use populist rhetoric while not being populist themselves, there are undoubtedly some politicians and parties who truly believe and call for weakening of elites and support for the people in an ideological manner, such as the Five Star Movement, who use polls on their website to make policy (Tronconi, 2015). Therefore Mudde's definition allows us to differentiate between politicians who use populist rhetoric and true populists who ideologically believe in anti-elitism and supporting the virtuous people.

## Framework for Factionalism

Political parties are not monolithic. Within each party there are different groups that identify with the overall ideas of the party but may disagree on how best to implement those ideas and some

even that wish to overthrow the party entirely and replace it. Often the disagreements will come from different party leaders and their supporters. The intraparty groups that coalesce around these leaders can be described as factions. This idea is echoed by those who study electoral politics and political parties. Bale, for example, in his examination of the Conservative Party noted 'firstly...party politics, indeed all politics, is essentially the interaction of interests, institutions, and, of course, individuals' (Bale, 2016a: 35). Michels, in his analysis of political parties even titled his chapter on factions within political parties as 'The Struggle Amongst Leaders Themselves'. Michels holds that factionalism comes from two main areas, ideological differences within the party held by party leaders, and personal differences between party leaders (Michels, 1968). An example perhaps of such ideological differences could be the disagreements within the French Parti Socialiste in the late 80s and early 90s between Laurent Fabius and Michel Rocard on the direction of the French economy, while personal differences can be exemplified by the rivalry between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama to be the presidential candidate in 2008. In both these examples the individuals involved could claim followings within the party, with politicians and members identifying themselves as on the Rocard, Fabius, Clinton, or Obama wing of the party, indicating that factions do have a connection to a leader or figure within the party. Therefore, when examining factions, it is important to consider individuals and their work within parties. However, often individuals do not wish to be seen as purely factional and may often take up a previous figure's mantle as faction leader, rather than form a new faction on their own. Therefore, rather than having one faction for every local party broker, it is possible to regard the party as consisting of a few powerful factions that make the study of factionalism possible. Therefore, we can argue that factions largely are bodies who are centred around a party elite or elites who compete within the oligarchic framework of the party for intra-party supremacy. Factional conflict based on interests and ideology can be different to personal conflict between leaders, as one involves a fundamental disagreement about the direction of the party, while the other is more personal and may abate somewhat when the leaders of these factions retire from political life. Therefore, the methods of managing dissent are different for each type of factional conflict

## The trouble with identifying factions

While the image presented of factions may be two groups or individuals and their followers locked in a struggle for dominance within a political party, often parties will actively attempt not to make the struggles too visible, which makes it difficult to always identify or discuss them. Parties place a 'premium on the appearance of unity' (Cowley, 2005: 40) and do not want to appear divided.

Factions that attempt to defect are often 'targeted...remorselessly, under the radar, using social media, direct mail, phone calls, and canvassing' (Cowley and Kavangah, 2016: 81). Parties do not want to show their divisions to the public as they are punished when they appear disunited.

'Cohesive parties appear more convincing to voters, giving voters clearer understanding of party policy, implying higher level of party accountability and electoral rewards' (Kukec, 2019). This is especially true where parties 'place more emphasis on issues which their elites have homogenous preferences about' and 'place less emphasis over policy issues over which their candidates hold heterogenous preferences' (Steiner and Mader, 2017: 686-687).

Along with the need for unity and the desire to hold office, factions are often hard to identify and observe because they may not be openly discussed or observable. Parties do not wish to admit splits as that would undermine their need to appear united. DiSalvo states that factions have 'negative qualities associated with them' (DiSalvo, 2012: 47). DiSalvo describes factions as 'diffuse networks' and their 'rules, norms, and processes are harder to distinguish' (DiSalvo, 2012: 47). Even in parties where they are more apparent 'the existing leadership seeks to settle internal disputes by reaching compromises that satisfy the greatest share of activists' (Ceron and Greene, 2019: 702). He credits these two factors as being reasons why factions are not understood or studied in detail. He also discusses the presence of non-elected officials who are often ignored by commentators but may still be of importance to their followers as further reasons why factions are ignored as they may subvert what many consider to be fundamental structures of political parties (DiSalvo, 2012). In the face of this it may be difficult to define a faction, as the definition of

a group being the followers of an individual is not comprehensive (as not every individual can lead a faction) and given the onus on unity party leaders will attempt to hide any such divisions.

## What is a faction?

Despite the difficulties, DiSalvo gives four criteria that can be used to identify factions within a political party, which will serve as this thesis's definition of a faction. He defines factions as 'a party subunit that has (1) the ideological consistency, (2) the organizational capacity, and (3) the temporal durability to (4) undertake significant actions to shift a party's agenda priorities and reputation' (DiSalvo, 2012: 50). These criteria fit in with Michels's view of factions coming from ideological differences. However, the description of a faction as the followers of an individual member of the party elite in the party, advanced by Michels may seem to be incompatible with this definition, as leaders, by definition, do not necessarily have temporal durability; eventually all leaders fade. Duverger manages to reconcile this inconsistency through arguing that while factions may initially be comprised of followers of one individual, they become doctrinal over time (Duverger, 1954), for example Rockefeller Republicans continued to exist in the Republicans even after Nelson Rockefeller left active politics. Disciples of one leader may end up taking the reins of the faction that has grown around their mentor.

Duverger further hammers home the idea of factions as elite-driven and individually led by describing them as 'not a sign of the liberty of members and a weakening in the authority of leaders; rather does it point to differences of opinion between members of the ruling class' (Duverger, 1954: 105). This also fits in with Michels's iron law of oligarchy, which states that organised parties are ruled by a group of elites (Michels, 1968). Therefore, it seems reasonable to identify factions as groups formed by individual elites, which obey the four criteria identified by DiSalvo, and pass on the leadership of those groups to other elites as time progresses. It is worth noting that these elites may not think of themselves as elites or see the factional structure as a positive note. Some more populist groups may believe that other factions are contributing to the domination of the party by elites, and see their role to change that and be the group that allows the party to speak.

An example of this can be found in America where followers of George McGovern gravitated to Jesse Jackson, then Howard Dean, and then Bernie Sanders. These four men came from the same tendency in the Democrats and from the same factional group; they are just the new leaders, who have similar ideologies, organisations to help them, and through handing the baton of leadership to each other (though not by any formal structure), aim to change the party. This fits the four criteria listed by DiSalvo.

While this definition is strong, it does require a party to have existed for long enough for the temporal durability criteria to exist. In new parties this framework would be more difficult to operate as the factions would not have existed for long and may just be camps around the founding leaders of the party. This is especially prescient in newer democracies or in proportional systems where the costs of founding a new party are smaller than in majoritarian or hybrid systems, meaning that it may be harder to track factionalism in those systems. However, within the Labour Party and most established Western European democracies (along with Japan, America, and Canada) this definition serves well.

## How do factions operate within political parties?

Duverger views the formation of factions as inevitable within a political party. 'The structure of the party favours the development of cliques' (Duverger, 1954: 52). The presence of multiple leaders within most political parties means that factions will develop to support those leaders and their ideologies and propagate new leaders down the line. However, this development comes at odds with the party's need to appear united and engage in its office-seeking nature. Sjöblom even notes that these factions, which may be naturally occurring, also may present a threat to the party. 'The existence of such fractions, where there are violent internal conflicts, can greatly increase the risk of a party break up' (Sjöblom, 1968). Consequently, a tension exists between the natural development of factions as part of the way a party is run, and the need for the party to appear and remain united. This tension is managed by most parties, as splits tend not to happen with regularity. '[Splits] occurred in a small number of parties in a number of countries...and these splits have been compensated for by the reunification of previously disunited parties' (Blondel,

1978). Blondel is still largely right to this day, as some major parties in the UK, France, and Germany have existed for over 100 years, such as the SPD, or the Conservatives, or the Parti Socialiste (the latter has changed its name). In fact, Blondel even says that factions are 'one way of bringing an element of cohesion to politics' (Blondel, 1978). In dominant-party systems, factions can often take the form of sub-parties within the dominant one and 'compete with each other for influence in a way that has some resemblance to the jostling for influence found between parties' (Ware, 1996). For example, the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party has well-defined factions that exist within its structure. Ware argues that 'intra-party competition...sustained factionalism by providing a forum in which the various factions could take on their opponents' (Ware, 1996). Given that the LDP is so large, having factions is beneficial for it as it is a method of attracting different strands of society to its banner. Close and Gherghina agree generally about factions in other countries and also list several other services factions provide such as offering 'a greater "voicing" power than individualised forms of dissent...express policy disagreement, impact the distribution of resources' in a constructive rather than destructive way allowing for 'ideological debates, leadership renewal, and so on' (Close and Gherghina, 2019). However, as seen with the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the 1980s, if factions don't get their way they can exit the party and form a new one.

In multi-party systems, factions may not openly compete in the public arena, but they can often be used and advertised by parties claiming to be a broad tent, particularly but not exclusively in 2 party systems and hoping to attract members and supporters. Therefore, this tension is resolved by factions being 'authoritarian in structure' (Duverger, 1954). Factions in successful parties are allowed to jostle for influence but they subscribe to a set of norms and rules, often set by the party in general, that allows for these disagreements and ideological discussions to be had in a way that all have their chance to have their say and attempt to hold influence. However, they all agree that the decision agreed upon by the party through those mechanisms are final and will adhere to them in order to present a united front, which is maintained by discipline from the heads of the factions down to the members who follow them, in order to fulfil the office-seeking directive of the party. Therefore, while the factions exist the party can appear united and not internally at odds, which is appealing to the electorate, while still placating their constituent groups and

leaders through the mechanisms of the party that are agreed to by factions. If factions are unable to placate their groups, then the unity the party strives for may not exist.

Despite the idea of all decisions being final and factions being authoritarian, if the rank and file of a faction disagrees very strongly with one decision, then it may be hard to keep them in line. For example, when the Conservative Party was in opposition from their defeat in 1997 to 2010, for all but 5 years of that time they could be seen as being clearly divided. The three leaders before Cameron were clearly Thatcherites, but managed to bring in more One-Nation Tories to the frontbench. Yet, the divisions between One-Nation Tories and Thatcherites (or wets and dries, or mods and rockers as they would all be called) were apparent and obvious to the voting public and even though the factional leaders were publicly accepting most of the decisions being made, they were either unable or unwilling to ensure that their factions would do the same and keep them from expressing their anger in public forums.

Sometimes, though, the disunity does not just come from factional rank and file, but from the leadership as well. Some factions may not be content with these rules and norms set by the party but want to remain within it. They may end up questioning these decisions publicly and expressing their discontent. In this case these factions, as Cowley and Kavanagh pointed out, may be pushed to the side within their party. Rather than being part of the big tent and invited to the table of decision making they are kept on the fringe and it is made clear that they have no power within the party. For example, George McGovern and his faction (carried on by other Democrats later on) very publicly disagreed with the moderate factions in the Democrats such as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton particularly over free trade and, even though those two leaders became President and were able to find agreement from most other factions, the McGovernites continued to oppose free trade and their subsequent leaders continued to oppose key Democrat initiatives like NAFTA. This is an example of a party faction that refuses to engage in these rules and norms and does not seem to place the same premium on unity as its other factions. As a result the moderate factions within the DNC have tried to relegate people close to Bernie Sanders (the spiritual heir to this movement) to the fringes of the party; their members would get less DNC money, face more primary challenges, and be less likely to gain leadership positions. Therefore, those factions that operate outside the rules and norms set by the party tend to be shunned. On



the other hand, the factions that are shunned, when they do gain the leadership may be less willing to play by the established rules and norms, viewing them as the constructions of a previous elite that makes it harder for them to thrive, at least until they can gain control of the party machinery and bend those rules to their interests.

## How do factions gain control of a political party?

In Riker's discussion of Heresthetics, one of the key examples he gives is how the Founding Fathers of America managed to agree on how to choose the President (through the creation of the electoral college and not by appointment from the legislature as some wanted). Riker states that those who wanted a separation of powers 'adopted a rhetorical stance and hammered at it until they were successful' (Riker, 1984: 15). Within the framework of a party, factions will try to structure the discussion around certain issues, so they can win the debate around them. As a result of this sometimes some factions will be successful in wresting control of their party from the former dominant group. The newly found issue-space will play to their strengths in intra-party contests and through winning elections to roles within the party as well as the leadership, a new faction is able to take over. They often aim to do this by creating alliances with other factions. For example, within the Democratic Party, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) allied with the CIO Union to build institutional support for civil rights, which led to the rise of politicians like Hubert Humphrey who were both strong trade unionists and fervent supporters of civil rights (Baylor, 2018). These factional alliances end up 'disaggregating parties into their true raw ingredients – the selection of group issue positions and allies' (Baylor, 2018: 77). When this happens, they can use the institutions that are available to provide their structure and prioritise their issues. Often, to make this happen, this faction, that was formerly the losing group that did not control their party, must change the discourse in order to allow themselves to take control and steer the party in a different direction. If the losing faction can 'restructure issue-space so it can win' (McLean, 2002: 540) then once it wins it can change the party to better reflect the issues that it cares about. However, upon doing this and becoming the dominant faction it will fall victim to the 'continuous struggle in the Party between the leaders and

(some of) the led' (Richards, 1964: 76). It then becomes incumbent on the party to manage these factions to avoid a public split. Often the method of doing this is by ensuring that every other faction is involved and can be consulted on issues that are not so central to the party but are important to them.

For example, when Tony Blair became the leader of the Labour Party, he allowed Gordon Brown to have control of the Treasury, while he focused on Foreign and Home affairs. Through doing this he was able to ensure unity within the party, while maintaining his leadership. Since Brown was more interested in economic affairs than Blair, he could manage the Brownites by giving them that portfolio and ensuring that they would support his leadership. Additionally, both men had to keep the more traditional Labour factions in line, which obliged them 'to fund and provide public services and social welfare in an attempt to reform, in some measure, the socio-economic situation that they had inherited from the Conservatives' (Bailey et al., 2014: 105). The leader then has 'a responsibility for aggregating, accommodating, and articulating the party's basic orientations and policy commitments' (Carty, 2015: 91).

However, there are examples of some factions that do not value unity who are able to take control of the party through re-organising the issue-space. For example, in 2016, largely due to his belief in strong immigration control Donald Trump managed to win the Republican nomination and be elected President of the United States. He was not aligned to any major faction of the GOP and clearly did not value unity as he did not commit to voting for any of his rivals for the nomination if he did not win and received almost no endorsements for the nomination. However, since he was able to appeal to the party's selectorate with hardline views on issues like immigration and the culture war discourse which the Republicans wanted to move away from after their defeat in 2012, he was able to become the nominee. Even though he did pick many Republicans for his Cabinet from mainstream factions, he would ignore them and fire them quickly, with his Cabinet at the end being filled with people who agreed with him. Therefore, situations like this can occur, where outsider factions gain control and do not seek to share power. Furthermore, where there is increased focus on the membership in choosing the leaders, these leaders may claim their

mandate comes directly from the membership and thus ignore or sideline elements of the party machine that contain their critics.

Often times as well leaders may believe that they are the reason that they are in power and thus consider their faction to be indebted to them, while the faction feels it is doing most of the work to maintain the leader's office. For example, in some parties it is clearly the personal mandate of a leader that has enabled their rise to the leadership, rather than any factional dynamics. Barack Obama for example was largely given the nomination on the back of his personality, rather than backing from any faction of democrats. On the other hand, in other parties the rise of certain politicians is more obviously done through a faction, as for example, was the elevation of Michel Rocard to the premiership. Additionally, times where the leadership is viewed to be less in control is when there is greater factional strife within the party. When the leadership appears to be winning then they will be more obviously in control and no one will wish to challenge them. However, an event that undermines confidence in the leadership, or a particularly bad election defeat will allow for factions that are out of power to make a more obvious case for change.

Finally, factions do not need to be large to gain control of a party. A unified small faction can overcome a divided larger faction due to being more organised and having a clear plan for what the party should look like. For example, in the US, there were very few elected Republicans that supported Trump but due to divisions amongst both mainstream Republicans and the religious right, who are the main two factions, Trump's more populist appeal was able to rise and win the primaries.

## Factional Management in Parties

Given how political parties tend to be broad churches and their 'support is elastic to changing strategic party appeals' (Kitschelt et al., 1999: 67), a dominant faction has to consider how it manages the other groups that make up the party, to avoid splitting or otherwise damaging the organisation so that the party can remain electorally viable and successful in its legislative endeavours (Koger, Masket, and Noel, 2009). Parties that are seen as divided often do not do well in elections and may face difficulties governing. 'Factionalized parties are disadvantaged in

the process of government formation' (Ceron, 2016: 803). For example, one particular problem is that those factions that lose out in a leadership election 'are unlikely to participate in crucial forms of campaign activism' (Cross and Pruysers, 2017: 490) especially if they are not reached out to. Therefore, the party must develop mechanisms for handling dissent and ensure that disagreements are thrashed out peaceably behind closed doors. They also need to make sure they 'integrate losers into the party more broadly and to keep these members engaged and active in party affairs' (Cross and Pruysers, 2017: 490). Dissent can take multiple forms, from voiced disagreements with the direction of party policy, working against the leadership of the party to change course or even change the leader, or even attempts to use party mechanisms and rules to oppose the leadership. Dissent within a political party is defined as the holding and expression of opinions that vary from those collectively agreed by the party.

In describing the struggle for such hegemony, Zariski comments that 'any meaningful analysis... must take into account the relationship between the party, the various structural and functional components of the party organization, and the interest groups which seek to influence party decisions' (Zariski, 1960: 29). Furthermore, Carroll and Kubo say that party unity is 'due to the effects of intraparty competition on how party discipline is enforced' (Carroll and Kubo, 2017: 252). Therefore, when examining how parties manage dissent we must look at their organisation and institutions as those are key mechanisms for keeping the party together. 'Party organizational arrangements have a big role to play in the management of factionalism' (Boucek, 2009: 475). It is important to do so as if dissenting groups do not feel listened to they may make their opposition public, which will embarrass the party, or even cause a split. This is not always the case, sometimes, the dissenting factions do not wish to cause a change but just state their views in private and may agree to disagree. However, the threats of unmanaged dissent are large. Factions that take over therefore have to be able to assess the levels of and manage dissent, which they seem to do through the tools that Cowley and Kavanagh as well as Hassell have written about. In addition, Lynch and Whittaker identify seven methods of controlling the dissenters to such a stance: candidate selection, where factions can control which candidates are

chosen allowing them to elevate both their own supporters and supporters of cooperative factions while punishing dissenters; patronage, where factions can reward their followers and factions who choose not to dissent too loudly with high positions within the party; discipline, where factions can threaten to remove or defund dissenting factions; permitting low-cost dissent, allowing dissenting factions to register protests or vote against policy if they know that such a policy will pass; policy compromise, where factions will try to work with dissenting groups to find a middle ground that all sides can accept; deferred decisions, where factions agree not to make a decision in order to preserve party unity; pledging referendums, where instead of dealing with the issue internally the issue is put to the wider public; and issue salience, where factions attempt to demonstrate that their stance on the issue is the most favoured by the electorate and therefore most likely to yield benefits for the party (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). They have used these to define how the Conservative Party was able to unite around a soft Eurosceptic position.

## Two Case Studies

Two case studies of factionalism where previously out-of-power factions took over and how they then managed dissent, and which have been the subject of relatively detailed analysis are: 1) the British Conservatives during the 1990s and early 2000s as the party oscillated from the One-Nation approach of John Major to William Hague's more right leaning view and 2) the American Republicans during Newt Gingrich's takeover in the 1980s and 1990s. Both case studies are able to detail the organisation behind the factions that came to power as well as the actions they took. These parties managed to unite and even gain power, with both of them being currently in government in their respective nations. These have been covered by a number of books and articles, notably Bale (2016a) and Rosenfeld (2018).

The British Conservatives are a good example of the importance of managing dissent. Their defeat in 1997 was partly attributed to a perception of infighting (Bale, 2016a). Their electoral resurgence, which brought them back into government in 2010, was largely due to the method Cameron and his faction used to manage and control dissent on Europe (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). Cameron managed to bring the Tories back into power and keep them there, while still juggling the different factions that existed in his party (and for a time the Liberal Democrats as

well). Heppell discusses Cameron's 'ability to persuade (rhetoric) and manipulate (heresthetic) both his own parliamentary party and Liberal Democrats' (Heppell, 2013: 268). This is in contrast to the literature that discusses the fall of the Major government and Hague's rise, which manages to do a good job of demonstrating how Tory rebels made Major's life difficult, through 'the willingness of Conservative MPs to utilise...expanded media facilities to broadcast their differences' (Cowley and Norton, 1999: 102). Major, unlike Cameron, was unable to manage dissent effectively and maintain the idea that the Conservatives were a unified party, which was a one of many factors in both Major's faction and the Conservatives losing power. Garnett and Lynch (2003) do a good job of demonstrating how the more Thatcherite section of the Conservatives managed to gain power from Major and what they did once in power. Their choice, William Hague, was 'a product of the Thatcher years' (Garnett and Lynch, 2003: 99). They detail how he managed to become 'acceptable to a majority of MPs' (Garnett and Lynch, 2003: 87) and gain the support of eurosceptics as the candidate who could defeat Clarke. Further, once he became the leader, Garnett and Lynch discuss how he sided with the Thatcherite side on issues like Section 28, lower taxes, and - most importantly - Europe. This further division continued to damage the Tories and it was up to Cameron and his leadership to restore unity and unite the factions. Within the Conservatives we see the difficulties factions have in maintaining unity and managing dissent but at the same time how important it is to be able to do so and how parties who want to gain power must appear united, which Cameron was able to achieve, by bringing together the 'mods and rockers' and striking a balance between the two (Bale, 2016a: 98).

In the example of the American Republicans during the 1980s and 1990s, plenty of attention has been paid to how Newt Gingrich and the Conservative Opportunity Society managed to gain control of the Republican Party and how they managed dissent amongst liberal Republicans. Grossman and Hopkins (2016) detail how Gingrich managed to rise to power. They discuss his strategy of 'recruiting and training conservative candidates across the nation and mailing them audiotapes of messaging advice' (Grossman and Hopkins, 2016: 288) as well as climbing the Republican ladder and combatting Democrat politicians. They describe his

investigation into Jim Wright, the Democratic Speaker of the House, which caused him to resign on accounts of several Ethics violations, as completing his 'ascent from junior gadfly to leading figure' (Grossman and Hopkins, 2016: 289). They also demonstrate Gingrich's methods of furthering his influence in the Republicans through ensuring that 'Senate challengers with House experience received financial help from Gingrich' (Grossman and Hopkins, 2016: 291). Unlike the more established Thatcherite faction in the Conservative Party, Gingrich's movement was a more populist one that often saw itself at odds with the rest of the party leadership. In fact, Grossman and Hopkins discuss how Gingrich not only forced the resignation of Democratic speakers but also Republican leaders in the House so he could ascend.

The same populism appears to exist within the Tea Party. In her unpublished book, Rachel Blum admits 'Little attention has been paid to how the Tea Party has achieved this level of influence' (Blum, 2018a: 35). As with Gingrich, Blum details how the Tea Party tried to change the Republicans by 'pressuring the party anywhere it held power' (Blum, 2018b: 49). Republicans still by and large endorsed Tea Party figures like Sharron Angle and Christine O'Donnell when they were nominated. There is an interesting contrast with the UK Conservatives, a party locked in factional conflict which ended when a leader, who despite belonging to one particular faction, was able to manage dissent and balance the demands of the different groups to gain power. By contrast, the Republican Party confronted a new populist faction that did not place a premium on unity or seem willing to work with the other factions and yet the party did not suffer strong negative consequences for this disunity at the ballot box. Gingrich and the Tea Party have not only attempted to make things difficult for the opposing Republican factions they have actively targeted them, and yet the Republicans do not seem to have suffered for it. The Tea Party and Gingrich groups have evolved into the Trump faction, which despite losing a general election, is still seen as the dominant faction in the GOP and other Republicans feel the need to either pay them homage or not actively oppose them. This indicates that populist factions in mainstream parties are able to not only take over but potentially remake the party in their image under the right circumstances.

These case studies show that the idea of managing dissent, while important is not necessarily a requirement for being in government, nor is it sought after by all factions. The Conservative party serves as a useful example of why managing dissent is important, as it follows the traditional trajectory of only seeing electoral success once its factional issues were resolved. However, the Republican Party has not necessarily resolved these issues and they remain a successful party.

This inconsistency calls some of the theories espoused by Michels, Duverger, and DiSalvo about factionalism into doubt. One main difference between the two case study examples is that the Conservatives during the Major, Hague, Duncan Smith, and Howard years were engaged in a fight between two established factions, who, while they were clearly not united, still may have found themselves bound by the rules and norms mentioned above. Both groups had been in power within the party recently and had managed dissent from the other to provide a united front. Therefore, while they may not have succeeded in appearing united, they were still trying to play by the rules. Gingrich, on the other hand, was less willing to do so, as was the Tea Party. Their more populist factions did not seem to even care about the appearance of unity or managing dissent so unlike the Conservatives who could be said to be trying but failing to put on a united front and work out a deal with dissenters, the Republicans had a faction that was not even trying to secure the appearance of unity. The main difference between these two examples is that Gingrich and the Tea Party could effectively silence the party oligarchy and speak directly to the members, using them to remove Republicans who were obstructing their agenda in the primary system. Their rhetoric was far more populist, and this spoke directly to the Republican rank-and-file. The fact that Gingrich and the Tea Party are a more avowedly populist movement requires a level of examination of what populism is and how populist factions might be different from regular factions.

### **What is a populist faction within a political party?**

Based on the definition of populism above, combined with DiSalvo's definition of factionalism, we can conclude that a populist faction is a group within a party that believes in the antagonism between the elites and the people and argues/holds that the party has a duty to take the people's



side, has historical roots within the party, a desire to organise for intra-party elections, and a goal of moving the party towards taking what it sees as the people's side.

The ideology of the populist faction (DiSalvo's first point) lies within the Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser definition, of the struggle between the people and the elite. This faction believes that the party they are in is the best placed to be the champion of the people and to take their side and restore their will to pre-eminence. They may see other factions as being champions of the elite and abusing the thick-centred ideology the party subscribes to (e.g. socialism, conservatism, liberalism). They seek a return to what they may see as the true definition of the thin-centred ideology as one that ends up serving the people. Moreover, rather than being a loose collection of politicians a populist faction will be organised (DiSalvo's third point) and stake their claim to the party through an internal machine, to contest internal elections or lobby politicians and may have 'an outsized capacity to affect the behaviour of the parties or their politicians' (Rosenfeld, 2018). While some parties may have individual legislators, who espouse a more populist view, and gain prominence within the party as a leader of a particular voice, a faction must be more than one voice and have an apparatus to organise. For example, Bernie Sanders and progressive Democrats organised heavily for Keith Ellison to be picked as the chair of the Democratic National Committee even after Sanders was unsuccessful in his bid for the 2016 nomination, indicating that they are a faction. They must also be engaged in an attempt to move the party towards a more populist direction (DiSalvo's fourth point). Often this may include an alternative party platform (if they are not in the leadership) or a break from previously established political stances towards ones they see as benefiting the people rather than the elites (such as not involving the nation in foreign wars). Finally, they must have clear longevity within the party (DiSalvo's second point). For something to be a faction it must not be a new grouping that emerges due to one leader's following, but must be from a tradition that has existed within the party or been transferred through at least one party generation (unless the party is new).

This final element may prove to be difficult for populist factions, as Mudde has noted that populist parties are largely leader-driven. If the same is true for populist groups in a party, then it may be

hard for them to be truly regarded as factions as they must be able to survive the departure of a leadership figure. For example, when Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser discuss the FPÖ's populist faction they mainly mention its leader, Jörg Haider. The same is true for the SVP and Blocher, as well as Fidesz and Orban (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). However, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser also note that some populist factions pass 'from one strong leader to another as was the case in...the FPÖ (from Jörg Haider to Heinz Christian Strache)' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Additionally, factoring in Duverger's idea that factions become doctrinal, populist factions will become doctrinally populist, and if there are enough disciples within the populist faction, then it is feasible to see another leader take the reins of such a faction and continue the legacy. Yet, the relative importance of the leader to populist groups may see some changes to the faction or doctrinal populism when the leader changes that may not be as readily observed in non-populist factions. However, it is worth noting that both Michels and Duverger do place a level of importance on faction leaders regardless of whether they are populist or not, but the double importance of leaders in populism and in factional leadership may see a different effect.

Populist factions tend to identify the struggle between the unrepresented people and the elite in power as a fundamental part of the party and see it as the method by which the party will come to power, through linking the views of the 'people' to their leader and mobilizing support from the mass (Mudde, 2009). This may seem like a more strategic view, but it also has an ideological component as they may come to see certain leaders of the party as being too close to the elites, unwilling to carry out the will of the people or defend them, which will make them unworthy of power and betraying the core tenets of the party's goal to serve the people.

For example, the Tea Party faction of the Republican party, which is often described as populist in nature, had 'widespread opposition to economic policies promulgated...by the second Bush administration' (Gervais and Morris, 2018) because it seemed like those policies were not reaching the people and were serving the elites. Gervais and Morris state that Tea Party opposition and reaction to their own party's policies stemmed from a view that Bush had been bailing out Wall

Street and was in the pocket of the elites and they saw themselves as reclaiming the party to represent true American values and stand up for the average American, which Bush and his faction had betrayed through their actions. These populist factions can believe that by supporting 'the people' over 'the elites' they can 'offer a potential for vote-switching' (Bartolini and Mair, 2013). However, when not in power they can be seen as being against the party and against the leadership, meaning that they have to rely on organisation 'to direct their anti-leadership campaign' (Bloch Rubin, 2017: 7). A populist faction will seek to challenge the leadership and through organisation gain power over the party to enact their agenda.

## What issues arise from the existence of a populist faction within a political party?

Given the distaste populists have for elitism and elites, a populist faction may cause problems for the cohesion of the party. Factions, by and large, may vie for control of the party, but generally tend to observe rules and norms for the sake of the appearance of unity. There is a 'tendency towards accommodation in those segmented societies in which no group commands an overall majority' (Mair, 2002: 46). For example, within the Republican Party, George H. W. Bush appointed neoconservative Republicans like Dick Cheney and Bob Barr to high ranking positions in his Cabinet to create a united front. Despite being more of a multilateralist and having differing views on how to end the Cold War and go after Saddam Hussein, Bush understood that the GOP had to have all of these views on board, and that his view was not the only one in the party. The same has been true of previous Presidents like Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, George W. Bush, and even Reagan, who all appointed people to senior positions in their administrations within the Republicans who hailed from different factions. Populists by the definition above dislike elites and may come to see those rules and norms as part of a process that locks their views out of the party. They see the need to compromise with the elites as distasteful and diluting their pure mission and disdain this idea. They may believe that the party should be united behind them as the champions of what the people want, rather than pandering to what certain elites desire. There is not much discussion of how populist factions involve other groups within the party, or whether

they do at all. Therefore, it is worth investigating how they view compromise and working together with other - in their eyes - elitist factions.

Should populists form a faction, then 'the previously rebellious are becoming even more rebellious' (Cowley, 2002: 95). Their members may 'come to rely on intraparty organization to resolve several serious...problems that would otherwise prevent them from effectively challenging congressional leaders for legislative control' (Bloch Rubin, 2017). If the populist faction sees the majority of the party's lawmakers as being elite and unrepresentative then they may try to cause disruption in the party to force those parliamentarians to change course and obey their directives. They choose to 'work as part of large...umbrella parties' (Mudde, 2005) but to establish their will in a way that does not necessarily reconcile with non-populist factions. Where other factions may differ on certain issues but accept the need for unity populist factions may see such unity as a betrayal and faced with compromise as part of the party's attempt to include a broad church may begin 'ratcheting up...the level of rebellion' (Cowley and Stuart, 2014). This creates 'a very peculiar political identity, namely, an antiestablishment political identity' (Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). As such, should they ever be elevated to the leadership, populist factions may seek to rule alone or marginalise elitist factions, seeing them as part of the establishment. Believing as they do that they are the sole guardians of the will of the people (either in the party or whom the party seeks to represent) they may see any attempt at working with other factions as a betrayal of those people. The factional rank and file (of non-parliamentarian activists) may exhort the leadership not to compromise or listen and may seek to drive off the other faction rather than recognise the need to work with them. Again, this is an area that the literature does not really discuss, with attention given to populist factions that have taken the leadership of a party but not on how they co-exist with other factions.

By having a level of rebellion and unwillingness to engage with what they see as a party of the elite, populist factions may become more extreme and become marginalised within the party due to their lack of desire to play by the established rules and norms. This may lead to the targeting described by Cowley and Kavanagh (2016), where the traditional elite within a party would seek to

reduce the influence of these factions and their members, by either encouraging de-selection or primary challenges or by working to prevent these factions from gaining more seats. Their recruitment will therefore be aimed at bringing more people into their rebellion against an elite and fostering more of an air of animosity within the party, as they see the rest of the party as keeping them down and unable to participate due to the fundamental disagreements on how to treat the establishment. Furthermore, should they take over, that distrust and dislike of other factions may carry on and see reprisals against parliamentarians who are considered to be unrepresentative of the party's goal to protect 'the people' and this can lead to infighting or lack of discipline within the party.

As we have seen in the Republican Party, there have been moves to launch primary challenges against elected officials who are not in line with Trump's views or are seen as 'critical' of Trump. These populists have sometimes justified this by stating that they received the same treatment by the mainstream of the GOP in previous years. The anger populists seem to feel is one of being marginalised and ignored and now feeling that it is their turn to wield control and pay back those who treated them so badly in kind, leading some to call for reprisal targeting of non-compliant factions. Additionally, as Hassell mentioned, factions often end up consolidating around a single candidate, who usually ends up being unopposed within the party by the other compliant factions. Since populist factions may be more likely to oppose an uncontested leadership election, they may have ended up putting up another candidate and finding themselves without the resources and running in what they may see as a rigged election. Therefore, upon gaining power they may be more likely to eschew any deal making with the factions that conspired to keep them out of power and try to ensure only their people win. This animosity did not seem to initially exist between Blairite and Brownite factions, who may have had disagreements but never had a feeling that one was keeping the other down and it was their turn to have revenge, until Blair reneged on the deal he made with Brown (Rawnsley, 2010). This animosity-driven approach is not mentioned and could be a potential issue of populist factions within a political party.

## Hypotheses

The thesis therefore aims to look at the questions emerging from the literature as detailed in the key questions section above. The literature mainly discusses the importance of managing dissent and the need for unity when it focuses on intra-party factionalism. On populism it mainly focuses on populist outsider parties rather than mainstream parties. Therefore, when looking at the Labour Party the questions aim to bridge this gap and explore the effects of a mainstream party being taken over by a populist faction, both how it happens and the results therein, coming from both the literature on party politics and the tensions between members and elites, and the literature on populism which focuses on the anti-elite nature of populism and hints at an inability to manage dissent or observe norms. This has led to the following three hypotheses.

H1: Populist factions gain control of a party due to intra-party tensions as opposed to electoral concerns

H2: Populist factions will often ignore unwritten rules that create unity within a party until they can be bent to suit them

H3: Populist factions rely on the membership to maintain their power over other constitutionally protected bodies within the party, and struggle to manage those aforementioned bodies.

## Case Study

In order to answer these questions this thesis focus on will one case study: The Labour Party in the UK during the time Jeremy Corbyn was leader. Given its status as a mainstream political party and not a fringe group, but one led by a populist leader it therefore can shed light on the aforementioned questions.

### The Labour Party

Labour in the UK was led by Jeremy Corbyn between 2015 and 2020. Corbyn comes from the more populist Bevanite/Bennite faction of Labour, which has traditionally been more sceptical of Europe and engaged in rhetoric about being 'for the many not the few' (their election slogan in 2017). Labour has been one of the two major parties that have dominated UK politics since the inter-war period – and regularly forms the government and Corbyn's populist faction went from being seen as irrelevant in party circles to running the party very quickly. Through examining

Corbyn's leadership we can explore all these questions. Even at his height there was a substantial part of Labour that did not support him, roughly 40% of the party membership if NEC elections are accurate as well as an overwhelming majority of the PLP. Through examining Corbyn's leadership we can see how he has interacted with the more traditional factions (such as Blairites, the Old Labour Right or even the Soft Left) and the measures by which he has (or has not) involved them, which is the second question. Additionally, by looking at populist parties and factions, on both the left and the right across Europe we can ground this within larger trends within Europe.

## Chapter 3: Populism in Europe or in the 2010s?

### Introduction

Populism has been an increasing trend in political life across Europe in the last decade with populist parties seeing increasingly good electoral results. The global recession and response by mainstream parties saw increasing numbers of people choosing to reject the status quo and trust in new or untested parties such as SYRIZA in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, or the Five Star Movement in Italy, some of whom have made it into government, all have polled well. This chapter seeks to discuss the populist currents in Europe as a way of discussing how leadership in mainstream parties has tended towards populism as well in more than one election. Firstly, by examining the success of populism across Europe as well as voter disillusionment with mainstream parties and politicians the chapter will explain how populism found its way into mainstream parties and how populist leaders emerged. Secondly, by examining the attitudes of populist politicians to dissenting viewpoints, the chapter will seek to demonstrate the tension between the with-us-or-against-us nature of populism with the requirement to manage dissent. Lastly, the chapter will discuss how populism in mainstream parties has differed between the left and the right but still in the end is prone to similar intra-party issues. This chapter will therefore provide the contemporary context that informs this thesis. With populism rising and party members being more polarised it is possible that there will be more party leaders who seek to implement a populist view and ignore dissent from party colleagues, and this will have consequences for both comparative politics in general and the study of party politics in particular. This chapter will engage with the wider literature on populism in society (Agnew and Shin, 2019, de la Torre, 2015, Mudde, 2004, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, Rovira Kaltwasser, Taggart, Ochoa Espejo, and Ostiguy, 2017, Stockemer, 2019) as well as party politics in the modern day (Duverger, 1954, Michels, 1968, Scarrow, 2015).

The first section of the chapter outlines the rise of populism and populist parties across Europe in this century, while the second section discusses the moves by mainstream political parties to combat and stem the populist tide. This is followed by a discussion about how mainstream



parties have leaned into populism on the left and right respectively. The fifth section discusses the issues with populism within a mainstream party, before the sixth section concludes. A key finding of this chapter is that while populism is on the rise the evidence suggests that it has very little staying power. This is particularly apparent in mainstream political parties which are less prone to personalism from the leader and operate in a more oligarchic structure, meaning that a populist leader will be obliged to manage dissent. This chapter reveals that populism within mainstream parties is mainly an intra-party phenomenon on the left while it is more of an electoral tool on the right, but in both it is generally short-lived due to the challenges involved in managing dissent. One conclusion, therefore, is that the Iron Law of Oligarchy remains relevant today. The chapter somewhat refutes the literature on increasing personalisation of political parties, demonstrating that despite increasing focus on the leaders of parties and their increased power within the party, factions and elites maintain their traditional importance and that managing dissent from these groups is still relevant. This finding then confirms that populists in mainstream parties will face particular challenges when attempting to lead mainstream parties and will struggle to challenge party rules and norms effectively, which provides a theoretical justification for the hypotheses of this thesis: that populists in left wing parties derive their mandate from the membership, ignore unwritten rules and norms that are designed to manage dissent, and subvert and ignore constitutional bodies that they see as opposed to them.

## The Rise of Populism

### **Left-wing populism**

Populism has always existed within politics, going back to one of the earliest proto-parties in Ancient Rome, the Populares, and has played a role within electoral politics in many eras typically gaining support when there is anger with mainstream politics and dissatisfaction with the political process and elites. In today's modern parlance populism tends to be associated with the far right and with racism and extremism on the political spectrum (de Lange and Mudde, 2005) though this is a misperception as it transcends the political spectrum. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) define populism as existing throughout the political spectrum and identify it as an ideology pitting the people against the elite. This definition allows us to not just evaluate parties that are decried

as populists but also politicians within mainstream parties who use populist rhetoric and may oppose elitism within the party.

In the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2008 there has been an increased dissatisfaction with mainstream politics across the world, notably due to the perception that there has been a ruling consensus around austerity which comes at the expense of the average citizen. This has led to an increase in populist movements on the left that grew out of the Occupy Wall Street Movement and subsequent social justice protests in 2011, forming into parties like SYRIZA and Podemos as well as strengthening parties like Die Linke. These populist parties can supplant existing alternatives on the extremes of politics as in the case of Podemos 'a fully newly created radical-left populist party has emerged during the crisis attracting sizeable support, among others, from former voters of the established radical left' (Ramiro and Gomez, 2016: 109). In Greece as well, SYRIZA has largely replaced the Greek Communist Party as the main party of the far-left. These new populist parties on the left have seen electoral success and have even gained positions within government.

This willingness to enter government distinguishes this wave of populism from others, where either populists were subject to a *cordon sanitaire* where no other party would work with them, or sought to gain power alone or not at all, but in these cases both SYRIZA and Podemos have been in government. Additionally, just as the evolution of the radical right meant that a right-wing populist party 'accepts democracy but challenges *liberal* democracy' (Ambrose and Mudde, 2015: 214) the new populist left replaced the Marxism of old communist parties with 'egalitarianism and 'proletarian' anti-elitism' (March and Mudde, 2005: 35) and saw grassroots redistribution become 'a key issue on the radical left's agenda', instead of the more state-centred version of old communist parties (Gidron and Mijs, 2019: 638). This acceptance of democracy and support for less extremist solutions meant left-wing populist parties were acceptable governing partners. As Noury and Roland (2020: 432) argue 'Controlling for regional fixed effects, (...) an increase in unemployment is associated with a rise in the populist vote. They show that the increase in unemployment leads to a decline in trust in European and national political institutions and alienation from existing parties.' Therefore, with the recession causing unemployment and

such unemployment increasing the desire for radical change, these new parties found supporters that would not have supported previous radical left parties. This new status also left them open to elite co-optation. As seen in Greece the realities of government ended up limiting the changes SYRIZA could make and therefore their populist rhetoric came up short and resulted in electoral defeat in the subsequent election (Aslandis and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016). Yet, these parties remain formidable forces even after their defeat and will remain politically relevant in the future, suggesting that populist left parties are here to stay.

The dislike of mainstream parties amplified by these populist parties on the left is often a main part of their main appeal, as many of those parties were tainted by association with the establishment (Marzouki, et. al., 2016). This anti-establishment sentiment is also attractive to young voters, many of whom are less likely to join mainstream parties (Marzouki, et. al., 2016, Scarrow, 2015).

### **Right-wing Populism**

Along with new populist parties on the left there has been a strengthening of existing populist parties on the radical right. Populism on the radical right has been documented since the 1970s and 1980s and many of the parties that began in those eras are now enjoying a second wind with strong electoral results indicating support for their policies. Parties like the Front (now Rassemblement) National in France, Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), Sweden Democrats, and Danish Peoples Party have seen strong election results. With the perceived consensus around austerity after the recession, even these parties, which were often ostracised, have seen voters attracted to their solutions. Though these parties tend to be nationalist and anti-immigration they often also outlined a strong welfare chauvinist agenda, sometimes appearing more redistributionist than many centre-left parties, meaning that they often ended up being anti-austerity, while providing a way for fears regarding immigration, regarded as taboo and racist to be legitimised (Mudde, 2002). For example, in the French Presidential election of 2017 Marine Le Pen spoke against the power of financial institutions and in favour of redistributing wealth to the workers. As with new populist parties on the left a lot of support for these parties comes from voters who are poorer and younger. The populist right's opposition to globalisation also served as

a rallying call for supporters who were disaffected with supranational bodies like the European Union and the IMF who were seen to force countries into austerity even when their governments were against it (Caiani and Graziano, 2019, Rama Caamaño and Cordero, 2018). The anti-globalist and welfare chauvinist 'ideological core' of these long-standing populist parties (Mudde, 2002) was in line with the mood of many voters and thus many of these parties became normalised, to the point that some of them were no longer subject to a *cordon sanitaire* by others parties, being involved in confidence and supply agreements and even government, such as the True Finns in Finland, the Sweden Democrats in Sweden, and Vlaams Belang in Belgium (Mudde, 2019). It remains to be seen if this is a short-term boost or a more permanent situation.

On top of strengthening extant populist parties on the right the years following the 2008 recession saw the emergence of new ones. Several parties that either previously did not exist or had no parliamentary representation saw a rapid growth; examples include the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, VOX in Spain, and CHEGA in Portugal, all of which are populist right-wing parties that have seen a meteoric rise in recent years. These new parties have also attracted a young electorate and have used modern tactics like social media to gain support, presenting themselves as a new force in politics, often emerging in nations where a populist right had not previously existed, creating a new force rather than supplanting an old one (Barbeito Iglesias and Iglesias Alonso, 2021). These new parties have often emerged in sympathy with increased social conservatism from existing right-wing parties as opposed to a feeling that all parties are the same (Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020). They end up being a response to the signals sent out by mainstream right-wing parties where these new parties indicate they will do what the mainstream right is willing to discuss but not enact in order to not appear extreme (Marzouki, et. al., 2016). They benefit from the normalised discourse of their older counterparts in other countries on socio-economic issues while not bearing the stigma attached to those parties by being new on their political scene, allowing them to capture the imagination of the electorate (Marzouki, et. al., 2016, Mendes and Davidson, 2020).

### **Populism without Partisanship**

Another development during the 2010s has been pure populist parties, as in those that are neither on the left or the right. One of the key examples of this is the Five Star Movement in Italy, which was set up as an internet website and has policies that could conventionally be described as both left and right-wing. Mosca and Tronconi (2019) argue that the Five Star Movement ‘seems to come close to an ideal-typical image of a populist party as far as its political rhetoric and style of communication are concerned. Its anti-establishment position, the refusal to enter into any coalition-forming negotiations (until the aftermath of the 2018 elections), the rejection of professional politics, an extreme, often offensive use of language, all point to a strong populist character.’ The main focus of parties like these is an increase in direct democracy and a return of power to the people, being more people-inclusive than elite-exclusive. These parties embrace of pure populism instead of appealing to one side of the political spectrum may help solve the problem detailed by de Lange and Mudde in 2005 where ‘many parties and organisations are considered to be borderline cases, because they exhibit some but not all of the characteristics implied in the labels and definitions’. Many of these parties are also highly personalistic, with some like the Five Star Movement, having their main webpage owned by one individual. Other such parties have also taken the name of their founder as part of their official name and have aimed to avoid oligarchic tendencies within their parties, which has caused them to be reliant on one individual and may limit their staying power.

## Mainstream Parties Combatting Populism

With the rise in populism many mainstream parties have had to find a way to combat this trend, both to ensure their continued viability and also to avoid increased extremism in the political system, which tends to damage mainstream parties and empower radical ones. As with previous rises in populism the ways of combatting this trend are varied and take many forms. Bonnie Meguid provides a framework where mainstream parties can take either an adversarial or accommodating approach to populist parties (2005). Looking first at adversarial methods, parties can often attempt to exclude populist parties from government. One such method is for remaining parties to apply a *cordon sanitaire*<sup>1</sup> around the party, where mainstream parties will outright refuse any coalition or confidence and supply agreements with the party, leaving them

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from the French word for quarantine

with parliamentary representation but little else<sup>2</sup>. This was the traditional approach to parties like the Vlaams Blok in Belgium. The application of a *cordon sanitaire* serves as a statement that certain views are unacceptable and will not be involved in a government under any circumstances, and thus voting for these parties will not see the desired results, since those parties will be unable to affect any change, and even in some cases will not be allowed much access to parliamentary committees or questions beyond the bare minimum. In fact, in some instances representatives of mainstream parties will even leave the chamber when representatives of the party under *cordon sanitaire* speak, as famously happened in Israel, when far-right politician Meir Kahane would speak he would often do so to an empty chamber. This is mainly applied to parties on the far-right, but can also be used against parties on the left, as for example in Germany both the AfD and the Linke are subject to a *cordon sanitaire* when it comes to national government (though the Linke is involved in some state governments). The idea of this approach is to not allow populist parties to become normalised in political discourse or provide any legitimacy for their views, and is often used when a new populist party initially emerges as a way of limiting its initial advance (Meguid, 2005).

*Cordon sanitaire* tends to be applied to parties that have truly extreme views, such as racism or support for fascism, rather than to any overtly populist party, though there is a significant overlap. It can often be effective, as parties who wish to join the government may have to change to be allowed in, as the Vlaams Blok did when it became Vlaams Belang (Erk, 2005). However, it may also backfire as some of these groups may use the unwillingness of mainstream parties to even entertain them in government as legitimising their claims that all the main parties are tools of the elite against the people and a vote for them is a true vote for change. Such political ostracism may end up seeing their support increase and causing even more awkward types of grand coalition being necessary to keep them out.

When adversarial methods fail, mainstream parties tend to go for a more accommodating approach on the issue, particularly if even after two electoral cycles the populist party is continuing to gather strength (Meguid, 2005). A method of accommodating populist parties has

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<sup>2</sup> This has led to some very convoluted coalitions particularly in nations like Belgium.

been to allow them some influence over government, particularly by providing them with a confidence and supply agreement, not quite bringing them into coalition but giving them some leverage. This has occurred particularly done in Scandinavian countries like Denmark. Thus the populist Danish People's Party entered into a confidence and supply agreement with Venstre between 2015 and 2019, providing them with support in exchange for policy concessions (Akkerman, de Lange, and Roodujin, 2016). This strategy allows for the concerns of the populist party to be addressed while not compromising what are seen as core values by allowing the party access to the direct levers of power. However, these confidence and supply agreements can be unstable as the populist party may withdraw more easily than from a direct coalition and may still be punished for propping up an unpopular government.<sup>3</sup> Voters may favour the party that the populists propped up as a vehicle for change and thus seek to influence that party instead. Furthermore, that party may also seek to supplant the populists by adapting policies in line with their beliefs.

Recently, on top of confidence and supply agreements, some mainstream parties have taken populists into government. Though there were some early instances, such as the ÖVP-FPO coalition in 2002, this trend has increased post-recession. By bringing populist parties into government these parties have to make the compromises that they criticise other parties for doing (Mudde, 2009) and may end up damaging their anti-establishment brand (van Spanje and Weber, 2017). However, Bos and van der Brug (2010) find that increased legitimacy helps populist parties, meaning that being in government has some benefits. Sometimes, being a coalition partner and staying the course means that a mainstream party may see a populist partner as reliable and aim to renew such a partnership<sup>4</sup>. Yet, at the same time the mainstream party may use the coalition to cannibalise the votes of the populist party<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, as with the *cordon sanitaire* bringing populist parties into government as a way of managing them is a strategy with

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<sup>3</sup> As seen in the Netherlands where a confidence and supply agreement between the VVD and PVV fell apart and the PVV was heavily punished in the subsequent election

<sup>4</sup> An example of this is in Norway where the Progress Party governed with the Conservative party over mostly two terms from 2013-2020, leaving one year before the election

<sup>5</sup> An example of this is in New Zealand where the Labour Party formed a coalition between 2017 and 2020 with New Zealand First and then in the subsequent election that party lost all its parliamentary seats.

variable success, potentially legitimising them as part of the political process or defeating them when they do not deliver all they promise. However, a populist party that is consistently in government may end up becoming more mainstream.

On top of all these methods of dealing with populist parties, some mainstream parties have ended up attempting to become more populist as a method of getting support. By adopting the issues that a populist party advances the party aims to gain the voters by providing a more attractive electoral offer (i.e. being a party that can lead a government) while still accepting voters' concerns about the issue (Meguid, 2005)

## Mainstream Left Parties and Populism

Left-wing parties across Europe found themselves facing ideological challenges during the Recession and the aftermath, with many of them having moved to the centre in the 1990s. These parties therefore applied a more neoliberal view of economics and after reflatting economies seemed to accept the need for austerity (Bremer, 2018). This contrasted with much of their membership, who opposed this type of consensus and demanded more Keynesian stimulus, and the failure of the leadership of these parties to provide these policies made many of them question the difference between these left-wing parties and mainstream right-wing parties (Giuliani and Massari, 2017). Members also felt that traditional voters were abandoning their parties for this reason (Bremer, 2018). Therefore, many members of mainstream left-wing parties sought to change their parties to be more in line with what they viewed as traditional left-wing values in order to regain lost votes or return the party to what they saw as its 'true' values. To affect a change in the policy of their party many members used the democratic processes of the parties that were installed in the 1980s and onwards to put pressure on the leadership. This had the effect of aligning the membership with more fringe and populist factions within the political party.

Left-wing parties have always traditionally been more internally democratic than right-wing parties and were amongst the first to enfranchise their membership in leadership contests. For example,



the French Parti Socialiste brought in party primaries to choose their presidential candidate in 2007, nearly 10 years before the right-wing Les Republicains did (Mény, 2017)

Often the desire of left-wing party members to move leftwards received some pushback from party leaders who felt that such a strategy was not electorally viable or risked overpromising and under-delivering due to the constraints placed on national governments and economies by international institutions. Therefore, those who were more on the fringes of their parties were the ones more willing to support anti-austerity policies and they used the increased democratisation of these parties to contest and win leadership elections and primaries. Their message was that their party should listen to its members. They rejected the idea that the party should compromise its principles to win. Whether these candidates won or not they managed to gain a level of influence within the mainstream left and provide an outlet for members to be more radical. Further, they also forced mainstream left wing parties to take on more radical positions in order to placate these intra-party populists.

Often these populist figures have struggled to fit into the elite of the political party and thus face challenges to their leadership from the start, as the rest of the party opposes them. For example, when Benoît Hamon won the primary to be the socialist candidate for France many members of the party openly supported Emmanuel Macron in preference to him (Clift and McDaniel, 2017). Even though socialist members preferred him the preferences of the party elites managed to frustrate his efforts and refused to support his candidacy which contributed to his defeat.

However, even when personally unsuccessful populist figures on the mainstream left can change the rules and structures of the party to water down the power of political elites. A key example is Bernie Sanders who, even when failing to secure the nomination as Democratic presidential candidate in 2016, was successful in abolishing the superdelegate system. Getting rid of this meant that party elites had a much reduced role in nominating the presidential candidate. Therefore, a populist figure who had little to no support amongst democratic elites would have a stronger chance of winning the nomination as their momentum would not be challenged by elite figures supporting another candidate, as happened with Senator Sanders (Bacon Jr., 2020).

Additionally, many mainstream left-wing parties, particularly in the latter half of the 2010s began to move to the left in response to pressure by their members and other parties. For example, in Spain, the Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) moved away from the more neoliberal leadership of Zapatero to the left-wing leadership of Pedro Sanchez, who immediately favoured both an economic move to the left and closer links with parties like Podemos (Orriols and Leon, 2020). Increasingly the centrists that held control of these parties have been defeated. In order to avoid being outflanked by populists on the left and to placate their members many parties have changed their tune on austerity or taken stronger stances on social justice. Especially in the aftermath of a party choosing an unacceptable leader, the elites in parties have aimed to meet their members halfway in terms of policy. Additionally, mainstream left parties have been less hesitant to go into government with populist left parties, either to co-opt them and let them share the blame, or to placate members who support such partnerships. For example, increasingly at the *Lande* level across the 2010s the SPD has entered into government with the left-wing populist Linke party in Germany. Furthermore, in 2019 Spain saw the introduction of Podemos into a coalition government with the PSOE.

The mainstream left has had to adopt a more populist viewpoint in general due to their democratic structures which force them to acquiesce more to their members. With members becoming more radical elites have had to listen to them or face defeat in intra-party competitions. With a few exceptions there has been a general move towards a more left-wing stance largely due to the pressure exerted by populism.

## Mainstream Right Parties and Populism

Just as left-wing parties moved towards the centre on economics in the 1990s and 2000s right-wing parties moved towards the centre on social issues. Many right-wing parties, especially in Europe, started being more open to immigration in particular, helped by EU freedom of movement policies. As with the mainstream left many members of mainstream right parties were opposed to this shift. They supported controls on immigration and what they viewed as traditional morals. Compared to left-wing parties, members of right-wing parties typically have less of a say in how

their parties are run (Lehrer, 2012). This has led to right-wing parties suffering a stronger decline in membership than have left-wing parties (Scarrow, 2005) as their members find themselves in a political party that is not reflecting their values and where they have no ability to change that course, meaning that they either leave or join new populist parties that may also be autocratic but are more congruent with their views (Ambrose and Mudde, 2015, Mudde, 2004). The step from mainstream to populist right is not hard especially on issues like nationalism where 'The step from 'the nation' to 'the people' is easily taken, and the distinction between the two is often far from clear.' (Mudde, 2004).

Even though this step is not driven by the membership, some mainstream parties have taken it. Given that populist parties have seen strong electoral results, right-wing mainstream parties who often are willing to make changes in pursuit of office-seeking have sought to emulate their priorities. Some of them have been willing to enter into coalition with these parties or adopt elements of their ideology in the name of seeking power, the main goal of a political party, or to gain more members and voters (Blondel, 1978, Dalton, 2018, de Lange, 2012, Mudde, 2004). This tradition started in the 2000s when the ÖVP entered into coalition with the right-wing populist FPÖ and has since increased with another such coalition in Austria (2017-2019), as well as confidence and supply agreements in the Netherlands 2010-2012 and Denmark 2015-2019, along with similar coalitions involving the Progress Party in Norway and the True Finns in Finland, indicating a trend. These coalitions have the effect of moving the political zeitgeist to the right and legitimising populist rhetoric both in society and making it more acceptable for mainstream right-wing parties to adopt these populist policies for themselves (Mudde, 2004).

On top of being more willing to bring in populist parties the mainstream right has also been willing to turn towards populist policies in the name of winning elections, particularly when they are risking being overshadowed by a populist party, or losing votes to a party that would be taboo to govern with in a formal arrangement. For example, in France, following Marine Le Pen's success at the ballot box the mainstream right Republican Party elected Laurent Wauquiez in 2018 who called for similar policies to Le Pen (Perrineau, 2017). Similar pressure has been seen in the Partido Popular in Spain in response to the rapid rise of Vox. Populist factions in the PP have

called for a move to a more anti-immigration and nativist policy (Scoones, 2021). Furthermore, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) saw a leadership shakeup where the more mainstream elements were forced out by the young Foreign Secretary Sebastian Kurz, who turned the party in a nativist direction and won a strong electoral victory in 2017 (Löffler, 2020). Even the liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in the Netherlands has aped the populist rhetoric of Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom (PVV), by calling for surveillance of mosques and more immigration controls (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). The main difference with left-wing parties is that these moves seem to be more leadership-driven than membership-driven, though they are likely to have the support of the membership.

The main difference between the way the right and left embrace populism is that mainstream right-wing parties go down the populist route for electoral reasons more often and with the support of their own party elites, rather than in response to a strong membership reaction. This can be seen in the French Republicans as well as the Austrian ÖVP, where populist leaders like Wauquiez and Kurz were installed by elites and then removed by them when they did not deliver electoral results. Since often mainstream right parties are less internally democratic than leftwing parties the likelihood of having a leader who is at odds with the elite foisted upon them by the membership is reduced, meaning that such a policy shift is due to elite manoeuvring within the party oligarchy. Therefore, it is also easier for right-wing parties to abandon this approach should it not prove electorally viable. The elites of the party can easily remove the leader and change the policy should it not prove an election winner.

However, many of the populist leaders in right-wing parties have experienced volatility due to the power of elites in those parties to remove underperforming leaders. In France, Laurent Wauquiez was quickly removed after an unsatisfactory performance by the Republicans in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. In Austria, while Sebastian Kurz was successful in winning two elections, his stance on controlling selections alienated other factions in his party who were able to use a corruption scandal to push him out of office in 2021. In these instances a mainstream right-wing party turned towards populism as a way of gaining votes, with variable success, but when it was not yielding results as a strategy the leader of this populist faction was easily

removed as the party looked for another way to deal with this crisis (Bale and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2021). These sudden shifts demonstrate the power of the oligarchy in political parties and their ability to make quick changes (Duverger, 1954). In these parties the populist faction has been defeated by other factions who are more adept at handling the oligarchy (Michels, 1968, Ware, 1996). Given the smaller core electorate mainstream right-wing parties will have to either tack to the extremes or the centre to get more votes, and this gives ample room for factions to try to restructure issue space (Boucek, 2009, Ceron, 2016, Riker, 1962, Riker, 1980, Sjöblom, 1968, Zariski, 1960). When factions fail to do so then they can be more easily removed from power. This separates mainstream right-wing parties from their counterparts on the left, as they are more able to remove populist factions due to being less internally democratic.

In other countries, where populist factions did not take over right-wing parties initially, the latter have benefitted from electoral failure within those parties in the same way that populist factions who did take over suffered from such failure. One clear example of this is Germany, where the moderate faction that controlled the CDU prevailed in choosing the centrist Armin Laschet as *kanzlerkandidat*. In 2021 Laschet led the CDU to an election defeat and the populist faction of the Union moved quickly to replace him and change tack even before the Scholz government was fully formed, effectuating a clear change of the guard. The CDU swiftly adopted a much firmer anti-immigration stance within Germany and even began to entertain the idea of forming agreements with the populist AfD, something that Merkel had outright rejected (Art, 2018). Similar moves were seen in the UK Conservative Party when Theresa May failed to secure a majority in 2017, and then faced pressure to move towards a more populist Brexit strategy and eventually had to make way for Boris Johnson who was more populist in general, demonstrating how electoral failure can empower populists. Just as elites in a party can remove populist leaders and aim for the centre if they feel that the populist strategy does not work, they can and often will do the same if a centre-facing strategy fails. The changes in these parties tend to mainly be office-seeking rather than ideological.

The main difference between the adoption of populism by the mainstream left and the mainstream right is that often the elites in mainstream right parties make the active choice to embark down a

populist route in the name of winning elections. Therefore, if this approach ends up not being successful electorally it is easier to change course as the same elites who brought in the new direction and leadership can easily remove it or force that leadership to change its course entirely, which is a much harder task on the left.

## Issues in Populism in Mainstream Parties

Populism has increased on both the mainstream right and the mainstream left with populist factions gaining control of mainstream parties. Whether it is to steal a march on these parties or to increase their own electability or because of the desires of their membership (Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2014) going down the populist route has appealed to a large number of mainstream parties. However, unlike populist parties, mainstream parties tend to have more of an elite oligarchical structure, instead of being dependent entirely on a leader like populist parties are, meaning that populist factions are not entirely unchallenged in their management of the party and have to try to manage dissent. This comes into conflict with populism's view of politics as being a struggle between elites and the common people. This view leads to populists drawing the conclusion that surrendering any control or issue-space to another faction is a betrayal and will therefore ignore the unwritten rules that call for opposing factions to be given some concessions. Therefore, other factions, not mollified by the traditional offer of policy concessions and portfolios where they are allowed to bring their own vision forward may end up causing factional infighting as they oppose the new direction of the party as well as the new leaders and don't have a compelling reason to accept the new leadership. If a non-populist faction is in charge, then similarly populist factions will dissent strongly as they will view the current state of affairs as an oligarchic stitch-up which is preventing them from carrying out the view of the people, or the members of the party. Therefore, the presence of populist factions destabilises mainstream parties and reduces the effectiveness of the oligarchy whose purpose is to quell intra-party strife and create at least the pretence of unity.

The rise of populism in mainstream parties is thus a destabilising factor as populists will put pressure on the party outside its oligarchic norms, using either the view of the membership, or refusing to honour unspoken agreements that have characterised the party and its operations.

This refusal to honour these unspoken agreements then calls off those agreements in the future, which is often seen as important to the stability of the political party. For example, in Germany, when the CDU came second in 2021, the more populist faction within the party aimed to seize power immediately and not even give their *kanzlekkandidat*, Armin Laschet, a chance to form a coalition. Usually in German politics there is no reshuffling of leadership until after a new government is inaugurated, as until then the leader may be called upon to negotiate a government, and while admittedly unlikely in the case of Laschet, the populists refused to even give him a chance. Even when populists are in charge of a party their lack of engagement with elites may also lead to problems with adopting populist policies, which have largely not appeared in manifestos (Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug, 2012). Therefore, to a considerable extent the populist takeover primarily consists of a change in tone and a hollowing out of the party norms and does not see a large change in official party policy due to the inability of populists to engage with formal structures.

The rise of populism within a political party does not usually lead to a large policy shift within the party but mainly creates adversity between factions and ends the unspoken agreements that characterise party politics and managing dissent within the party, which causes further instability within the party and with its image with the public. Therefore, on the whole, populism within a mainstream party is a destabilising force which can create problems for it in the long-term.

## Conclusion

Populism in Europe and America is on the rise. Whether this trend will soon peak and will fall away or is a permanent feature in our politics is yet to be determined, but it is undoubtedly affecting electoral and party politics in profound ways. This chapter has looked at the ways populism has manifested in politics, on all sides of the political spectrum, according to the existing literature, as well as how mainstream parties have tried to contain it. Overall, there has been an increasing attempt by mainstream parties and politicians to work with populists across the spectrum with fewer examples of applying a *cordon sanitaire* and more collaboration.

Furthermore, increasingly mainstream parties have adopted populist rhetoric and policies, mainly driven by populist factions, who tend to have the support of their membership, which has become

more extreme and polarised. The move by mainstream parties towards populism has caused problems within the parties as populist factions have attempted to impose their will. Often these factions will not aim to work with other groups in the party oligarchy and will try to lead the party like most populist parties are led, autocratically, which will alienate other elites and see a backlash from those groups. This backlash will limit the actual power of these populist factions, as either they will be removed when they are no longer generating electoral results, or when they eventually leave power their changes will be overturned quickly by the other factions, meaning that they will have very little staying power. Furthermore, their inability to work within the norms of the party means that they will not see much change to the actual manifesto or policies the party proposes, which is linked to the second hypothesis. Therefore, it is difficult to see mainstream parties fully being able to emulate populist parties as they are too broad in scope and have an oligarchic rather than personalistic structure. However, with the rise of populist parties in general, those parties may increasingly dictate discussion within the political sphere and play a role, particularly if they are invited into government or allowed into confidence and supply mechanisms. Therefore, looking at the rise of populism within parties and how populists work to manage dissent is an important and worthy aim.



# Chapter 4: Managing Dissent in the Labour Party: Previous

## Leaders

### Introduction

This chapter details two leaders in the Labour Party who were more successful at managing dissent. Those leaders are Tony Blair, who started off successfully but could not fully manage dissent as a partially successful case study, and Harold Wilson, who remained successful.

In the literature review, the importance of party unity and maintaining relationships with factions is discussed. Successful parties are seen as those that have unified parliamentarians (Zariski, 1960), with clear policies (Boucek, 2009), and few obvious factional conflicts (Ceron, 2016). This chapter argues that there is an empirical way to manage dissent.

Blair as a leader took a very personalised approach to managing dissent in the party and broke away from many traditional rules and norms in the party 'Blair regarded the party's traditional managerial culture – heavily rule-bound, and reliant on persuasion, negotiation and deal-making – as inefficient, time-consuming and distracting. His managerial ethos favoured 'procedural flexibility', that is to say, a willingness to fudge or circumvent any rules and conventions that might inhibit 'getting the right results'. (Shaw, 2016:155).

This idea of a strong leader being able to overcome the rules and set a course for a party does have merit 'party leaders that are autonomous in the decision-making process or can adopt a powerful whip to achieve compliance of rebel MPs are more able to handle internal disputes so that factional conflict is no longer harmful for the party.' (Ceron, 2016: 803). Strong leaders who are seen as successful often face less dissent (Ceron, 2016), but when they are not seen as assets they then face 'future difficulties in reaching parliamentary decisions and compromise' (Bøggild, et. al, 2019).

Harold Wilson on the other hand took a more collegial approach. Wilson inherited a divided Parliamentary Labour Party and sought to ensure that all voices were represented and he

parcelled out roles to all factions, giving the Foreign and Defence portfolios to moderates like George Brown and the Social Services and Transport portfolios to those more on the left like Barbara Castle and Richard Crossland. When those individuals were replaced their replacement would largely be drawn from the same faction, ensuring a stable balance of power between the different factions of the Labour Party and allowing Wilson to manage all of them effectively.

Wilson ended up being the only Labour leader to lose an election, remain leader, and then return to the premiership, proving that electoral performance is not the end all and be all of managing dissent (Harmel, et. al., 1995). In fact, Wilson remains the only post-War Labour leader to leave the leadership of his own volition, rather than being forced out by electoral defeat, death, or the loss of confidence of his colleagues.

On the whole, assessments of Blair's leadership state that he was initially successful at managing dissent but his excessive personalisation of power backfired when he was no longer seen as an asset (see Cowley, 2005, Cowley and Kavanaugh, 2016, Rentoul, 2007), while Harold Wilson was a more collegial figure who managed a more divided Parliamentary Party (Crowcroft, 2007, Heppell, 2012, Rose, 1974). All assessments of both leaders demonstrate strong personal will and leadership, which is necessary according to Ceron (2016) but the two men directed that will differently, with Blair opting for control, and Wilson opting for collaboration.

## Tony Blair's Leadership

Anthony Charles Lynton Blair was elected as leader of the Labour Party in 1994. He succeeded John Smith, who had been leader for just under two years and had tragically died of a heart attack, Blair served as Shadow Home Secretary under Smith and had been in previous leader Neil Kinnock's Shadow Cabinets. He won the 1994 leadership election overwhelmingly against Deputy Leader Margaret Beckett and the Shadow Employment Secretary John Prescott<sup>6</sup>. Blair presented himself as the leader of the moderate branch of the Labour Party and set out his leadership as a continuation of the modernisation of the Labour Party, started by the previous two leaders, and he enjoyed the endorsement of former Deputy Leader Roy Hattersley.

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<sup>6</sup> Blair won 57% to Prescott's 24.1% and Beckett's 18.8%

Blair's leadership started after a series of modernising reforms from his predecessors. Historically, as Crowcroft (2007:709) observed, PLP meetings were often: 'struggles...marked by lengthy battles for personal ascendancy between leading politicians and, as during 1950-5, the question of precisely who directed the party was key'. But by the time Blair became leader, many of the factional fights between the hard left and the moderates had already happened in the 1980s, with the moderates ultimately winning. John Smith had led the Parliamentary Labour Party on a number of divisive issues, such as the Treaty of Maastricht, constitutional reform, and intervention in Bosnia, and was known for consulting the PLP regularly and listening to all factions within the party (Stuart, 2006). Blair as leader did not consult the PLP as regularly and felt that such debates detracted from the need for the party to look outwards. This was a departure not just from Smith, but from other leaders who regularly recognised the importance of the PLP and would at least take soundings from parliamentarians throughout, using the PLP as a chance for MPs to air dissent in a controlled environment (Crowcroft, 2007).

Blair came to power by doing a deal with John Smith's main heir, Gordon Brown. In return he allowed Brown a large level of control over economic policy. Brown became a major sounding board for Blair and played a more ambassadorial role with the PLP, both listening to those who were less comfortable with Blair's leadership and informing Blair of concerns. John Prescott, the Deputy Leader also served in this role, liaising with MPs who were not on the moderate wing of the party and reporting back to Blair.

When Blair became Prime Minister in 1997 he ran on a clear manifesto with five pledges. Given that all MPs had run on these pledges there was widespread agreement on implementing them and the 1997-2001 parliament faced very few public rebellions. He was seen to have widely collaborated with all groups in the party when it came to designing the 1997 manifesto.

The early period of Blair's government also saw a large level of factional unity, with leaders like Gordon Brown, John Prescott, and Robin Cook being behind Blair. When factional leaders are united and not openly struggling that prevents conflicts within the party (Crowcroft, 2007) and since Blair had not alienated these figures, allowed them control over their briefs and managed

any disagreements in direct negotiations, the party remained united, and dissent was low and relegated to a small cadre of hard left MPs. However, after Blair's 2001 victory the relations between Blair and other factional leaders in the Labour Party soured, especially over the Iraq War<sup>7</sup>, which saw the resignation of Robin Cook, as well as the question of when Blair would stand down, which exposed rifts in the party. (Beech and Lee, 2008).

Yet the second Blair government (2001-2005) still appeared united apart from these large rebellions and Blair remained firmly in charge of the Labour Party. Despite the rebellions he was able to gain an authorisation of force to enter Iraq and continue on controversial policies like installing tuition fees. There were certain areas that he was unable to gain victories on and for which he still had to defer to Gordon Brown, in particular the issue of joining the Euro, which Blair supported but Brown successfully opposed. Blair was therefore still bound by his agreements to delegate policy and would not cross Brown. However, as demonstrated by Cook, Blair was increasingly taking control of areas like foreign policy that he had previously delegated out.

Labour won a third election in 2005 but on a much reduced majority. This reduced majority saw increased infighting within the Parliamentary Labour Party and increased pressure on Blair to resign as leader. Factional supporters of people like Gordon Brown, who had felt particularly cheated, began to brief against Blair and followed the historical tradition of using debates and disagreements in the PLP to advance themselves by positioning themselves in favour of one leader or another (Crowcroft, 2007) with dissent towards Blair becoming more obvious and pronounced. Significantly, Blair's declining popularity in the country, meant he was no longer seen as a strong electoral asset. Thus in 2006 continuing dissent towards Blair's leadership was encouraged by a bad set of local elections that triggered a large cabinet reshuffle. This reshuffle was meant to strengthen Blair's position, with many of his loyalists gaining Cabinet positions and those who were more supportive of Brown being demoted or removed.

Despite this reshuffle, dissent in Blair's leadership continued to increase and calls for him to resign became both louder and more common by members of Parliament, with him no longer being seen as an electoral asset, and his increasing attempts to remove those from different factions from

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<sup>7</sup> The vote to authorise force in Iraq saw one of Labour's largest parliamentary rebellions

areas where they had been promised control causing anger. Further problems arose from the Cash for Honours scandal and the initial deal Blair made with Brown to hand over the premiership to Brown, eventually forced Blair to resign his premiership and parliamentary seat in 2007, 10 years after being elected.

Tony Blair at the start of his leadership took a different approach to managing dissent from other leaders, aiming for bilateral negotiations with factional leaders. Blair risked alienating more members of the PLP, but at least at the start Blair ensured that the other factional leaders had autonomy over their areas and this was effective in managing any form of dissent.

However, by relying on his relationship with factional leaders Blair changed the dynamics. For most of Labour's history the PLP was the vehicle for factional disputes (Crowcroft, 2007) and by excluding them Blair could more successfully pressure factional leaders. Blair's well known model of sofa government meant that he would often meet with factional leaders one on one. This prevented major rebellions from gaining strength as dissenting factions would not necessarily be able to coordinate with one another. With many MPs taking their cues from figures like Robin Cook, John Prescott, and Gordon Brown, the agreement of these figures often stopped major rebellions. Dissenting MPs could be discredited as part of an irrelevant hard left fringe that was set in their own ways and had been ignored since Tony Benn's failed leadership campaign of 1988. Additionally, once Blair was elected newer MPs accepted this model of leadership. The new MPs had not been in parliament under previous leaders and were seen as more extroverted which supported personalised leadership (Bøggild, et. al., 2019) and also many of them were convinced by the idea that voters 'build leader personalities into their voting calculation' (Dalton, 2011: 147). Thus, with many new MPs who felt personally indebted to Blair entering parliament, the old model of collegial leadership began to fall away and those MPs who remembered it became more of a minority, and with the landslide victory and unity at the top there was not a perceived need for the leader to deal with divisions that appeared non-existent.

However, with succeeding parliaments MPs began to diverge from Blair and even the new intake began looking to factional leaders for cues, rather than simply following Blair's line. This made Blair dependent on the factional leaders he had a direct relationship with and ensured he could

not alienate them and had to accept when they refused a policy, such as when Brown refused to allow the UK to join the Euro<sup>8</sup>. Despite Blair's wish to do so, his reliance on Brown meant he could not overrule his Chancellor. MPs who wanted to advance during this period had to behave as their factional leaders did not want them to air their grievances in the PLP as had been traditional (Crowcroft, 2007). However, when these leaders were alienated, MPs who wanted advancement in their factions saw voicing dissent as a clear way to advance as had been habitual (Crowcroft, 2007). As the Blair government between 2001 and 2005 began to reclaim policy areas that had been granted to other factions they felt disenfranchised and their MPs began voicing dissent.

Despite all this, Blair recognised that he could not govern without the support of Gordon Brown and never removed his chancellor and still deferred to Brown on economic policy, indicating that he still understood the importance of managing some dissent from powerbrokers.

In general Blair had an obsession with avoiding arguments within the PLP and used the direct negotiation strategy to starve potential rebels of leadership to ensure the appearance of unity (Minkin, 2014). This had the effect of making Blair uniquely reliant on those leaders and doomed his premiership when those brokers withdrew their support and encouraged dissent.

Blair on the whole was only partially successful and managing dissent in the Labour Party, his management mainly relied on him having direct relationships with the major power brokers and using those relationships to weaken and stigmatise rebels as a small and insignificant part of the party (Cowley, 2002). When Blair honoured the agreements he made he was successful at managing dissent. However, when he began to move towards more personalised leadership, and in the process reneged on agreements the dissenters returned and removed him.

Blair largely became a victim of the success of the Labour Party under him. A large part of New Labour's marketing was based on Blair's personal appeal (Casey, 2009). Therefore, Blair's belief that he was integral to Labour's election victories and thus indispensable to the Labour Party,

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<sup>8</sup> Blair actually offered to resign early if Brown would accept joining the Euro

meant that he felt that he could renegotiate and alter the deals he made with other factions on the division of policy between each group. This alienated the factional leaders who he relied on.

Blair's relationship with members was even more fraught. The Labour membership has always been to the left of the Parliamentary Party and members were already wary of some of his initiatives. The Iraq War was an example of a clear break between Blair and the membership, as over 90% of Labour members opposed entry into the Iraq War. In fact, the decision to authorise force in Iraq caused a rift between the PLP and the membership, which caused the election of both Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn, as those men made virtues of their opposition to the War in Iraq.

Additionally, Blair largely ignored local government. Many councillors were on the moderate side of the Labour Party, like the PLP. However, they never felt that Blair seemed to care or value their input. This was voiced by interviewees who were councillors during the Blair government, who felt that there was little to no strategy or consultation with local government by Blair or even his Local Government Secretaries. Therefore, Blair never could rely on local government as a strong bastion of support.

Blair also faced some opposition from Trade Unions. His leadership often viewed Labour's relationship with trade unions to be a hindrance to their electability, and therefore sought to distance the party from the unions, which was exacerbated by the election of more left-wing Trade Union leaders like Kevin Curran in the GMB. Some unions even disaffiliated under Blair's leadership and the remaining unions endorsed leadership candidates like Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn hoping to influence those leaders.

Blair's disregard for the membership, unions, and local government limited his allies. He was entirely reliant on the PLP and avoiding a return to a factional power struggle there (Crowcroft, 2007). This only worked so long as he honoured his bargains, but when he dragged his feet on leaving more attention was paid to factional strife. By the end of the second term in government there were clear stories about the differences between Blairites and Brownites (Rawnsley, 2010),

indicating that people were aware of the factional infighting and Blair was not successfully managing dissent in the party. MPs were less afraid to speak against Blair.

This type of personalised naming of factions echoed the factionalism and infighting of the 1950s where the Labour Party was divided between the Gaitskellites and Bevanites, and unlike the 1980s where there was one named faction of Bennites but the moderates did not have a leader (Crowcroft, 2007). However, unlike the 1950s there were less ideological disagreements and it was more of a personal disagreement due to Blair appearing to renege on his agreement with Brown. Despite the disagreements being more personal they still hampered Blair. His attempts to take more control of the different areas of government despite allowing different factions to operate them caused serious problems.

His approach to ensuring there were no public disagreements with Labour MPs led to the Blair project aggressively briefing against any MP who showed any sign of disagreement (Minkin, 2014). An MP interviewed for this thesis who was in parliament during the Blair government agreed with this assessment<sup>9</sup>. This approach could work as long as factional leaders supported Blair. When all groups were in accord then Blair could treat his office and position in a more assertive manner and create a 'de facto British presidency' (Foley, 2004:54).

It should be emphasised that despite Blair reneging on deals he made with other factional leaders he always understood the indispensability of both Gordon Brown and John Prescott. John Prescott as Deputy Leader was the one person who was constitutionally protected by the Labour Party and thus Blair could not sack him and had to listen to him. Prescott had always traditionally been closer to the left of the Labour Party and was a vital ambassador to more sceptical MPs who were not habitual rebels and had some hope for advancement. He was able to warn Blair if the Prime Minister was suggested policies that were too unpalatable for the left of the party. Robin Cook also served in this role within the first Labour government and as Foreign Secretary was

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<sup>9</sup> He was also an MEP before being elected to Parliament and stated Blair took this approach with the EPLP as well.



able to operate one of the Great Offices of State, indicating that the left could play a role in the Blair government, and his demotion and resignation met with anger from that group<sup>10</sup>.

Blair and Brown started off as allies within the Labour Party against the hard left and were supporters of Kinnock and Smith. In fact, their agreements on Foreign Policy enabled Blair to support the Iraq War as Brown supported him on that front (Daddow and Gaskarth, 2011) as well as on defence (Brown, 2016). However, when Blair looked like he was not honouring his deal Brown's allies dissented (Cowley and Stuart, 2014). Blair, despite his 'communication and presentation skills' (Theakston, 2011) was unable to stave off a party rebellion if Brown deserted him and was forced to honour the bargain.

Blair as leader was capable of managing dissent as long as he stuck to the agreements he made with other groups in the vein of previous leaders (Crowcroft, 2007) and was punished when he deviated from that route.

## Harold Wilson's Leadership

James Harold Wilson was elected as leader of the Labour Party in 1963 following the death of Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. He had long been seen as an MP on the Bevanite side of the Labour Party, who opposed Hugh Gaitskell and has served as Shadow Chancellor and Shadow Foreign Secretary. He inherited the leadership at a point where the Labour Party had come out of a period of infighting between Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevan, particularly over issues like nuclear disarmament. Gaitskell and affiliated trade unions supported keeping the nuclear deterrent (Minkin, 1991), while Bevan supported disarmament and the UK not taking sides in the Cold War, with Wilson being seen as broadly supportive of the left but capable of working with the right, meaning that his election to the leadership was not alienating to anyone, and allowed him to be a viable candidate when the moderates were split between George Brown and James Callaghan, enabling Wilson to be elected (Vickers, 2008). Shortly after assuming the Labour leadership, Wilson led the Labour Party to a victory in the 1964 election, replacing a thirteen-year period of

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<sup>10</sup> His resignation speech over Iraq received a standing ovation in the House of Commons

Conservative government, with a very narrow majority, meaning his government was vulnerable to rebellions (Cowley, 2005).

During 1965 Wilson's majority was watered down due to a number of by-election defeats meaning that governing was increasingly difficult, until 1966 where he won a snap election convincingly. After winning a convincing victory in 1966 the Wilson government began making radical changes to domestic politics in the UK. His government rapidly decriminalised homosexuality and abortion, abolished capital punishment, expanded comprehensive education, and created the Open University. On economic policy Wilson created the Department of Economic Affairs to encourage economic planning and also changed the pound to a decimal system. On foreign affairs the Wilson government remained a staunch ally of the United States, though categorically refused to join any involvement in Vietnam, and attempted to join the EEC.

Wilson's approach to managing his party was to parcel out policy to different factions. Figures like Barbara Castle, on the left of the party, were given domestic portfolios where the Wilson government sought more radical action. However, in areas like foreign policy, Wilson deferred to the moderates in the party, like George Brown who he knew would continue Britain's alliance with America in the Cold War. Wilson aimed to position himself close to Labour's affiliated Trade Unions and placed James Callaghan, a former trade union official, as his Chancellor of the Exchequer (Minkin, 1991).

Wilson allowed each group to have control of their area of policy, meaning that all factions were placated and were able to buy in, which is a time-honoured method of management (Carroll and Kubo, 2017). Following the framework in the literature review Wilson's main method of party management was compromise (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012) where different factions would have control of different policy areas, as well as the permission of low-cost dissent, where bodies like unions could occasionally oppose certain areas of policy (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). Especially after the convincing Labour victory of 1966 Wilson could afford a few small rebellions as could any leader with a sizeable majority (Cowley, 2005). Despite his ability to keep all factions supporting him the first Wilson government saw more rebellions than his Conservative

predecessors (Piper, 1991). His government also saw more rebellions than the Attlee government as well (Piper, 1991).

However, despite these rebellions Wilson remained a popular leader. Even with factional infighting Wilson was able to prevent any major upheaval and used his position as a broker to ensure that every group was represented in the Cabinet, meaning that even when factions lost internal fights they wouldn't cease their work as some do (Cross and Pruyers, 2017). His level of support and contribution to unity was so strong that even after Labour was handed a shock defeat in the 1970 general election Wilson was still able to carry on as leader of the party (O'Hara and Parr, 2006) in order to keep the party united instead of standing down and handing the reins to a new leader. Wilson remained successful at keeping the party united in opposition (Bell, 2004). Despite that there were a number of issues that the Labour Party was split on (Haeussler, 2014), in particular the issue of joining the EEC after Britain acceded (Haeussler, 2014). The issue of the European Economic Community so polarised the Labour Party that Wilson had to agree to call a national referendum on the issue (Gliddon, 2016), which he had to carry out when returned to the premiership.

The promise of a referendum is also an approach to managing dissent when there is an issue that internal mechanisms cannot resolve (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). Wilson also had personally supported entry to the EEC and had even tried to join and supported staying in and promoted candidates who did as well, showing that he engaged in candidate selection (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). Wilson was not just reliant on everyone getting along but could deal with divisive issues.

Wilson also managed dissent by using patronage, which is effective against rebels (Cowley, 2005, Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). As all factions were represented and able to advance within the party there was no premium on rebelling and members that remained loyal and supported the whip could expect promotions, which made loyalty a more appealing option, particularly from 1966-1970 when there was a large majority meaning that a rebellion would often also be futile.

Wilson returned to the Premiership in 1974, with a smaller majority which makes managing dissent more difficult (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012), requiring potentially more coercion (Lynch and Whittaker, 2012). Even though Wilson managed a majority after a second general election in 1974 the Labour government was elected with less of a mandate than in previous elections and did not benefit from a strong shift in public opinion or a desire for change<sup>11</sup>.

Despite this reduced majority Wilson remained successful in managing dissent. His strategy of parcelling out positions to all major factions and keeping them all around the cabinet table remained successful. Even on the issue of Europe, which had caused problems in opposition and even saw the resignation of Deputy Leader Roy Jenkins, Wilson was able to reconcile everyone. Jenkins even returned to the Cabinet as Home Secretary and Wilson came off the sidelines and joined his Great Offices of State in supporting a Yes vote in the referendum (Aqui, 2019). However, he still allowed Cabinet Ministers like Tony Benn and Barbara Castle to support a vote to leave. Europe was such a divisive issue across all factions of the Labour Party that even though foreign policy was in the 'moderate' camp, some moderates opposed the EEC. Key amongst those were the Unions (Whyman, 2008). Therefore, because this action crossed factions Wilson was forced to deviate from his usual policy of allowing factions free rein in their portfolios. Wilson's gamble paid off, as the referendum delivered a decisive result in favour of the EEC, which hurt the rebels, as unpopular stances tend to dampen parliamentary rebellions (Cowley, 2005). The eurosceptics in the Labour Party did not wish to rebel on an unpopular issue, as it would cost political capital for very little gain (Cowley, 2005) and thus dissent on Europe would be put to the side under Wilson.

On the remaining issues facing the Second Wilson government he was able to forge through policies on complicated issues like economic policy in a period of stagflation as well as the troubled situation in Northern Ireland without alienating any major faction.

Wilson after 1974 was on a smaller majority than he had even after 1964, which left him very vulnerable to any potential rebellions. Governments with small majorities who do not enjoy large popular mandates face this issue (Cowley, 2005). Nevertheless, Harold Wilson managed to stay

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<sup>11</sup> In the February 1974 election Labour actually got less votes than the Conservatives.

until his voluntary retirement, He remains to this day the only post-war Labour leader to leave fully of his own accord. Although Wilson faced more parliamentary rebellions than Attlee, Churchill, Eden, Macmillan, or even Heath, these rebellions never threatened his leadership of the party. The fact that the rebellions had limited impact showed Wilson's skill (Cowley, 2005).

## Empirical Methods to Manage Dissent

This thesis argues that there is an empirical method to manage dissent and both Blair and Wilson are examples of more successful examples within the party. Wilson was always successful while Blair struggled around the end of his leadership. However, in analysing the leadership of these two men we can demonstrate that successful management of dissent involves three elements. Those elements are: honouring agreements with other factional leaders; parcelling out areas of influence to each faction and maintaining that balance of power; and engagement with non-parliamentary stakeholders. Leaders who are capable of following these elements will be successful. The following two sections will analyse the merits of these three elements and how they are important to manage dissent.

## Three Elements of Managing Dissent

All political parties have to manage dissent from the different factions that make them up and the Labour Party is no exception (Bolleyer et. al., 2016, Kaltenecker, et. al., 2019). The main way to manage dissent is to be able to appease all factions and keep them on board with the general message of the party (Kaltenecker, et. al., 2019). The main way to appease factions is to appease their leaders and ensure that they do not spearhead any rebellions in the party (Kaltenecker, et. al., 2019). If factional leaders feel that they have something to gain by supporting the leadership and that they are partners in a deal for control of the party they will not encourage rebellions and their acolytes amongst the membership will stay in line (Kaltenecker, et. al., 2019).

The importance of appeasing the membership is emphasised by Kaltenecker et. al. (2019).

However, given that the membership of a party is often factionalised and take their cues from factional leaders the best way to prevent factional leaders from mobilising against the leadership is to do deals with them and honour those deals (Kaltenecker, et. al., 2019). If a leader begins to

renege on the deals that they made with other factions then they will pay a price in terms of party unity. Factional leaders have followings amongst the membership and will therefore allow their followers to make their dissent heard more (Kaltenegger, et. al., 2019). This would limit the responses of the leadership as the softer options for managing dissent would be off the table and more coercive actions would have to be considered, meaning that renegeing on deals is not an attractive option. Therefore, leaders who renege on their promises will have trouble managing dissent and maintaining order within the hierarchy of the party (Bolleyer, 2022).

On the other hand, leaders who maintain and honour the deals they make with factional leaders in the party will see limited dissent. If the relevant factional leaders feel like they are listened to and the promises that have been made to secure their support are being kept they have no incentive to withdraw. Therefore, any dissent is kept to a lower level within private conversations and the relevant factions do not wish to remove the leader or demonstrate a high level of disunity and instead prioritise a strong working relationship with the relevant leader.

Along with honouring deals good leaders also allow for equitable distribution of roles. Leaders often have to hand out policy portfolios to others within the party, whether that be ministerial posts in parliamentary systems or committee assignments in presidential ones. Given the oligarchical nature of factions their leaders will all play important roles within the party and therefore a good leader will distribute roles to them. By allowing them to have influence within the machinery of government or in building the party's platform a leader is able to bind them to the same platform which prevents excessive dissent.

Giving a role serves as a reward for loyalty to the relevant faction, demonstrating that they will have a seat at the table and the ability to make real change in exchange for ensuring that their faction remains in line with the party, the role provides the faction with a seat around the table and high level influence (Kaltenegger, et. al., 2019). It further plays a role of appeasing factions that do not control the leadership, preventing party struggles from being a fully zero-sum game as even if they do not win and may see factions they are opposed to taking power within the party they still have a place within the party and in government (Kaltenegger, et, al., 2019).

Leaders who fail to give roles to other factions or include them in high level discussions will face more dissent. The factions that are being ignored have no incentive to remain loyal and therefore may either voice dissent, making the party appear divided, or even split the party. Furthermore, leaders who symbolically give roles to faction leaders but then do not allow those leaders the necessary autonomy will also struggle, as the gift will not be true and therefore these factions will not feel like they are actually in charge of the role, but merely expected to follow the line of another group. Therefore a symbolic rather than material role may see a faction withdraw its support of the leadership and begin to dissent openly, which will make the party appear divided as well, or even cause a split.

However, leaders who do parcel out roles to different factions will prevent large levels of dissent from those groups. This reduces the chances that the party appears disunited and helps prevent major splits within the party. It is important to recognise the idea of the portfolio being given to the entire faction, rather than to any particular individual from the factional group. The position is given to seal the faithfulness of the faction, meaning that if the leader who has been given the position were to die or leave politics the relevant role would be given to someone in the same faction (Ennser-Jedenastik, et. al., 2021).

The final element is maintaining relationships with other major stakeholders within the political party that are not part of the government, and making them loyal to the leadership (Alexiadou and O'Malley, 2021). This includes working with affiliated bodies, such as trade unions, second order political representatives like councillors and understanding the desires of the membership which may not be the same as elites (Ennser-Jedenastik and Schumacher, 2020). This has become particularly important with the gradual expansion of the franchise within political parties, where many of these other stakeholders can choose the leader (Punnett, 1993). Therefore, these groups could be vital to defending the leader in times of crises and being able to identify their wishes and champion them as leader became important in a way that it wasn't previously, and factional leaders could be more easily drawn from those stakeholder groups, moving intra-party competition to group like unions, councillors, and even the membership (Marsh, 1993). Leaders who wanted to increase their appeal and demonstrate popularity within the party as a method of managing dissent needed such engagement. This often takes the form of close engagement with

these other stakeholders, such as meeting with trade union leaders. It also involves consulting and engaging with them on issues and policies that they believe matter and acting on those issues when in government.

Leaders who do not recognise the increased importance and presence of intra-party democracy and their reliance on all stakeholders in the party, rather than simply parliamentarians will leave themselves more vulnerable to challenges (Marsh, 1993). Failing to engage with those bodies leave the leader almost no fall-back point if their relationships with other factions deteriorate and other party oligarchs begin to organise against them, often in a bid for power (Marsh, 1993). If a leader is able to operate the other two elements successfully this is less of an issue but failure to engage with stakeholders means there is less room for error (Marsh, 1993).

However, a party leader with a direct link to other stakeholders can prevent others from forging an alliance with those groups (McLean, 2002) and can even work to forge alliances between groups (Baylor, 2018). By having a metaphorical finger on the pulse of the different groups that make up the party a leader can use them to implement their own view if that policy is popular. For example, in the United States, the popularity of civil rights amongst most Democrat-voting groups was used by leaders to move the Democrats in a more pro-Civil Rights direction. Despite the powerful entrenched groups in favour of segregation stakeholder engagement allowed the leadership to overcome those groups. Therefore such engagement allows the leadership to continually assess and reshape the coalitions that maintain their power in the party (McLean, 2009), meaning if it is clear that the deals they made are with people who no longer have the support they used to, or if there is an appetite for a different faction to control a different portfolio the leader has legitimacy to make those changes.

These three elements that allow a leader to successfully manage dissent are naturally quite difficult for populists to do within mainstream parties as they acknowledge the elite nature of party politics and therefore require placation of elites. Populism is an anti-elite ideology. A populist faction would find making a deal with other factions, often who are non-populist and elite distasteful and compromising their mandate to deliver the view of the party membership. In populist parties that do not have factions this is less difficult, since often power is concentrated in



the leader (Schulz, et. al, 2017), but in mainstream parties where there are factions and often leadership comes about due to a prospective leader making deals for the support of other factions. Populists' inability to make deals makes gaining the leadership more difficult. Furthermore, when they do gain the leadership their hold on the party is more tenuous as they will have done it without the support of other factions.

Populists similarly struggle to parcel out policy areas to other factions. Their anti-elitism means that compromising on the policies that the virtuous members supported to placate other elite factions is seen as distasteful (Böhmelt, et. al., 2022) and may even be seen as a betrayal. Therefore, even if people are appointed to policy portfolios, populist leaders in the party may seek to overrule them on their own policies.

Stakeholder engagement may on the face of it seem easier for populists to do, as after all these factions exist to support the views of the membership over the elite of the party, and therefore populist leaders should have no trouble consulting with members. However, while populists do engage with the membership more they will struggle with second order politicians and affiliated bodies such as trade unions, as those bodies either are working within the political structure and therefore will also place an emphasis on oligarchical tendencies, or be their own organisations who also follow the iron law of oligarchy and will prefer elite engagement. Sometimes these bodies may not be fully in lockstep with the membership, with councillors being moderate due to the benefits they gain from their party being in power, and affiliated organisations also facing a premium on power and thus being a moderating influence, all of which requires elite engagement and is not best placed to support populist factions.

## Conclusion

Tony Blair as leader began as being successful in honouring deals and parcelling out positions to different factions elements. He never truly engaged with all stakeholders in the party, preferring bilateral faction negotiations. Furthermore, as his leadership went on he began to fail on the other two elements of managing dissent, reneging on the deals he made and attempting to extend the power of his faction.

At the start of his leadership Blair made deals with people like Gordon Brown, promising that he would stand down after two terms in exchange for Brown's support. This arrangement worked well for both sides by providing Blair with a unified moderate faction within the party, while making the succession clear. This allowed for a unified front if there was a resurgence in the hard left and therefore could work to regulate conflict in the party as the leadership had all levers of control (Bolloyer, et. al., 2016). However, after his second election victory Blair vacillated on when he was going to leave which caused increased friction between him and Brown, which contributed to a higher level of dissent.

Blair also initially parcelled out roles to factional leaders in an equitable fashion, allowing both allies of Brown positions and bringing in the soft left, in particular Robin Cook. However, those roles were not set in stone and shifted throughout his premiership. This created a level of dissent and saw disparate groups combine (Baylor, 2018). Due to Blair removing people from opposing factions and replacing them with his allies, these factions began to more loudly voice their dissent and this damaged Blair's ability to manage conflict (Bolloyer, et. al., 2016). This left Blair vulnerable and expedited his resignation.

Blair never truly engaged with other stakeholders within the Labour Party, despite some promising early signs such as a clear manual for local government (Blair, 1998), often ignoring them once in power, which caused them to form new alliances where they used to be at odds (Baylor, 2018) such as local government and unions working together to support non-Blairite candidates. This had the effect of making Blair vulnerable when elites started voicing dissent as he had no other groups to fall back on.

As a leader Tony Blair is an example of the importance of continuously managing dissent. While he was successful at the start and managed dissent in the party reasonably well, honouring the deals he made, divvying up roles, and showing some interest in other stakeholders, this did not last. This allowed for some factions that had opposed each other to form new alliances (Baylor, 2018). Throughout his leadership, as he abandoned these three elements in favour of more

personalised leadership the number of rebellions increased (Cowley, 2005), showing that no leader can rely solely on their popular support as a method of controlling the party.

Harold Wilson, on the other hand, serves as an example of a leader who continuously managed dissent throughout his leadership. Wilson came to the leadership with the support of the left of the party. His election was largely due to the fracturing of the moderates within the PLP and divisive campaigning by George Brown, the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, which made Wilson appear more of a unity figure (Heppell, 2010). He was then able to use this mandate to make deals with unions and restructured the alliances in Labour so he could govern the party (Carty, 2015, McLean, 2002, Riker, 1984) and kept his close relationship with the unions and honoured the deals he made with them.

Wilson also effectively parcelled out roles to the different factions. He handed roles like foreign affairs to moderates and employment to the left of the party and ensured that when ministers were replaced the balance of power was maintained. Furthermore, he ensured that the faction who controlled the relevant portfolio was able to make policy largely unimpeded. This ensured that the party was working together and that Wilson remained the main power-broker, which prevented new alliances from forming (Baylor, 2018). Since all the factions had existing rivalries and Wilson was acting equitably towards all of them that prevented them from wanting to form new alliances (Baylor, 2018). Furthermore, when issues came up that were cross-factional, such as the membership of the EEC, Wilson was able to broker agreements through the use of a referendum. Wilson also maintained the balance of power through changing circumstances, even including the Labour Party returning to opposition, demonstrating that he considered the balance of power important and would not use changes in politics as an excuse to restructure as some leaders do (Baylor, 2018). Through allowing all factions a role in government ensured they were all appeased (Kaltenegger, et. al., 2019).

Wilson also played a strong role in engaging with stakeholders in the party, in particular the affiliated trade unions, as demonstrated by him respecting their euroscepticism (Gliddon, 2016). He also worked closely with unions on economic issues, appointing union officials like James Callaghan into high positions of power and had cordial relations with their leaders. Wilson did not

engage very strongly with the rank and file membership, however, at the time they did not have a role in electing party leaders. Therefore, since they neither funded the party to the level of trade unions nor did they have statutory powers they were less relevant until later factional fighting where member enfranchisement was used by factions to create new alliances (Baylor, 2018).

Harold Wilson played a strong role in managing dissent in the Labour Party and was successful throughout his leadership managing to restructure the issues in the party so that Labour was united in a way that it was not during the 1950s (Riker, 1984) and would not remain so after he resigned. As leader he was able to survive election defeats and the loss of his majority as an unquestioned leader who could handle any dissent, a distinction most of his successors would not enjoy.

Having analysed and compared two Labour leaders who were more successful in managing dissent in this chapter, the next chapters examine Jeremy Corbyn and how he managed dissent. They examine his relationship with stakeholders in the Labour Party, which is one of the three elements for successfully managing dissent. The parliamentary chapter also examines how he parcelled out portfolios and which factions he included in his Shadow Cabinet. It also examines how he honoured the different deals he made with major power brokers in the party. The chapters also demonstrate the difficulty for populist leaders when it comes to managing dissent in a mainstream party, due to the elite structure of the party and the power of the party oligarchy.

## Chapter 5: Corbyn and the Membership

### Introduction

The previous chapters have examined the increasing radicalisation of members of political parties and how this creates tensions with vote-seeking parliamentarians. This chapter examines how that tension was exploited within the Labour Party during Corbyn's leadership, focusing on the first hypothesis: that populists in mainstream parties consider their mandate as being solely from the membership of their party. In other words, did Corbyn's leadership actually intend to prioritise membership interests and concerns over those of the party elites?

As was argued in Chapters 2 and 3, populists often define themselves against elites and therefore it would make sense for this to carry on in an intra-party perspective. Since populists typically challenge elites, they cannot expect much support from elites and will instead aim to forge a new winning coalition with the membership of the party and those few elites that may support them. However, in this new winning coalition the main partner is the membership. Under Corbyn, the membership was given an exalted status by the leadership. As discussed in Chapter 3 populists around Europe have tried to create a new, people-centric polity and within political parties this has gone with the direction of travel of allowing the membership more rights (Dalton, 2011, Mudde, 2004, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, Scarrow, 2005, Scarrow, 2015). However, the effect of this populism on members who have accepted and agree with the oligarchic structures of party politics has not been examined, as many members may see the oligarchy as either a positive or a necessary evil. This chapter therefore aims to examine the effect of Corbyn on the membership by examining how his leadership was viewed by both members who supported him and members who were sceptical of him.

In order to address this question, the testimony of members from a wide variety of areas is evaluated, from rural seats where Labour will never win to seats where Labour has always been strong. Additionally, the length of their membership will also be assessed to see if members who

have been around in the party longer have less positive views about Corbyn, due to memories of the previous period of factional warfare in the 1980s. This will also take into account whether they have been continuous members, or whether they left particularly during the Blair years, with those who rejoined being likely to be the more radical. It will then evaluate whether the radicalisation of party members described in Chapter 2 along with the general rejection of political elites that has led to the rise of populism around Europe as detailed previously holds true within the Labour Party and what role this played in Corbyn's rise. This will help answer the first hypothesis, about how populists in mainstream parties calibrate their appeal.

The first section of the chapter covers the background of the membership, examining the relationship within the party between the membership and parliamentarians particularly in 2015 and how this affected the vote in the leadership election and influencing why Corbyn's message was more popular in certain areas and with certain sections of the party. The second and third sections discuss the feelings of the membership towards party elites and how the support of the membership was maintained. The fourth and fifth sections discuss Corbyn's moves to engage with the members and how his stances on Brexit and Anti-Semitism cost him a lot of support. This sixth section discusses the overall situation with the membership and then the final section concludes.

Research on Heresthetics establishes how different actors will attempt to structure the systems they are in to achieve a positive outcome (Riker, 1980, Riker, 1982). Populists often try to move systems of decision making and power sharing away from relying on unwritten rules designed to placate elites, viewing such an arrangements as undemocratic. Instead they try to structure the systems they work in to be more in line with the views of the grassroots with the membership being able to make most decisions, which elites view as destabilising. This chapter will therefore analyse how Corbyn sought to restructure the Labour Party to dilute the power of elites and hand power to the membership, a body he saw as more useful to him, than the elites who were sceptical if not outright hostile to him from the start of his leadership and this will further support the second hypothesis, that populists ignore the unwritten rules that exist to placate elites. However, not all the membership would view this potential assault on the party oligarchy as a

positive development. Members who were more active in campaigning, had closer connections to party elites, or were officers in their CLPs may have accepted the oligarchic construction of the party. If so, there might be expected to be evidence of disagreement amongst the membership and some dissent towards Corbyn, so Corbyn's reactions to that and his reforms of party structures are important to examine. This will also allow for an analysis of the third hypothesis, that populists rely on the membership to support and protect them over other constitutional bodies within the party.

## Composition of the Membership

As Scarrow (2015) discusses, membership of political parties has often become more radical as the number of members has declined on a global basis and this creates opportunities for more populist leaders to be elected in mainstream parties.

The growth of the rights of individual party members has been a phenomenon across advanced democracies in Western Europe and North America dating back to the 1980s when in order to combat declining numbers the membership was increasingly given greater rights in choosing the party leadership (Scarrow, 2005). This development coincided with a radicalisation of party membership as the links between parties and civil society have declined, leading to more activist voices joining who may be out of step with the party's broader electorate (Dalton, 2014). This can create a divide between the elite of a party which is primarily office-seeking and the membership who are more ideologically inclined, which can be exploited by figures on the fringes of the party. This has been seen sporadically throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries in nations like the United States, France, and the UK where populist figures have engaged in heresthetical methods to try and reform the party to suit their interests and ensure that they can come from the fringes to take command of the party (Riker, 1980, Riker, 1982).

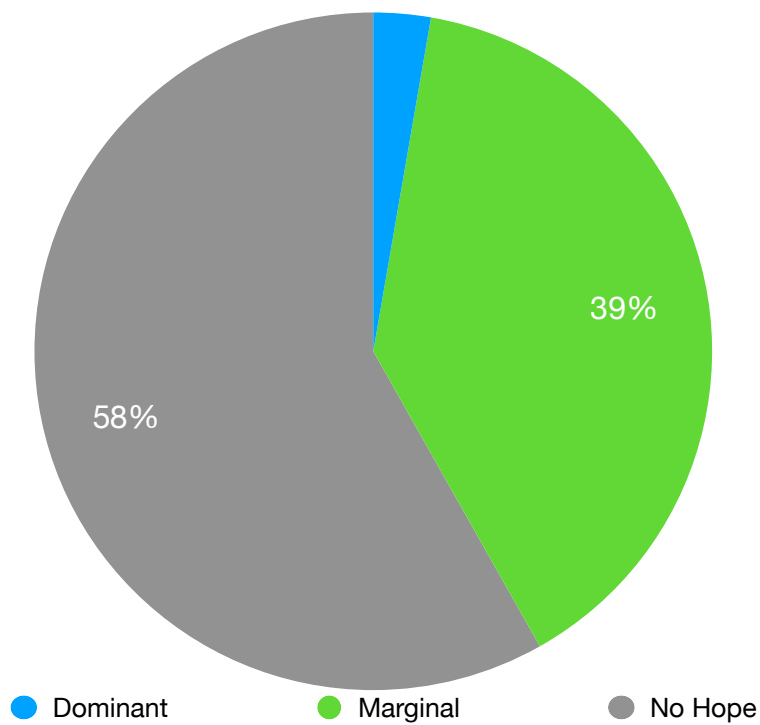
As shown in the discussion of populism in Chapter 3, there is an attempt within all mainstream political parties to restructure the party and make it more responsive to the wishes of its members, or of a fetishised view of what its membership wants, often harkening back to a supposed golden era (which the predecessors of this populist faction also opposed at the time)

(Clarke, 2019), and seeks to restore the membership to their rightful place in directing policy at the expense of party elites (Biale and Ottonelli, 2018, Michels, 1968). This idea of the activists being over and above the party elites is attractive to the new activist model of party membership (Lisi and Cancela, 2017, Young, 2001). Therefore the situation within the Labour Party was ripe for Corbyn and his message to resonate should the right circumstances emerge where the party membership felt that they could not trust parliamentarians to follow their ideology (Hughes, 2015, Stone, 2018).

Owing to the plurality electoral system the Labour Party is divided into several hundred CLPs who direct the Labour Party's efforts locally and have an elected Executive Committee (EC). The EC is answerable to either a General Committee (GC) of elected delegates from local branches, or in some cases to an All-Member Meeting. These meetings tend to be on a regular (usually monthly basis) and all members may attend (though in GC only delegates may vote). Since each CLP is based locally some of them are in seats that have high resources and large numbers of elected officials, and an MP, while others are in seats Labour has never and will likely never win and have almost no budget, and there are CLPs that run the full gamut in between (Fisher, 2000, Pemberton and Wickham-Jones, 2012). A large number of members were interviewed and are categorised as being in three types of Westminster seats: dominant, where Labour is almost assured of perpetual victory; marginal, where Labour is competitive but there is a clear challenger party; and no-hope, where Labour has no potential to gain control or even win election beyond securing the election of a few local councillors. The areas were categorised by examining the past electoral record, particularly if they had a Member of Parliament within the last thirty years, the vote share of the Labour Party, and the composition of the current council. The third criteria was particularly relevant for determining whether a seat was dominant or marginal. For example, though Coventry has almost always returned a Labour MP in their three seats, there is a strong Conservative presence on the council providing a clear alternative to Labour. Exeter, on the other hand, which has had a Conservative MP more recently was categorised as dominant because Labour not only had a strong majority on the council but there was no obvious opposition party as the non-Labour seats were distributed amongst other parties. The distribution of the membership within my sample is shown in Figure 5.1, with members being described as a Labour person who has never held elected office (elected officials will be examined later):



**Figure 5.1 Breakdown of Membership by Area**

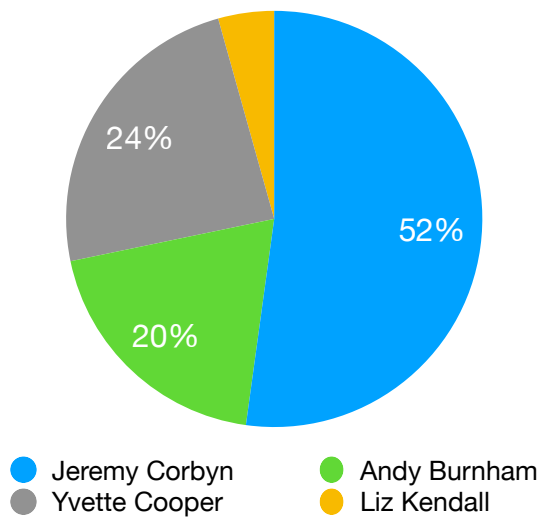


Since the sampling method for selecting interviewees for seats in this thesis was based on candidates for election the reason there are far fewer activists for dominant seats is that most of those people won election and have thus been categorised as councillors. The members interviewed in this thesis are naturally potentially more office-seeking than the average member as they did seek a public office, yet in no-hope areas these members are so unlikely to win that they can be considered not to be truly office-seeking and potentially more representative than the membership at large (Carty, 2015, Dalton, 2007, Ignazi, 2018). Beverley Cottrell, a member in the very conservative South Cambridgeshire seat who stood for council said that in her area ‘Labour councillors are like hen’s teeth’. Therefore, sampling both members in marginal and no-hope

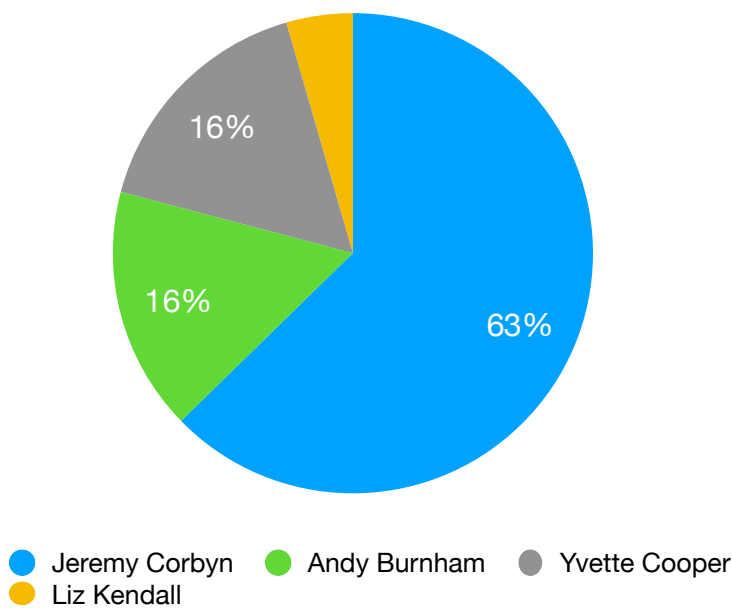
constituencies can demonstrate a difference between office-seeking members and more ideological members. Furthermore, every interview discussed dynamics within the CLPs so therefore they can provide an indication of the dynamics within the wider membership. In the 2015 leadership election the membership overwhelmingly voted for Jeremy Corbyn to be the leader of the Labour Party and they subsequently re-elected him in the subsequent year when he was challenged by Owen Smith. However, this vote was not as uniform as the numbers would potentially indicate, with a majority of CLP nominations for Corbyn coming either from very safe or no hope seats, with marginals being more muted (New Statesman, 2015). Though CLP nominations in 2015 did not have any genuine weight, unlike in later leadership elections where they do play a formal role, they are indicative of where Corbyn's support came from. Importantly, members in marginal seats where Labour could hope to win but was not assured of victory were the least enthused about Corbyn and thus valued electability more. As examined in Chapter 2 party membership has increasingly become middle-class and ideological and members instead of being from trade unions are more likely to belong to interest groups and be more involved in their politics, allowing activism to trump office-seeking (Bale, et. al., 2019). This tendency may be exacerbated in seats where Labour is either guaranteed victory or will never win, allowing for Corbyn to appear more attractive to these members (Achury, et. al., 2018, Dalton, et. al., 2013). In marginal seats where there is a constant battle for council seats or parliamentary seats electability is likely to take greater precedence overall. Therefore, when looking at the membership it is reasonable to expect that members in marginal seats will be more sceptical of Corbyn based on concerns about his electability.

This pattern was indeed replicated across the interviewees based on their voting preference in the 2015 leadership election. While Corbyn did win across the board in the membership sample of this thesis, including in marginal constituencies, his victory was more convincing in seats where Labour had no chance of winning. This is demonstrated in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 which show the spread of votes from members in marginal seats and members in no hope seats (Bale, et. al., 2019).

**Figure 5.2. Breakdown of votes of members in Marginal Seats**



**Figure 4.3. Breakdown of votes by members in No Hope Seats**



In areas where Labour has no hope of winning Corbyn had higher support in the 2015 leadership contest, but in marginal constituencies where Labour control of the council and victory in the parliamentary seats was neither assured nor unfeasible Corbyn underperformed compared to the overall figures of Corbyn's victory in 2015 (59.5%) by nearly 10%. This suggests that in areas where electability is an issue Corbyn's perceived lack of electability was an obstacle. The main reason that members who did not vote for Corbyn cited for their reticence in interviews was worries about his electability and the implications this would have on holding councils or parliamentary seats. On the other hand, those who voted for him cited ideological reasons in their

interviews and many in seats where a Labour victory was highly improbable cited that they wanted a leader they could happily follow.

However, even in marginal seats Corbyn still performed strongly and got the most votes. This is largely due to the increased focus on ideology of party members who may value their ideological views over electability and favour a leader who will be closer to them, particularly when they feel that party elites are not as ideologically committed (Dalton, 2018). This issue was highlighted by Luke Akehurst of the 'Labour First' moderate faction as a key reason why Corbyn won:

He won partly because the mainstream of the party didn't calibrate its reaction to the election defeat correctly. So, it almost looks like we were so freaked out by the election defeat that we were going to accelerate back to sort of hyper Blairism. And a good example of that is Harriet Harman's decision which was a pivotal moment in the leadership campaign to whip people on (...) a piece of legislation going through about social security(...) it was quite kind of draconian. (...) The Corbyn people were able to present it as though the PLP was being really harsh on welfare claimants, understandably grass roots labour party activists reacted to it badly. (Interview 29)

The issue of the welfare cuts highlighted how, as indicated by Akehurst, the PLP was out of step with the membership. It allowed Corbyn to almost paint himself as the heir to the previous leader, Ed Miliband, in his commitment to not reversing the leftward shift that Miliband had started. Members interviewed largely enjoyed Miliband's work on moving on and leaving behind the perceived neoliberal elements of New Labour and shifting Labour onto a 'purer' footing and they found the PLP's resistance to him upsetting, meaning they were already sceptical of the PLP and open to criticism of it, especially over the welfare cuts (Goes, 2016). Therefore, the differentiation of Corbyn to the Labour elite, the fact that he did not appear to be a regular politician made him more attractive to Labour members. Dan Ratcliffe, who voted for Corbyn in a marginal seat, expressed this view:

I think we've been compromising as a party for so long. So, Blair came in, and that was the big reforming thing. And we lost a load of voters, but we did a lot of good in government. Brown was always going to wind up taking over from him.(...)okay, we've we've had Brown and a lot of the party were through gritted teeth, we know that New Labour is doing these good things. And so, we'll ignore the bits that we don't like, and we'll just carry on, let's be in power. And then we kept compromising with Brown, we compromise with Ed Miliband, (...) between Ed Miliband standing and the election for Corbyn, and we're not really got anywhere. I think, a lot the party didn't believe that we wouldn't win as the coalition was so awful, it was so self-evident to us. And well, everyone must realise this, and corporate citizens and people turn up to these rallies. And yeah, see the people over this, this is great. And so, I think there was a perhaps a jaded view of our leadership and a real sense that being idealistic could work (Interview 30)

This view was shared by an activist in a rural area:

I supported Jeremy Corbyn, he was my first choice because I'd always been on the left of the party and I quite liked a lot of stuff Ed Miliband was saying but I didn't think we were going far enough in what we were saying and challenging the Tory party on austerity or on foreign policy (Interview 45)

The narrative by most member-interviewees in most interviews was that Miliband had been a positive but insufficient change and that Corbyn provided the ideological purity necessary for the party, which had lost the 2015 election by compromising. Corbyn, a life-long rebel, could present himself as a clear conduit between the membership and the elites in the party and was fully in support of the members over the elites, especially reflecting their personal views. He was unwilling to compromise with the electorate and could provide a clear challenge to Tory austerity, so Corbyn appeared more attractive than continued compromise between members and their parliamentarians. The increased extremism of party members towards this unwillingness to compromise values made a serial rebel like Corbyn increasingly seem like the right option (Dalton, 2017, Dalton and Sin, 2008). Therefore, once Corbyn was on the ballot he was able to appeal to the membership and win across the board.

The shock loss of the 2015 election ended up lifting the lid on an already simmering situation of distrust between the Labour membership and the elites (Bale, 2016a), which had been tempered by the compromise leadership of Ed Miliband. When that compromise failed it appeared that there could be a return to Blairism, especially with the Blairite candidate, Liz Kendall, being the first to announce her bid. This move scared the Labour grassroots and made the membership more amenable to Corbyn, who also benefitted from the registered supporters scheme, where non-members could pay a small fee in order to vote in the leadership election, which increased his voter base. However, many members did not vote for Corbyn, and this was especially true in marginal seats where electability was a concern. Therefore, although Corbyn's victory was convincing, there was still around 40% of the membership that did not support him (Mason, 2015).

## Members and Parliamentarians Perceptions of Each Other

The literature review identified a general trend towards greater ideological polarisation amongst party members, a trend that was particularly present in the Labour Party, leading to the perceived compromise leadership of Ed Miliband. When that leadership failed to win the 2015 election this precipitated a split between the membership and parliamentarians over the future direction of the party, which contributed to the election of Corbyn. This dispute was not just over ideological

direction but also over the relationship between members and parliamentarians and whether parliamentarians should mainly work for Labour members. Many members considered MPs to be their representatives and therefore wanted them to reflect their own views. This position differed from the traditional view of MPs who see themselves as representing their entire community. John Clare, a member and former councillor in a marginal seat in the North East stated his view of parliamentarians, which showed a clear belief that they were taking the membership for granted and was upset about it:

I do not go out knocking doors, delivering leaflets in the pouring rain in the middle of winter, I do not give substantial amounts of money to the Labour Party to provide an individual with a good secure job. (...) I mean they're not all good, hard-working MPs (Interview 96)

The view of a large portion of the membership, as evidenced by Mr. Clare's claim, was that members of the Labour Party are the reason MPs are elected. Therefore, MPs should reflect the values and beliefs of the membership and seek to promote those values within the community, and they should ultimately answer to their CLPs. Consequently, totemic issues for Corbyn like mandatory re-selection were appealing to those members as a way to ensure that MPs who had strayed from the left could be held to account. This view was directly at odds with the views of many MPs who saw their role as being community, rather than party facing, as stated by one former MP:

We haven't come into politics to fight battles with lunatics in the Labour Party (...), that wasn't the gig we signed up for, we've come into politics to make the lives of the people we serve better. (Interview 63)

This latent issue, combined with the perceived slide of the PLP towards 'hyper-Blairism' as characterised by Luke Akehurst, created a perfect situation for Corbyn. His rebelliousness towards the leadership, which was seen as a fatal flaw amongst the PLP, was weaponised and seen as a positive characteristic amongst the membership, who believed he would not betray them in the way that the previous Labour government was perceived to have let down Labour values. Furthermore, the shock defeat of 2015 under a leader seen to be more acceptable to the public gave many members a fatalistic outlook, that if Labour was going to lose it should lose standing for what it believes in. Corbyn, to many members, was a leader in line with what they believed, pursuing a full repudiation of the austerity agenda implemented by Cameron as well as the military interventionism of Tony Blair. Thus, instead of trying to be as conservative as the Conservatives, Labour could put out a bold alternative agenda that would convince people to vote Labour. Corbyn's leadership campaign sought to bypass the Parliamentary Party altogether

and reach directly to the membership, offering them this different kind of leadership where they did not have to compromise their principles. Liz Walter, a former member of the Labour Party, who left in protest at Starmer's leadership expressed this view in an interview:

the Blair government was for me too much in bed with big business. Not doing nearly as much as it should've done towards redistribution of wealth and curbing the power of big business. Not to say it didn't do any good things, it did, minimum wage and all those things, tax credits, Sure Start, they were all brilliant things. But I wanted them to go further in doing something to tackle the root causes, which to me is unbridled capitalism, and I didn't see any of the other candidates tackling that. (...) I think mainly the things I've just said are things that inspired people. People wanted a change; I think it was really exciting in 1997 when Labour came to power after all that time. But the idea of Blair as Thatcher's heir really resonated, especially with people I knew. And I think a lot of people had clearly left the Labour Party over Iraq particularly. Many people I knew whose views I respected were just disgusted by that and couldn't join Labour. And I felt that Corbyn would be able to bring those people back into the party and start more of a mass movement towards radical socialism. (Interview 138)

This idea of a mass movement was directly against the vision of the PLP, as perceived by Labour MPs, and therefore it posed a threat to the power of many MPs who feared a return to the inward-looking days of the 1980s. Given that Corbyn himself was one of the key members of the losing faction in that era, MPs saw this as the old Bennite faction attempting to settle scores and were opposed to what they saw as a type of mob rule.

In line with the trends identified amongst party membership William Owen also identified his support for Corbyn using similar language:

I think he struck a chord you know; he certainly struck a chord with the changing membership. When I first joined the Labour party many years ago, it was very union dominated, and much of the policy direction and the way you think came from the unions, it came from what we now think as the right of the party. I think that died a death under Blair and under Brown as well. The party became much more middle class, people like me, I guess. Academics, middle class people, decent incomes looking towards a different future to what we could see capitalism was evolving into. I think that's what it was, and clearly your generation, young people – I don't know what caused your generation click onto Corbyn but click on it did. I took part in a few rallies, after 2015 when he became leader, and it was absolutely wonderful. Prior to that, politics was a bit more turgid, a bit more structured, a bit more programmed. It certainly was under Blair. He was always a good speaker, he spoke well, but you never really felt enthused by it particularly (Interview 137)

The new, ideological, and mostly middle-class membership of the Labour Party felt more able to discuss issues and wanted to be involved in the policy making of the party. This also mirrors trends in Europe of members in political parties wanting more of a say in developing the policy of their party (Farinelli and Masetti, 2015). They did not want policy to be made solely by the Parliamentary Party. Therefore, the idea of a more grassroots party that was promised by Corbyn which did not feel the need to play the political game at Westminster was quite attractive to this

new membership. In his first conference speech as Labour Leader Corbyn affirmed his support for the grassroots of the party gaining a more prominent policy-making role:

I am not a leader who wants to impose leadership lines all the time. I don't believe anyone of us has a monopoly on wisdom and ideas - we all have ideas and a vision of how things can be better.

I want open debate in our party and our movement.

I will listen to everyone.

I firmly believe leadership is about listening.

We will reach out to our new members and supporters.

Involve people in our debates on policy and then our Party as a whole will decide. (Corbyn, 2015b)

This also helps explain the increased levels of support for him from members in rural areas who were interviewed for this thesis, who live in places where elections will never be won but under a Corbyn leadership their members could influence Labour policy more. However, the model the PLP subscribed to was a more traditional one where the leader set out the direction of the party, compromised with other factions and created a united manifesto. Corbyn, however, did not appear to be a figure who would compromise, which was why people like Martin Field, a member in a no-hope seat in the East of England supported him:

People do care about the NHS, and they do care about the railways, and they do care about education; they do care about the things he's fighting for. And people actually wanted someone to make a difference! It wasn't going to be just another bland Blairite with a tinkering at the edges and mainly going along with the capitalist ways of dealing with things. (Interview 135)

Adam Pounds, another Labour member in a marginal seat in the East of England also expressed support for Corbyn's unwillingness to compromise his values:

I actually think the campaigning is a very important thing, and his actual wish to engage with the public is very good. I think when I watched the interview of the leadership before, it was very clear that he had much more of a personal touch. He wasn't afraid to challenge members of the audience if he got the answers he didn't like, which I think was a very important thing. Whereas, I think the others tended to bend to what they were saying. (Interview 112)

The idea that policy could be made by members to genuinely cover what they wanted, rather than be lost within the opaque and elite processes of the Labour Party was attractive to the membership. Jeremy Benstead, a former councillor in Cambridge expressed the feelings of alienation held by the membership which Corbyn capitalised on:

The membership were ignored and this was the chance for the grassroots membership to hit back at the then party leadership and what was perceived to be successors of that party leadership. (Interview 105)

Corbyn's message, of a Labour Party that did not have a direct leader but a facilitator who would take the membership's view on board and possibly support it over the PLP was therefore quite attractive, as stated by Philippa Davey, a member in the East of England:



Jeremy Corbyn was saying something really different; something a bit more radical, somebody who would be a bit more grassroots, anti-war. (...). Yeah, I think there was a real feeling that things could change and be more of a member-led organisation. (Interview 47)

This desire for a membership-led party that appealed to large portions of the membership did have its critics. Apart from MPs who both had an interest in keeping the system as it was due to the power it gave them as well as the increased efficiency and improved electability, councillors were also opposed to this change. One councillor commented that the idea of a 'member-led' policy system would end up being a gift to the opposition:

Quite frankly, we should be the last person the MP is bothered about; they should be bothered about tackling poverty and helping their constituents. That's their job. So I think it becomes a distraction and it becomes a gift as well (Interview 23)

The portions of the membership that were not swayed by the idea of a more grassroots-based leadership often considered it to be counterproductive to Labour's goal of winning elections. Even Ann Black, a member of Labour's National Executive Committee, who had long been seen as part of the left-wing faction on the National Executive Committee, explained her opposition to Corbyn as being due to pragmatism about electability rather than party democracy:

With Jeremy Corbyn it was, I suppose it kind of hinges on appeal within the party and appeal outside the party, and it's okay having half a million members but we actually need fourteen or fifteen million voters. So I think it was related to that, being seen as a 'can you see this person as Prime Minister in Number Ten', and Ed Miliband failed that test in his first few weeks and never really regained it over five years (Interview 85)

The worry, particularly amongst members in marginal areas was that Corbyn would not be able to be sold on the doorstep and would end up prioritising the members who did not play an active role in campaigning or electioneering in the Labour Party, who often were more extreme and were not hearing the messages on the doorstep. While many of them also agreed with Corbyn's economic policy they had not fully broken their trust with their MPs and recognised that a sustainable leadership needed to have the support of MPs and needed to focus on the electorate rather than the party. Furthermore, given that many of these arguments about empowering the grassroots had been used before in the 1980s there was a worry that a Corbyn leadership would not deliver empowerment of the grassroots but more infighting and score-settling. Furthermore, there was a worry about Corbyn's attitudes on issues like foreign policy and how he would be at odds with much of the PLP. The worry, therefore, was that he would not unite the party after an unexpected defeat and his fringe obsessions would lead to trouble down the road. Moreover, Corbyn's position as a serial rebel made people worry about his ability to command loyalty in the

PLP. Richard Angell, former director of the Progress faction outlined his issues with Corbyn and his extreme position as follows:

We allowed Jeremy Corbyn to stand as a kind of affable modern Charles Kennedy, when really he's a kind of affable George Galloway. For a variety of reasons, it just looked like he was kind of emollient super Grandpa, that was against the Iraq war, against tuition fees and against civil liberties, exactly the position that a good social democrat, like Charles Kennedy held in 2013, or 2003 to 2007, whenever he was liberal leader. But actually, he's not that, he might be more affable in his style to George Galloway. But he believes exactly the same thing. Seumus Milne is his Director of Communications. I'm told and understand his closest friend is George Galloway. That is his politics. It is that anti imperialist, conspiratorial anti capitalism, and the kind of unpleasant oppression Olympics that puts Jews at the bottom of the pile. A kind of white rich elite that can't really be the victim of racism, even when egregious things happen like Pittsburgh or the very real example of anti semitism that's happened in the Labour Party. This is pretty appalling, but because it was a failure of me and my colleagues to pin on him that he is really this, George Galloway-esque character. He then looked like a breath of fresh air. And I go back to the comment about the fashion. He looked like he was vintage Labour, when really he's an anathema to Labour. Never has any other Social Democratic Party in Europe been led by somebody whose thought the wrong people won the Cold War. And that is what we have in the Labour leader. (...) You know, it was almost unbelievable that Jeremy Corbyn could be friends with Hamas and call them friends. So people dismissed it as being true, despite the fact it is and there is evidence suggests that it's true. So in that vein, he looked like a breath of fresh air. And people wanted to cling to that because Labour has lost two elections (Interview 46)

However, despite the concerns of the membership and that Corbyn was a far cry from what any successful leader of the Labour Party looked like, both in temperament and physically, a large portion of the membership was willing to hear his message. Longstanding alienation of the membership from parliamentarians meant that members were looking for a different sort of leader who would ask their opinion and focus on a more grassroots democracy. This alienation helped Corbyn win the leadership election, and the next section will focus on how it helped him maintain his leadership.

## Membership-Parliament relations during Corbyn's leadership

Under Corbyn's leadership Labour saw a large increase of membership from under 400,000 to nearly 600,000 members (Whitely, et. al., 2018). Many of the new members were people who joined under the registered supporters scheme introduced by Ed Miliband where supporters of the party could pay £3 to vote in the leadership election. By allowing affiliated individuals, mainly people in a trade union, who were not full party members, to vote in leadership elections, it favoured Corbyn. These newer members were typically far more pro-Corbyn and distrustful of the moderates in the PLP (Crines, et. al., 2017).

The dissenting voices within the PLP will be covered in more detail in Chapter 6 but for the purposes of this chapter it will suffice to say that Corbyn and his initial Shadow Cabinet struggled to find common ground, even though Corbyn had reached out to multiple wings of the PLP. Issues like airstrikes in Syria which turned into public spats only served to further the divide between the PLP and the Corbyn-supporting membership. Many interviewed members felt that the Shadow Cabinet should support Corbyn's policy and that their disagreements were an attempt to undermine his leadership. It was well known that Corbyn only got onto the ballot because he was lent nominations by MPs that did not support him, and most of the Parliamentary Group remained skeptical of him. Yet, many members felt that Corbyn had a mandate to lead and fundamentally transform the party, and that these public spats demonstrated unnecessary recalcitrance amongst MPs. This reluctance to accept the change, combined by the knowledge that most MPs opposed Jeremy Corbyn being leader would, at least in the minds of some members, be a sign that the PLP did not wish to accept the result and would try to undermine Corbyn.

Though many MPs had a different view, which will be covered in Chapter 6, and saw Corbyn as not observing the rules and norms of the Labour Party, these rules were not seen as important by many of the rank-and-file membership who believed that Corbyn should be heard above his colleagues. Therefore, concepts like collective responsibility and the fact that the leader is merely *Primus inter pares* were lost on many members.

This polarisation was further deepened by the transformation of the Corbyn leadership campaign into the factional group Momentum. This group existed to further support the leadership and continue organising the members, both old and new, that had supported Jeremy Corbyn for leader, and they viewed the PLP as an obstacle (Stafford, 2016). Given that Corbyn's leadership campaign was predicated on him being different from the PLP and members distrusting parliamentarians it therefore fitted into Momentum's interests to continue driving a wedge between members and parliamentarians. Therefore, emphasis was placed on 'disloyal' MPs like Wes Streeting, Jess Phillips, Chuka Umunna, and Chris Leslie who had steadfastly refused to serve under Corbyn and even threatened to 'stab him in the front' to continue the image that the

PLP did not want Corbyn and would do anything to remove him (Stewart and Elgot, 2016). Momentum would then attempt to pressure MPs to follow the correct line, as they did over the Syria airstrikes issue where they encouraged members to de-select MPs that would not support Corbyn despite this being a free vote. Corbyn as leader never spoke out directly against this treatment of MPs. In fact, one of his main goals was to make it easier to de-select MPs, signalling soft support of Momentum's actions (Culbertson, 2018).

Since the leadership did not call out the pressure and threats to de-select MPs Momentum was emboldened to continue pressuring and organising separately to the regular party, often providing their members with marching orders before constituency meetings. For example in CLPs like Cambridge, Exeter, and the Liverpool seats Momentum would often hold pre-meetings before monthly CLP meetings and issue a line for all their members to take at the meeting on the votes that would come up. In some constituencies they even produced slates for taking over branch parties, subsections of a constituency which in some areas have little constitutional power. For example, in Cambridge CLP, the Romsey Branch had a Momentum slate for their Annual General Meeting that allowed the faction to take full control of the branch.

Momentum and the leadership were unexpectedly handed a gift in the form of the leadership challenge of Owen Smith after the 2016 Brexit referendum. The mass resignation of MPs and the subsequent leadership election vindicated the belief that the PLP was set on getting rid of Corbyn no matter the excuse. This allowed Momentum to continue pushing for deselections and control of the party. It continued to draw on the point that John Clare made previously in this chapter about how party members resented being seen as foot soldiers for MPs, which Corbyn encouraged, as in his victory speech where he mentioned members and unions as what made the party strong but deliberately left out MPs:

We are a Party organically linked together; between the unions and the Party membership, and all the affiliated organisations. (Corbyn, 2015a)

A member of the cross-factional group Labour Together, which serves as a think tank and bridging ground between the moderate and hard-left factions, who wrote a post-mortem of the 2019 election, confirmed that the leadership challenge by Owen Smith was a gift to Corbyn and Momentum and only served to drive apart the members and the parliamentarians:

Even from the people who wanted to achieve something from that move, I think that was ill fought out. I think as well it probably strengthened Corbyn among the membership, because it gave like an enemy or attack point, like people felt they were under attack, therefore they defend even more strongly. I don't think it helped things at all in terms of the war. It entrenched people further. Yeah I don't think it was a very good situation for either side to be honest (Interview 64)

The results of the leadership challenge were a victory for Corbyn and for Momentum, in that not only did they see off Owen Smith, but in the National Executive Committee elections, Momentum won all the seats directly elected by the members. This provided Corbyn with a majority on the National Executive for the first time. This majority therefore allowed Corbyn and his allies the chance to reshuffle the Parliamentary Party by bringing in policies they had always championed, such as mandatory re-selection, where an MP would have to go through the full re-selection process before every election. The move reflected the wishes of the sections of the membership who had endorsed Corbyn, who believed that the PLP was out of touch with the membership and unwilling to offer the necessary radicalism as demonstrated by this interviewee:

From my understanding of politics the Parliamentary Labour Party, it hasn't been able to entirely reflect the current demographics and makeup of the Labour Party, and this is the current effect, if it was we would have seen a lot more young people in politics, see a better background that reflects life in the UK rather than people from private schools or Eton College for example, it's a matter that a few years ago the parliamentary party would have been relevant to the membership because it reflected them, but now I feel it doesn't quite do so (...) My understanding of the Blairites is that they are essentially Blue Labour who may be called conservative-lites as they had very similar policies on neoliberal economics, so those who followed them like Ed Miliband supported austerity – really should have been an alternative from one major party in the UK. (Interview 5)

In the end mandatory reselection was not brought in, but the idea of reshuffling the PLP was enticing to members, many of whom did support the lowered threshold to trigger an MP for re-selection. By playing on the latent conflict between members and the PLP, which had existed before his election, Corbyn and his supporters were able to continue trying to build support, demonstrating that to some level managing dissent in the PLP was seen as counterproductive to Corbyn's leadership.

The devotion of the leadership to grassroots membership activities over elite structures caused further division between those elites and the membership. On top of the reduced threshold to de-select members of Parliament, another change was to encourage CLPs to move to an All Member Meeting structure, where all members could vote on business in the CLP, rather than the delegates elected by the branches. While some CLPs already had this structure meaning that this was a less disruptive change, it still was consistent with the idea of removing elite structures.

Under the AMM model there would be less parity between the different areas in the constituency. In some rural areas where party membership had always been sparse this was less of an issue, given that their branches were not big enough to elect delegates. However, in geographically smaller constituencies with a thriving branch culture this move was used by groups like Momentum to remove long-standing figures in the party. This further reduced the link between members and parliamentarians as often long-standing officials in the constituency had close links with members of parliament and could therefore work to create a more harmonious environment and deal with differences of opinion, something that newer officials elected through AMMs who were only beholden to members struggled to do. By further damaging the oligarchy present within CLPs and allowing large and more extreme branches outsized political power in the CLP the Corbyn leadership further emphasised the ideas that there were no penalties for not having a strong relationship with elites. The decoupling of members from party elites, combined with the reduced threshold to deselect an MP shifted the balance away from branches within a constituency and towards organised factional groups like Momentum. Since branches no longer had as strong a role through submitting motions and electing delegates and might only meet to choose a council candidate, their role as a facilitator for discussion was limited. Therefore, if most of the discussion was held in factional groups that had no interest in broadening the discussion the gulf between members and MPs would only increase.

These actions by the leadership to continue driving a wedge between the membership and MPs were also poorly received by the members previously mentioned who were sceptical of Corbyn. In fact those actions actually widened the gulf and moved some members closer to MPs. These members were opposed to Corbyn disregarding norms like collective responsibility and doing nothing about the abuse and attempted deselections that were going on in his name within Labour. These members by and large believed it was not sustainable to have a leader who did not enjoy the confidence of their Members of Parliament. Therefore, for these members Corbyn's inability to work with MPs was a negative factor.

This continued wedge also worked to alienate some members from Corbyn, who were in agreement with some of his policies like Steve King:

In many ways I liked Jeremy Corbyn, I like some of his ideas, I like and support the manifesto we now have and I give Corbyn and his team a lot of credit for that, all the credit actually. It's obvious to me, however, that Corbyn is not going to become PM, and he's not going to win a General Election. So, I think a lot of members of the PLP are the first to realise that. They also have a stake in that as MPs, they could potentially lose their seats if a GE came about. I realised early on that Jeremy Corbyn was not going to win, and the Labour Party exists to implement its ideas and implement its manifesto, it's not an opposition, it's not a campaign group, it exists to be the British Government and implement those ideas. It is obvious to me that that is not going to happen under Corbyn. (Interview 103)

These members understood that MPs were closer to the political mood of constituents than perhaps they were themselves. Therefore, Corbyn's inability to work with them and his inward-looking attitude ended up alienating them as their goal was to win an election. These members largely held to the maxim that 'divided parties don't win elections' and therefore did not welcome Corbyn's moves to sow division.

In fact many of the changes Corbyn made to reduce the power of the PLP ended up costing him support amongst members who were initially friendly towards him. While these members did not consider the rules and norms for elite cohabitation as important as sceptical members they did not approve of overt hostility towards all the elites. Many members who supported Corbyn were in the gap between the overt anti-elitism of Momentum, and the pro-parliamentarism of sceptical members. These bellwether members opposed the PLP's attempt to remove Corbyn but by the same token they opposed Corbyn's attempt to reduce the power of the PLP since they largely wanted unity in the Labour Party and were coming to the conclusion that it was impossible for a leader of a party to serve without the support of their parliamentarians. Therefore, his sowing of division as leader, while helpful to his campaign, ended up alienating some of his voters, as evidenced by this Labour activist's belief that a leader needs to have the support of their MPs:

You can't [have a leader who doesn't have the support of his MPs], and I think that's an issue with the system we use to elect the leader, because at the moment previously MPs got some bigger say in the leadership, that was watered down a few years ago. But I think that was a mistake, and really it should be up to the MPs, and maybe party members to a certain extent, because ultimately they know them personally, they know their accountability, their record in time and that sort of thing (Interview 90)

As evidenced by this activist Corbyn's continued attempts to separate the membership and the PLP was only partially successful and some members actually became closer to the PLP and wanted them to have more, not less say in leadership elections. Andrew Hornsby-Smith, another

Labour member commented that despite the members having an overall say a leader who disregarded the views of MPs did so at their peril:

It might be sustainable organisationally but you can say these are the rules, get used to it but I think there is a struggle there between the grassroots and the parliamentary party that you set up when you say I don't care if none of you support me this is going to be the way it is going to be. Then they go 'do it your way, fine, but we are not going to go out of our way to support you if you are making an idiot of yourself'. I think a lot of MPs would probably have felt quite threatened if they brought in mandatory reselection and that sort of type of thing. There was a mistrust that I think grew, so it is not sustainable, no. (Interview 82)

In large part this may be the reason why Corbyn's reforms reducing the power of the PLP in leadership selection as well as his reforms to reselection were so easily repealed at the Labour conference in 2021. Enough members realised that they were unsustainable and wanted a leader who would mend the wedge between the membership and the PLP that Corbyn had exploited both to win and during his time as leader.

## Corbyn's Engagement with the Membership

Corbyn's leadership depended on membership support due to his populist stance. Since he viewed himself as the voice of the membership against a corrupt PLP and his leadership was entirely built on membership support he had to engage with this group more than any other. For example, in 2016 when he was re-elected as leader of the Labour Party, in his victory speech he did not once mention the PLP, who had been dissatisfied with him and launched the challenge, but instead continued to promote the membership and their importance to him:

We meet this year as the largest political party in western Europe with over half a million members campaigning in every community in Britain.

More people have joined our party in the last twenty months than in the previous twenty years. We have more of our fellow citizens in our party than all the others put together.

Some may see that as a threat. But I see it as a vast democratic resource. Our hugely increased membership is part of a movement that can take Labour's message into every community, to win support for the election of a Labour government. Each and every one of these new members is welcome in our party. (Corbyn, 2016a)

Members who supported him felt that he was genuinely engaging with them as stated by this

Labour member:

He was very committed to this idea of a bottom-up approach to shaping policy. You know there was lots of kind of opportunities for members to shape and influence policy, not just through the traditional conference and manifesto kind of relationship that many have but he went genuinely down to membership and asked questions (Interview 140)



Pike and Diamond (2021) argue that Corbyn's support amongst the membership came from the view that he was more like them and able to engage with them. This follows Dalton's (2007) argument about people being increasingly disengaged from party politics and looking to the leader more for direction on the political current, meaning that members who wanted more engagement from the party would elect a leader seen to be more proactive. Corbyn's entire style of leadership and engagement was geared towards the membership, with him attending rallies and attempting to speak to as many members as possible when he visited instead of spending time with elites. Additionally, his moves to increase membership representation on the National Executive Committee, as well as have members ask him questions to use in Prime Ministers Questions, and the introduction of events like Labour Live, a summer music festival for members, demonstrated that he was putting the membership first. Many members therefore felt that for once the leadership was facing them and putting their views first over focus groups.

Many members also credited the Corbyn leadership with the increased numbers of emails they received either asking for their views or attempting to engage them in campaigns. The virtual communications of the party throughout 2015-19 increased in volume and also provided members with important locations for campaigning, such as in the 2018 local elections or the 2019 general election where marginal seats were highlighted. Furthermore, there was the feeling that Corbyn would actually attend these events and meet with people, with members saying that they felt he was more present than any other leader:

Whenever he turned up in this part of the world, he got big crowds and big enthusiastic crowds, so I think it was good in that sense. At Conference he was very successful in engaging. But as far as a leader is concerned, I would say he did more than other leaders of the Labour Party, because you know we never met Gordon Brown or anybody when they were leader of the party (Interview 81)

Corbyn's ability to draw a crowd was seen as a positive and particularly newer members appreciated the fact that he seemed to engage with them. In fact many of the people who joined as registered supporters to vote for Corbyn quickly became party members because they felt enthused and engaged with by Corbyn, and felt that he was staying true to them instead of attempting to appease elites. The engagement was particularly felt by groups like Momentum who worked with the leadership to organise campaigning.

Momentum, as a group that grew out of the Corbyn leadership campaign, always maintained a closer relationship with the leadership and sought to increase turnout on the doorstep for Labour particularly around the general elections. They therefore sought to continue to build connections with Corbyn's office and often found a very receptive audience. Corbyn, and members of the Shadow Cabinet seen to be friendly to him, often turned up to Momentum events. Therefore, this increased the attractiveness of Momentum to newer members who often sought to engage with and meet Corbyn.

Momentum played a vital role in the Corbyn leadership's aims to engage with membership. Pickard (2018) discusses how Momentum aimed to energise members, particularly newer and younger ones, to be more active in the party. Those members were the ones who joined because of Corbyn and felt enthused by him, and his endorsement of Momentum offered a mutually beneficial arrangement for both him and this faction, that he would get more foot soldiers who were opposed to the PLP and Momentum would gain legitimacy.

However, Momentum's connection to the leadership served as a double edged sword and also served to poison the relationship between Corbyn and the more sceptical membership, who did not like elements of Momentum's programme (Dennis, 2019). While they also noted how Corbyn engaged with the grassroots more than previous leaders this engagement came to be seen as having two tiers, and that Corbyn was picking and choosing which members he wanted to engage with. Additionally, many members felt that the engagement was increasingly factional, rather than egalitarian.

Given that Corbyn was already making his priorities from the start of his leadership in late 2015 clear that the membership was seen as more important than parliamentarians, which already alienated these more sceptical members by October 2015, the fact that he seemed to only be catering to a section of the membership was problematic. It furthered the view that Corbyn was going to be a divisive leader even in late 2015 and only look to elevate the views of the members

that had voted for him and bring in more like-minded members to take over structures of power in the party. On top of this Momentum's moves to de-select MPs and councillors, whether successful, as in Harringey, or not, that saw little protest from the leadership furthered this divide.

Many interviewees cited the leadership's actions and behaviour after the 2017 election as being the point where they began to become more sceptical of Corbyn, due to a feeling he was only engaging with the members he agreed with. While many of them credited Corbyn with bringing in new members, they felt that these members did not campaign or mobilise as much as they did.

The difference in support between 'campaigning members' and 'lay members' for Corbyn was something that those who identified themselves as campaigning members fixated on. Many of them criticised the more Corbyn-supportive members for wanting to sidetrack the party and have long policy discussions instead of contacting voters. This speaks to the increasing polarisation of party members and their desire to do more than just assist the party in winning elections, which is the more traditional model of party politics that longer-serving members ascribed to, while newer members wished to be more engaged in policy. Momentum sought to use this engagement with policy to strengthen its position and increase its power. This caused umbrage amongst the more traditional members who expressed their concerns about Momentum's actions:

I think is appalling. I think initially it was set up to try and get Corbyn elected and to campaign among membership, I think the idea of having general meetings about different topics was an interesting one. But that could have been done within ordinary membership of the Labour Party and just said, can we have some meetings about this, this and this, there is a political education function that could have done that. And it could be managed within the normal party framework. This way around, I think it's just become a diversion. People who are interested go off into one corner, and they don't take part in the party as a whole. We've tried, actually, we did go around last summer. And we went and banged on the doors of every single party member in this ward. We still didn't get help. (Interview 12)

This member takes a more office-seeking view of the party, which is in contrast to the grassroots model that Corbyn and his supporters espoused. This demonstrates that while members of political parties are increasingly moving towards seeing parties as primarily tools for political education, rather than as purely election-winning organisations (Dalton, 2014), there are still many members who do not agree with the citizen politics model. Corbyn's leadership seemed to reverse the trend of disengagement from party politics by promising a grassroots party aimed at

educating and bringing new ideas forward and allowing people to engage more casually with the party as almost lay-members rather than encourage campaigning, which would attract the kinds of people who consider themselves more politically active (Dalton, 2014). However, this would necessitate displeasing the members who were wedded to the more traditional model of party politics.

## Membership on Corbyn's Handling of Key Issues

The key set of issues that attracted members to Corbyn were his stances on the economy and austerity, which set him apart from the other candidates. Members overwhelmingly supported Corbyn's defence of nationalisation and economic interventionism and this remained an area where he won plaudits from members across all factions. While some moderate members questioned individual policies, almost all members interviewed expressed opposition to austerity and support for the economic ideas set out in the 2017 and 2019 manifestoes. The 2017 manifesto was particularly well-regarded by interviewees as providing the right balance of radicalism while still being cloaked in a veneer of respectability. Particular policies that were mentioned by interviewees were the calls for renationalising transport, improving social care, and removing tuition fees for universities and this was an area the membership could have rallied around and been able to support Corbyn and his leadership and create a united Labour Party with much more muted dissent. However, many members felt that Corbyn was not focused enough on those issues and was more interested in making factional-based changes to party democracy. Further, other issues that Corbyn did not plan for, such as Brexit, ended up overshadowing the unity within the party on economic issues, along with the running scandals over Anti-Semitism.

Brexit was undoubtedly the biggest issue facing the country that Corbyn had to handle. Almost immediately after Corbyn won the leadership election he had to focus on campaigning in the Brexit referendum, and once that referendum was lost had to define a clear Brexit policy. Most Labour members supported remaining in the European Union and later on many called for a second referendum. However, many members also felt that Corbyn was ambivalent at best

towards the EU and a closet Brexiteer at worst, with some even blaming him for the result in the referendum and accusing him of ignoring the membership in order to further his dream of leaving the EU. This was particularly problematic in 2019 where there was talk of a Remain coalition ousting the Conservatives. Paul Sales, a Labour member, showed a typical Labour member view of the EU and thus viewed Corbyn's attitude on Europe to be against this:

He's a Brexiteer. He has a vision of the European Union as some sort of Capitalist plot. Now, if you're my age, I'm 74, and the European Union was formed by a group of men my age, roughly, and it was white men my age, sitting in about 1946/7 (...) you've got this group of guys who bolted Europe together economically to make it much less likely that there would be a future war, major war, between the members of the European Union, well as it was then, the coal and steel confederation in the first instance, and it has been a part of my life ever since. So Corbyn still has the wrong view about it, as do some of my close friends who think it's a Capitalist conspiracy, and they're not persuaded by that argument, they don't seem to understand that the only way you manage multi-nationalism in industry is by cooperation amongst the various states, certainly in Europe, to regulate, which is what they have to do. (...) He has handled [Brexit] very very badly, in order to achieve what he wants, which is to leave Europe, if necessary at any cost. I feel sure of that, I feel sure that's his personal agenda and he's failed to comply with the party's wishes, which is 66%, two thirds remain, outright remain. And if we'd have gone on that platform and pledged to work with other parties, it would have made life a lot more different. (Interview 142)

Many Labour members shared Paul's view that Corbyn either wanted to leave or was not willing to take action to fight Brexit and this was at odds with what most Labour members wanted, though some also admitted that many Labour areas voted Leave and thus the policy had to be nuanced.

The other main policy issue associated with Corbyn's leadership that caused umbrage was his response to Anti-Semitism. Almost from the start of Corbyn's leadership allegations of Anti-Semitism from close allies of the leadership emerged, and several University Labour clubs were investigated for institutional Anti-Semitism. Indeed, during his leadership this issue became more and more prevalent, with Jewish groups condemning both Corbyn's inaction on rooting out racism in the party and some previous statements he had made (Shaw, 2021). Most of the members who were interviewed had increasingly become aware of the issue and even some sympathetic interviewees felt that Corbyn had failed to handle it and considered this to be a problem with his leadership. In fact only a few interviewees thought that the allegations were entirely false or made up by forces hostile to Corbyn in order to discredit him. The majority view was that there was an issue of Anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, and though some were using it against Corbyn, who they felt wasn't personally racist, it was still a problem that Corbyn was not dealing with. A

Labour member expressed his view of the issue as being one of management over intent but still was critical of Corbyn:

Conversations we have had locally it's been very difficult and strained, within the sort of local family to have such a painful issue. That has run on and on and feels like, it could have been dealt with more effectively. I think there has always been this idea that those on Corbyn's side said it was a smear and those who were not on his side said it was a genuine and legitimate problem, deep-rooted within certain parts of the party. My view is that it is both. It was a genuine problem there was genuine antisemitism within the party and that doesn't mean that that wasn't opportunistically seized on by the media, the Tories, by some of the more anti-Corbyn MPs within the PLP. To say well, here's a guy who's going through a pretty bad set of circumstances and is handling it quite badly. Let's give him a good bashing for it because it makes him look bad. (...) When it comes to the kind of management on that kind of operational level sadly, I think that's not. He and his team have not been good at that. And when it comes to dealing with, the antisemitism complaints the management was poor, even as a supporter of them I was the first to kind of put up my hands and say yeah they have been bad at managing that process. They made it all look a lot worse than they needed to and paid the price sadly. (Interview 140)

Corbyn's mishandling of Anti-Semitism scandals within the party became a running sore to the point where almost all leadership candidates to replace him committed to solving it. Many members felt that had he taken a more proactive stance on Anti-Semitism and managed this issue in the party it would have solved a lot of problems.

When Corbyn became leader there was large unity around his platform. In the same way that his leadership campaign successfully used the registered supporters scheme and new voting system to win, there was the possibility to continue structuring the Labour Party to keep dissenters in line by focusing on the areas where they all agreed, such as anti-austerity policy, which could have been designed through a more grassroots framework due to wide reaching agreement across all levels of the party which would have created the 'sustainable rhetorical stance' (Riker 1984: 3) to remake the party as he liked it. However, the emergence of Brexit ended up putting him in a position where he was reluctant to take the same stance as a majority of members and thus could not rely on grassroots policy making, which weakened his heresthetical stance and emboldened those who disagreed with him by allowing them to question his commitment to a true bottom-up approach (Tonge, et. al., 2020). Given that Corbyn's entire leadership campaign was aimed at lifting the membership over the elite of the Labour Party, any attempt to undercut the membership would be hurtful to his leadership as the elite-driven forces that maintain a political party would be strengthened and force his leadership to make compromises to maintain a cohesive party (Aldrich and Griffin, 2018, Döring and Regel, 2019, Duverger, 1954, Ignazi, 2017). Furthermore, his inability to manage issues like Brexit and Anti-Semitism with the membership at large meant that

Labour appeared divided instead of united around an issue that was more intrinsically to its advantage, anti-austerity and economic fairness, which further cost Labour ground with the electorate and thus further jeopardised his project and his relationship with the campaigning membership (de Vet, et. al., 2019, Gallagher, et., al., 2011, Maier et. al., 2017, Mair, 2002, Mair, et. al., 2004, Mair and Zielonka, 2005, Radean, 2017).

## Overall Membership View of Corbyn

The change in the Labour electoral system allowed Corbyn to win the election on the backs of members who felt disillusioned with parliamentarians and who reacted positively to Corbyn's campaign, which seemed to prioritise the membership above all else (Quinn, 2004, Quinn, 2016). Their continuing support allowed him to stay in office despite losing the confidence of the PLP since Labour leaders do not need the confidence of parliamentarians to serve (Quinn, 2005a). Members viewed electing Corbyn as a way to reclaim power within the Labour Party and saw him as their man within the Labour elite who would advance their views and therefore were willing to overlook issues like electability or the views of the party elite, as they felt a leader they trusted more would be more appealing to the electorate, which did not happen (Schumacher and Giger, 2017, Wauters and Kern, 2020). Members therefore viewed Corbyn as the everyman leader who they could relate to and who would relate back to them and stop making all the compromises that they felt were not delivering electoral success anyway, and instead make an attempt to stand up for Labour values unapologetically. There were a minority of members who were worried about Corbyn's compatibility with the rest of the PLP and were afraid that once Corbyn was in it would be difficult to remove him due to Labour's rules (Quinn, 2005b).

Corbyn's key supporters viewed him as the breath of fresh air that the Labour Party needed and a return to the true values of the Labour Party. These members, who had largely either been in the party since the 1980s or had left the Party after Neil Kinnock defeated Tony Benn's leadership challenge in 1988, or under John Smith and Tony Blair and then rejoined under Corbyn believed that many people would welcome a radical socialist agenda such as the one that Corbyn presented. These were his core supporters and they took results like the 2017 election as vindication of Corbyn and believed that he had been continuously sabotaged by the moderates in

the Labour Party as well as the capitalist media. However, this was not the majority of the membership.

The membership by and large saw Corbyn as a decent person with integrity who would not necessarily lead in the same way as other party leaders did but who would seek to build a consensus based on what the membership actually wanted and would check the power of the PLP, due to the fact that he would lead and speak from the heart. For all but his most devoted supporters there was a tension between the need for a leader who was seen as 'truly Labour' and the issues and baggage that came with Corbyn, such as being eurosceptic and having a blind spot over Anti-Semitism, but overall it was seen that those issues could be addressed by the party and a Corbyn leadership was worth the risk. Indeed, in some areas it was almost seen as a useful gamble with party membership swelling and being more enthusiastic when it came to discussing policy, as well as attracting more support from Green voters especially in seats in university towns such as Cambridge and Oxford, and in London. After years of compromise with New Labour and Blair, Corbyn was seen as a decisive move away from that era and towards the party standing up for what it believed in. The better than expected result in the 2017 general election helped vindicate the belief that a more ideological and member-driven Labour Party could generate electoral benefits for the party and that there did not need to be a trade-off between electability and ideology. However, the issues they noted with Corbyn still remained problematic and ended up losing him support.

As the Corbyn leadership progressed, especially after the 2017 election, the problems that members had recognised with Corbyn became more apparent and began to overshadow the positive features. The issues with Anti-Semitism continued to attract close critical scrutiny from the media and the leadership's stance on Brexit continued to drive a wedge between the overwhelmingly Remain membership, as well as the general election that was looming in 2019, prompting more members to speculate that if Corbyn lost that election he would have to go. When the election resulted in a landslide defeat for Labour, members recognised that having a leader so out of step with mainstream British politics who was not a good manager was a serious flaw. Most members who were interviewed after the 2019 election, regardless of their vote in the



leadership election, believed that Corbyn's leadership had been a net negative for the Labour Party, compared with interviewees before the election, who were more positive about the impact he had on the Party.

## Conclusion

Corbyn and his leadership exalted the membership over all other interests in the party and it is undoubtable that he saw his mandate as coming from the membership primarily and therefore sought to serve them. The disputes that he had with other elites in the party were justified in his mind by this view. Interviewed members across the board and in all CLPs did feel that Corbyn communicated and engaged with them more than had previous leaders and welcomed his presence in rallies and his anti-austerity message as being a positive development. This was particularly true of new members, who joined to vote for Corbyn as supporters and credited him as being the reason they joined the Labour Party overall, and who flocked to the banner of pro-Corbyn groups like Momentum which used its connection to the leadership to attract this new blood. However, in keeping with a common trend for Corbyn's leadership, this engagement was mainly with the members that were supportive of Corbyn and not with those who did not support his leadership.

Members who were sceptical of Corbyn and did not vote for him in the 2015 leadership (some 40% of members) did not feel as engaged with Corbyn nor that he had mitigated their concerns. Many of them felt that Corbyn's enmity with the PLP, as well as many councillors, was hurting the party and found his inability to come to some form of accommodation with them to be a serious problem, believing it would have electoral consequences, a view strengthened by the frosty reception Corbyn's name got on doorsteps. Additionally, Corbyn's policies on Brexit caused dissent in the party as he was more ambivalent on issues like a second referendum than the overwhelmingly Remain party membership would have liked. These concerns, combined with Corbyn's inability to handle the continued Anti-Semitism scandals within the party, increasingly alienated sceptical members and seemed to validate their fears about electing him. Therefore, while there was leadership engagement, it was mainly playing to the base of members that had elected Corbyn and did not seek to manage the dissent of those who did not.

Despite the dissenting voices of some members, Corbyn's engagement with the membership does seem to validate the first hypothesis that populist leaders within political parties mainly draw their authority from the membership, rather than elites, and view themselves as a conduit for that membership, which Corbyn certainly did. However, it is worth noting that as with many populists, Corbyn largely would pick and choose which members were the ones he wanted to engage with. Further chapters will conclude that he also picked and chose which elites he wanted to engage with as well.

## Chapter 6: Corbynism and Local Government

### Introduction

In seeking to examine the second and third hypotheses of this thesis, namely that left-wing populist factions will ignore party norms until they can be bent to suit them, and that they will rely on the membership to support them against other constitutional role-holders, this chapter will build from Chapter 4 by looking at how Corbyn and his followers engaged on the local level with the most numerous of Labour's office holders: local councillors. The previous chapter examined the first hypothesis and evaluated how Corbyn gained his power through exploiting intra-party tensions. It demonstrated the alienation that Labour members felt towards their representatives, certainly at the national level, and how the election of Corbyn was meant to send a message to those representatives, and how Corbyn prioritised the rank and file membership of the Labour Party over its elected officials, particularly parliamentarians. However, what was less clear in the membership's views was how local councillors fitted into this puzzle. Councillors were overwhelmingly moderate and support for Corbyn was far lower amongst them than in the membership at large (though larger than the support within the PLP) and they often bore the brunt of the consequences of the increase in membership and factional movements of groups like Momentum due to their location within local communities (rather than away in Westminster). Thus it is important to examine how councillors responded to Corbyn and how they felt about the reforms he made within the party. Chapter 2 identified the increasing gulf between elected officials and party membership in many political parties, with the latter being more extreme and the former seeking to build their party's coalition of voters as party identities have frayed. The depth of this gulf between lower-tier elected officials and rank-and-file membership in the Labour Party is less clear. Councillors who want to move up into higher-level positions obviously have an incentive to support the party's stance on issues and will be more aligned with parliamentarians (Kukec, 2019). Therefore, if parliamentarians were uncomfortable with a leadership that was marginalising them and taking radical positions, councillors would share that discomfort. Yet, due to increased party democratisation the split between the membership and representatives (Ignazi, 2019) leaves councillors in a more difficult position, being closer to the membership, but also being expected to follow the national party line, which is exacerbated when parliamentarians and

the leadership are at loggerheads. The aim of this chapter is to explore how councillors were engaged by Corbyn and his followers. It shows how norms were ignored and hostile groups were dismissed by the Labour leadership.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first will look at how councillors fit into the literature on party politics and build a theoretical model for where they would fit into the parliamentary member divide that existed and thus why this chapter is important for the thesis. The second section will explore the feelings councillors had about Corbyn and their level of support for him as he became leader, which is found to be lukewarm at best, if not frosty amongst executive leadership and the leaders of the Local Government Association (LGA). His response via his local government spokespeople and institutional changes he sought to make to the party will be explored in the third section. It will examine the differences in the relationship of councilors with Corbyn and the more councillor-centric Andrew Gwynne, the Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Councillors found Gwynne far more amenable to them and more engaged, but also he was not listened to by Corbyn. Additionally, it will examine how the leadership sought to change the rules on how council leaders were elected in order to remove the dissenting voices within council executives, by having the membership directly elect the leadership of the council. The effect of successful councillor opposition to this proposed change will be evaluated as part of the third hypothesis on Corbyn's struggles with institutional bodies within the Labour Party. The fourth part of this chapter then looks at the relationships between councillors and pro-Corbyn groups like Momentum and explores the reasons for this fraught relationship, with notably differing views of what councillors should strive to accomplish and what the party's goals should be. All these sections draw extensively on evidence from personal interviews held with councillors and activists across the country. The final section will conclude that Corbyn and his supporters were willing to ignore norms within local politics and tried to restructure them, but were unable to persuade the LGA to support them and thus tried to sideline it and then restructure it.

## Explaining Councillor roles in political parties

Increasingly studies in party politics across advanced democracies aim to explain the gulf between the membership and elected officials. These studies are based on the combination of decreasing participation in political parties combined with increasing enfranchisement of memberships (Scarrow, 1999). Yet, councillors and local government have not really been covered by these studies, and it has not been made clear whether they are closer to the membership or to the parliamentarians. In fact, their existence as elected politicians who engage more with the membership creates a series of competing expectations. Since councillors are more directly accountable to the membership due to facing mandatory reelection there is more pressure to support the membership over parliamentarians. However, since councillors are elected and many aim to hold office and lead a council, they may also be sensitive to the problems facing a leader who struggles to manage dissent.

Councillors can be seen as an identifiable elite within a political party, certainly at the local level. Therefore, one may conclude they are part of the oligarchic structures within a party and tend to side with parliamentarians (Achury, et. al., 2018, Janda, 1983, Michels, 1968, Radean, 2017). However, given the numbers of councillors and the fact that they face mandatory re-selection (Cross, et. al, 2016) and their local, rather than national base, which insulates them from the intrigues of Westminster (Gauja, 2017), one conclusion is that they are closer to members. My interviews found that the identity of the councillor regarding the membership-representative split depends both on the status of the councillor and the council they sit on. Executive councillors (who have official responsibilities) are more likely to be against Corbyn than backbenchers. Councillors in Labour-controlled areas are more likely to be closer to the PLP than those who are not. Councillors in marginal seats are more likely to identify with moderate factions than those in safe seats.

Within councils, councillors choose their leadership and their officers, and this is not affected in any way by the local constituency party. Therefore, councillors are automatically involved in an oligarchic structure (Achury, et. al., 2018, Labour Party Rulebook, 2020, Loxbo, 2011, Michels, 1968). Furthermore, councils where Labour is in power or may be in power have the usual

constraints of an office-seeking political party, such as the need to appear united (Cowley and Stuart, 2014). The marginality of a council also matters, as members in marginal areas have more of an incentive to appear united as the question is no longer 'which Labour councillor' but 'will we have a Labour councillor' meaning that members may be more willing to accept a level of oligarchical control ( Scarrow, 1999, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004). Therefore, looking at the locations where councillors are from will also play an important role in seeing where they identify themselves on the membership-parliamentarian divide. These factors will help explain how they felt about the Corbyn leadership and his level of engagement with them, since councillors in areas Labour could never win in would be more likely to see the engagement through a membership lens rather than a council lens, while councillors on Labour-controlled councils would see themselves differently from the rank-and-file membership. Furthermore, the creation of an executive on a Labour-led council would also potentially be a factor for how councillors viewed Corbyn and the leadership.

In councils where Labour is in power executive councillors play a large role in running the council and coordinating with both the constituency party and the local members of parliament, informing the former of their actions, and working constructively with the latter. Seyd (2016) discusses that under Kinnock, Smith, and Blair the party became more professional and started emphasising the need for councillors in Labour areas to appear professional and work with the parliamentarians they shared constituencies with. Gone were the days of Militant councillors like Ted Knight and Derek Hatton in the 1980s, who had largely been seen as embarrassments, they were replaced with managerial councillors who would further the party's aims and maintain power in the local area. Executive councillors, who have to work closely with MPs and the LGA, would, therefore, be expected to identify with the PLP over the membership and not support moves that went against the PLP, and see the need for the leader to have the support of that body. They would prioritise the constitutional machinery of Labour, calling for collective responsibility, the need to manage dissenting voices across the party, and to appear electable in order to deliver their agenda. Yet, these councillors face mandatory re-selection every time they seek re-election and therefore are at the mercy of the party rank and file in a way MPs are not, given that branches are smaller than constituencies, and therefore have to worry about disgruntled and rebellious members deselecting them more than an MP does (Cross et. al, 2016), meaning they have to

consider carefully what their membership desires. Therefore, it is possible that councillors will have to worry more about their membership than MPs since they can more easily be deselected. This concern could play a role in their views about Corbyn given his support amongst the grassroots (Borz and Janda, 2018, Forbes, 2019, Wuttke, et. al., 2019), and thus confuses the comparisons between councillors and MPs. However, based on interviews, executive councillors still felt more sceptical of Corbyn and shared the PLP and the LGA's scepticism of him as leader.

Yet, the mandatory re-selection of councillors does create a closer level of proximity between the membership and councillors as opposed to MPs. Therefore, it makes sense that councillors on the whole would be less sceptical of Corbyn, and there would be a trend towards new councillors being more pro-Corbyn on the whole. Since the membership is more able to deselect councillors or select candidates for vacancies, which come up more often for councils than parliamentarians, the organised pro-Corbyn membership would be expected to select allies for council seats (Pennings and Hazan, 2001). However, de-selecting elected officials in the Labour Party (and across political parties in general) for ideological reasons was still very much seen as taboo, yet the membership had the means to do so, causing a potential issue where a longstanding norm was overturned by the membership believing it was serving the interests of the leadership (Bille, 2001, Hopkin, 2001, Katz, 2001, Quinn, 2005b, Seyd, 1999). Therefore, the willingness of members and groups like Momentum to discard the norm of re-selecting councillors who were performing well despite ideological differences was a significant source of conflict between Corbynism and Labour local councillors.

These themes about local government and loyalty to Corbyn were covered in the interviews that I held with councillors, asking whether loyalty to Corbyn made a difference in selections and how councillors viewed pro-Corbyn groups like Momentum. The conflict between the need for a party to function oligarchically in order to achieve power seemed to clash with the more democratic and flat structure that parties have been heading towards, and that Momentum weaponised by itself discarding the norms that restrained this structure (Laffin, et. al., 2007). Previously efforts to reform the Labour Party reflected the view that while 'parties do change their organizations in response to institutional reforms, but that these changes are filtered by the established procedures, structures and traditions of the parties themselves' (Hopkin, 2001:6), but under

Corbyn there was a strong effort to end the procedures. This brings us to one of the main hypotheses in the thesis:

H2: Left-wing populist factions will often ignore traditional norms within a party until they can be bent to suit them

Along with the local struggles with Momentum on the ground councillors also were faced with the LGA's views on Corbyn. The LGA Labour group had a constitutional status in the party so it can be considered to play a role in the oligarchy of the Labour Party and thus Corbyn was obliged to engage with it (Piñeiro Rodríguez and Rosenblatt, 2018, Quinn, 2002, Randall and Svåsand, 2002, Teorell, 1999, van Biezen and Poguntke, 2014). Van Biezen and Poguntke (2014) discuss the relevance of a top-down approach within a political party and how the parties have to keep the elites content and manage any dissent from them, and in the case of Labour this includes its group on the LGA. As the LGA is a group that represents thousands of Labour councillors whose dues are one of the main revenue streams of the Labour Party, positive engagement with them is critical to be an effective leader. In the case of Corbyn this was particularly critical since he did not share the overwhelming support of councillors in the same way that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown did. Therefore, faced with a group that was sceptical of his ability Corbyn would need to manage any dissent, either by convincing them that he could lead Labour to victory, or by ceding ground on policy issues to keep them in the fold. Even a presidential-style leader of a party, a trend increasingly seen in European parties, and potentially evidenced in Labour with Tony Blair, has to keep these constitutional bodies on board or risk disunity in the ranks (Enyedi, 2014). It would be a risky strategy to lose the LGA's loyalty to the leadership and push it onto the side of his intra-party opponents (Quinn, 2002). Councillors are also the most likely people to become Members of Parliament, with a plurality of new MPs in the 2017 and 2019 Parliaments having been councillors before (Cracknell and Tunnicliffe, 2022) and therefore, alienating councillors as a whole body risks alienating future party elites who will sit within the PLP, which is not a recipe for the peaceful running of a party (van Biezen and Poguntke, 2014). The power of councillors is important to the party as a bridge between the leadership and the membership: 'hierarchical elements, which consist of centralized conflict resolution mechanisms, centralised control and distribution of financial resources, as well as of *top-down* modes of communication usually



prevail, or at least remain prominent, when the party is formed through a *top-down* process prompted by the central organization's need to consolidate on the ground electoral support for the party' (Bardi, et. al., 2014: 155). Councillors use the LGA as a mechanism to resolve conflicts with the leadership and therefore loyalty to the LGA's stance is important to councillors, allowing this body to be viewed as an important and cohesive block in the party, and therefore not one that can be infiltrated from the inside easily. Therefore, unlike constituency parties which could be turned to Corbyn's side by groups like Momentum, the LGA can be seen as an autonomous body in the Labour Party, akin to the PLP and trade unions and would resist any factional interference. Therefore, it is crucial to view the LGA's Labour group as a powerful broker within the Labour Party and not a group that any Labour leader can afford to ignore.

Populist leaders in party factions though often do not enjoy engagement with elites within the party as they often view them as the enemy. Marzouki, et. al. (2016: 19) describe populists as viewing elites as 'charged with being, at best, distant from the people and incompetent (and at worst, downright corrupt)'. Increasingly, and spurred on by populist parties in other countries, populists champion a new view of intra-party democracy as being 'plebiscitarian and centralised, with a low degree of institutionalisation of rules and procedures and of inclusiveness' (Gerbaudo, 2019: 731) - meaning that intra-party populist factions would view the will of the membership and the grassroots as being superior to bodies such as the LGA and seek to continue empowering these members over constitutional bodies (Scarrow, 2015). The distrust of elites and support of the grassroots is intrinsic to populism in political parties (Alexandre-Collier, 2016. Marzouki, et. al., 2016, Muldoon and Rye, 2020, Quinn, 2016, Watts and Bale, 2018), and has led to the disenfranchisement of elite bodies to benefit the membership. This has only been accelerated when populist factions take over mainstream parties.

Rahat and Kenig (2018) discuss how parties have changed towards personalisation within the leadership and how this affects constitutional forces within the parties. They observe how personalisation is often due to the decline of a party and therefore theorises that a strong leader needs to weaken other elements of the oligarchy and set themselves up as having a direct link with the membership. This is particularly salient for populist leaders in mainstream parties, who

often struggle with the norms in the party and are at odds with different entrenched bodies in political parties. Therefore, the need to personalise all elements in the party often leads to a direct confrontation with constitutionally empowered groups like the LGA. Given that council leaders will see themselves as part of the party establishment and therefore will be closer to parliamentarians, they will often end up opposing populist leaders who have different policy views. The populist leaders will then view them as part of the corrupt establishment that is suppressing the grassroots and will seek to sideline them. This model suggests that such a tension would lead to a conflict between groups like the LGA and Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour Party.

Since Corbyn viewed his leadership through a populist lens, believing that the members had chosen him to drastically re-align the party over the objections of corrupt and unrepresentative office holders, he would not be inclined to listen to a group like the LGA which represents council leadership. Corbyn and his leadership would support more direct member involvement in choosing councillors (and indeed parliamentarians) despite the increased level of local rancour that it might cause, as demonstrated by Alexandre-Collier (2016) in his examination of similar moves to free up candidate selection and restrict the role of elites within the Conservative party. The LGA found these moves dangerous to their interests as the main group of Labour councillors and therefore opposed Corbyn's populist changes and found themselves struggling to work with him.

However, Corbyn's support of the membership runs into the issues discussed by van Biezen and Poguntke (2014), where the membership has become more radical and less able to represent the voters whose support they seek. Whiteley (2010) also argues that the increased linkages between the party and the state, which often is anathema to populist intra-party leaders, will often set executive councillors at cross-purposes with the membership. Therefore, with council leaders having to fit into state institutions and members who are opposed to this and want the councillors to follow their lead, even into what council leaders would see as unelectability, this sets the stage for a serious conflict.

This conflict would provide a clear test for a party leader in terms of managing dissent, and particularly for a leader like Corbyn who had the support of the membership but was viewed with suspicion by councillors and the LGA. The alienation of the membership from the elected officials, leading members to view themselves as 'ideological misfits' (van Haute and Carty, 2011), exacerbated this tension and dissent, especially with the election of a leader who seemed to base his election entirely on a direct appeal to the membership. Given that Corbyn himself was seen as separate from the parliamentary elite as well, this further weakened his relationship with the LGA, itself very much a part of the party infrastructure and thus hostile to such misfits (van Haute and Carty, 2011), leading to an alliance of misfits over the voices of non-misfit members who would be more willing to listen to party elites (van Holsteyn, et. al., 2015). This, combined with the increasing power of the membership, allows the leadership of the party to form an alliance with the membership and override constitutionally protected bodies like the LGA (Kölln and Polk, 2016). Therefore, the objections by groups like the LGA matter less since they cannot actually directly remove the leader on a constitutional basis since the leader's only mandate comes from the membership, of which each member of the LGA has just one vote. Therefore, in principle intra-party populists have a viable route to ignore groups like the LGA and impose their will directly as long as they have the support of the membership and are therefore willing to enter into an alliance with ideological misfits in the membership to ensure that their agenda continues to be developed, over any objections or dissent from elites like the LGA. Yet, despite this alliance most party literature would emphasise the necessity of a leader to at least engage with these bodies and listen to their concerns, not least in the case of the LGA because councillors are widely regarded to be the best foot soldiers for elections, knowing where the votes are in a marginal constituency, going door-to-door all times of the year to keep a party presence, and even being able to achieve positive change in the community (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992). Yet, intra-party populists never really seem to acknowledge the advantages of councillors' specialised knowledge and fail to differentiate them from the membership as a whole. Therefore we can look at the third hypothesis:

H3: Left-wing populist factions rely on the membership to maintain their power over other constitutionally protected bodies within the party, and struggle to manage those aforementioned bodies.

## Councillor Support of Corbyn

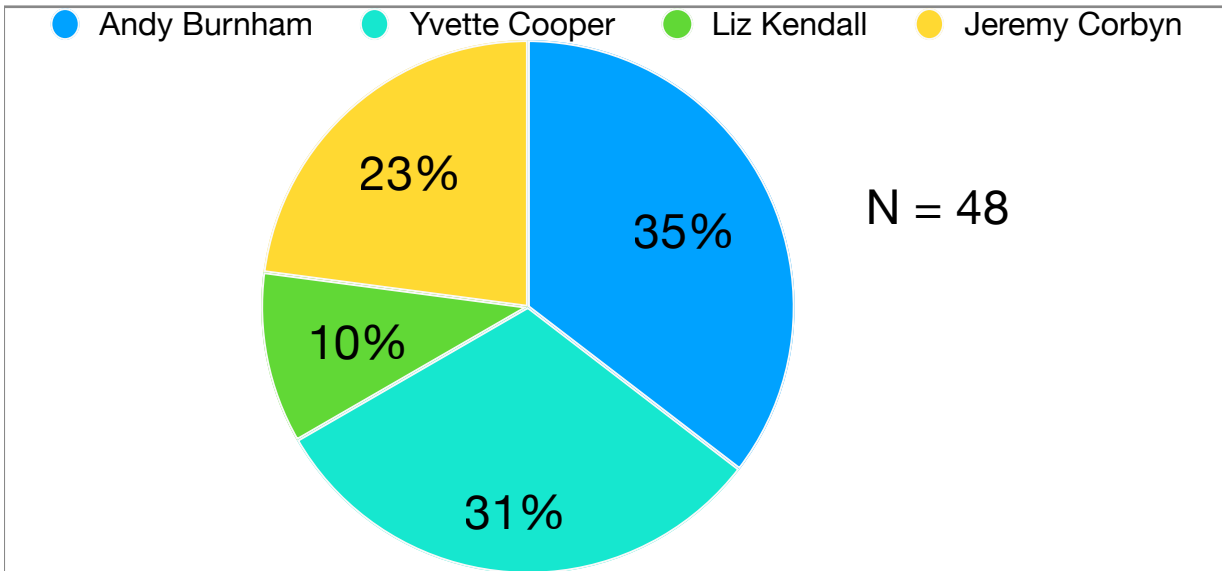
In order to determine the level of support and feeling for Jeremy Corbyn at the local government level, 108 councillors were interviewed, both in areas where full study was chosen, as well as leaders on Labour's section of the LGA. The interviews with councillors, particularly executive councillors and LGA leaders, focused on the level of engagement Corbyn's office had with them. There were two key questions that covered the amount of support for Corbyn. All interviewees were asked a question about the candidate they supported in the 2015 leadership election<sup>12</sup>, which was useful to determine the breadth of support for all the candidates and how much support Corbyn had within Labour local government, but often was not sufficient to really delve into the reasons for their support. It would determine the raw numbers of support but not the reasons why councillors backed their preferred leadership candidate. Therefore, a follow-up question was added for later interviews<sup>13</sup>. By forcing interviewees to discuss all leadership candidates the reasons for their choices were made clearer. The results for sitting councillors in 2015 and Executive councillors and LGA figures in 2015 for the leadership election are shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

### **Figure 6.1: Votes in the 2015 Leadership Election by Sitting Councillors**

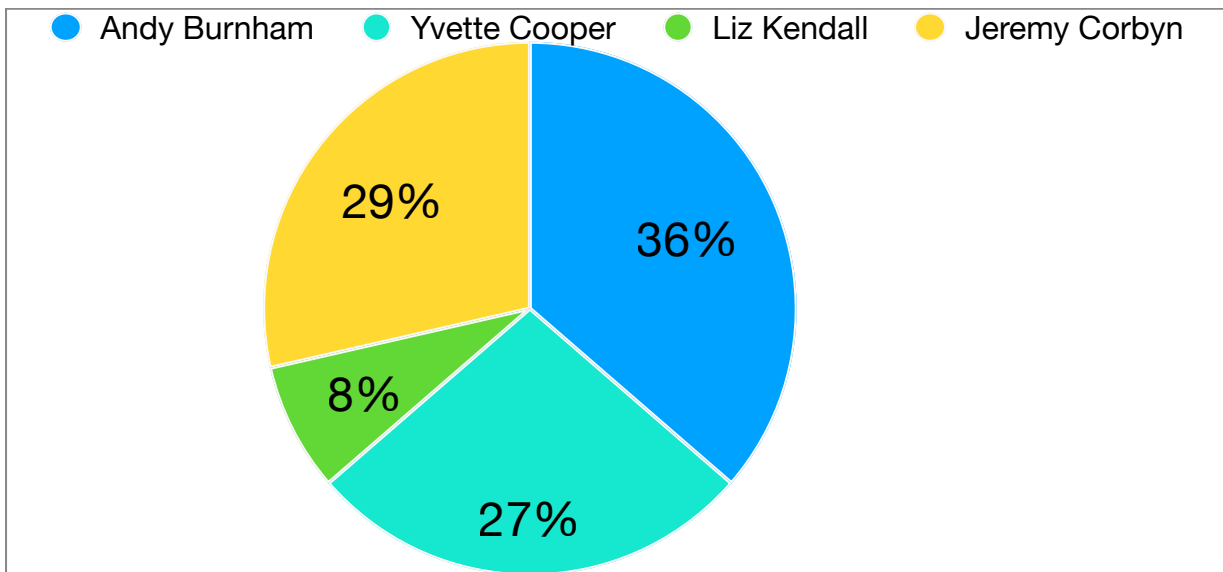
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<sup>12</sup> In 2015 for the leadership election who did you support and why?

<sup>13</sup> What did you think of the other candidates for leader? (Other candidates are then listed)



**Figure 6.2: Votes in the 2015 Leadership Election by Executive Councillors and LGA Figures**



Examining the figures for sitting councillors in 2015 we find that Corbyn fares far worse amongst them than he does with the membership at large (where he won nearly 60% of the vote). While there are a significant portion of councillors who do support Corbyn, most councillors did not vote for him and therefore it can be claimed he faced scepticism. Therefore, it would be important for him to have a plan to manage dissent.

### Relations between Councillors and the Leadership

Having shown that support for Corbyn amongst sitting councillors was low in 2015 and that executive councillors, group leaders, and LGA figures were even more sceptical, we now will

examine how the Corbyn leadership responded as well as test the hypothesis about how intra-party populists struggle to engage with constitutional bodies in the party. The responses to the interviews demonstrated a feeling that Corbyn did not engage well with local government and ignored the LGA altogether. It also demonstrated serious frustration with his proposals to weaken the power of council groups by allowing the leader to be elected.

Councillors overwhelmingly felt that Corbyn had little to no interest in engaging with them in their local government role and that he even seemed unconcerned about local government elections. However, this was not something that was exclusive to Jeremy Corbyn, with many local councillors noting that previous leaders had also neglected local government. However, the ideological differences between Corbyn and councillors served to only ignite dissent within local government figures, as this lack of interest combined with other changes Corbyn wished to make caused problems that did not exist under previous leaders

‘He didn’t really [engage with local government], is my honest answer. I think his interest was parliament and his interests were some of the hard left ideology that he talked but local government was an afterthought...there’s a culture in parliament of not valuing and recognising local government, except when they’re in opposition. When they’re in opposition they love us because we’re the people who are going to get them elected but when they get into government all that goes, and they focus on the power they’ve been trying to achieve for all this time(...)I think Blair and others didn’t engage that much either. So, he wasn’t on his own there. Most governments are guilty of this one way or another, so they were. I think his problem though was local government councillors weren’t in the same ideological place as Momentum as his core constituency so it’s more of a problem with him because of that(...)he should have reached out one, because councils are part of the Labour Party and we’re there on the ground doing it every day. Two, we’re the biggest funders of the Labour Party these days. Three, we’re the people who get them elected, we are the backbone of the Party.’ (Interview 54)

This quote, from a council leader in an area where Labour is dominant who is a peer on the LGA, demonstrates that there was a clear feeling of alienation between local government and Corbyn. While it is acknowledged that previous leaders also did not engage with local government, Corbyn’s ideology is highlighted as being sharply different from that of most councillors. This point seems to be particularly salient as the other leader he compares Corbyn to, Blair, spent most of his time in government, where there is less of a premium for the leadership to be engaged with local government. Therefore, not only was Corbyn’s engagement unfavourably compared to Blair’s but Corbyn was leader at a time where such engagement is seen as being easier to do, i.e. opposition, indicating a real lack of engagement with local government. This would seem to lend support to the third hypothesis of populist leaders like Corbyn not engaging with groups that are

seen as sceptical. Based on their preferences in the leadership election local councillors can be considered to have been skeptical about Corbyn's leadership from the start. However, despite the reasons stated by this council leader for why engagement is so important, the role councils play as the part of the party perpetually in power, the largest funders of the party, and the campaigning backbone of the party, Corbyn did not wish to engage with this constitutional body of the Labour Party.

The constitutional body that represents local councilors is the Labour group on the LGA, chaired by councillor Nick Forbes and represented on the NEC by Cllr Forbes and Alice Perry throughout Corbyn's leadership. Councillors felt that Corbyn failed to engage with this group and tried to circumvent it by selecting council candidates that were more favourable towards him, despite the popularity that moderate councillors had amongst their group and with the LGA. In an interview with an executive councillor, the view was put forward that Corbyn's only engagement with local government was attempting to get rid of councillors viewed as hostile rather than working with the constitutionally appointed local government representatives. Factional groups like Momentum would often try to de-select moderate councillors when they stood for re-selection, removing them from the council, and by definition the LGA, based on ideology. Additionally, Corbyn's leadership commissioned John McDonnell to write a Democracy Review, which attempted to change the way Labour group leaders were elected, suggesting that instead of the council group electing their leader, the CLPs within the council district would directly elect the group leader. Furthermore, the leadership often tried to supplant the role councillors play in organising elections by bringing in centrally-appointed community organisers whose job was to try to build Labour's role in the community, a role that councillors thought was their job. This move supports the second hypothesis that populist leaders ignore norms in parties until they can be bent to suit them, in that Corbyn ignored the importance of engaging with the LGA while it remained hostile to him, which it did throughout his leadership.

I don't think he did to be honest. I know they tried to get rid of lots of councillors. I know that eventually came. That was, I'm not saying him but people around him like Momentum or whatever, he ended up saying we need to deselect "right wing" councillors and moderate councillors. We need to make sure that the complete membership chooses local council leaders not councillors. So when you say engage, well perhaps, I suspect that if you went through the records, Jeremy Corbyn would point to that bit where he tried to engage but I don't think he did. I think recently, I think Nick Forbes and Alex Perry on the NEC have been fighting some of the proposals from Corbyn so I don't think, in terms of the higher ideas of looking at engagement of councils vs people in the party,

people like me, Nick Forbes and Alex Perry, no he didn't but from my lowly perspective, not being on the NEC, just seeing what's going on, I don't think it was that supported. (Interview 94)

This executive councillor in a dominant Labour area further demonstrates how councillors also were upset by Corbyn's attempts to change the rules around electing council leaders. Councillors felt that anything that came from the leadership was intended to weaken their position and deselect councillors that were ideologically opposed to Corbyn. The attempt to allow the membership, rather than the council group to elect the council leadership lends further credence to the third hypothesis that populists in mainstream political parties will seek to use the membership to override sceptical groups. While it is not uncommon for leaders to bring in member-centred reforms, they usually seek consensus from concerned groups, which Corbyn did not seek to do (Birch and Dennison, 2017, Gauja, 2017)

However, there were figures within the Corbyn Shadow Cabinet who were seen as being more friendly towards local government. A councillor in a dominant Labour area who is a figure in the soft-left Open Labour faction observed that John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor, and Andrew Gwynne, the Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary, did engage well with councillors though it had little impact on dissent from councillors.

I think John McDonnell worked very well with councillors. Not super regularly but when councillors had issues and stuff. Whether it was about grass roots stuff or 'hang on we're getting gutted on our grants and it means this can you take it up in the Commons for us'. John McDonnell I think was a good voice for local government. He comes from a local government background, John McDonnell has been a councillor and he's served on the GLC as well. Andrew Gwynne I think was very good. He was Corbyn's appointed minister, really got local government, worked it in with the devolution agenda and worked out what that meant, engaged in the detail. Corbyn himself, pretty poor in my opinion. Not really a huge understanding, he worked with councils well locally but I don't think given we took a bigger kicking during austerity its remarkable how little that focused in his rhetoric. (Interview 70)

Despite local councils being able to play a role in the anti-austerity message that played a large part in Jeremy Corbyn's election to the leadership, Corbyn as leader never took the opportunity to engage with councils to fight austerity. The attempts at engagement by John McDonnell or Andrew Gwynne were well-appreciated but without clear action from the leadership it did little to dispel dissent within local government.

Having examined the views of executive councillors, we can now look at non-executive councillors and their views of Corbyn. This includes councillors who are in the majority group but



not on the executive, group leaders who are in opposition, and regular councillors who are in opposition. As demonstrated in Figure 6.1 these councillors are more likely to be favourable to Corbyn. Councillors that were more favourable to Corbyn were more likely to blame the LGA and existing councillors for the lack of engagement instead of Corbyn.

One councillor in a rural area was very critical of the LGA and other Labour councillors claiming that they were unpleasant and were unwilling to work with the community organisers that Labour under Corbyn had set up. The view was that leading councillors were nasty and petty and thin-skinned, not accepting their role and being upset about unreasonable membership requests like setting illegal budgets. Therefore, just like Corbyn, councillors that were more supportive of him did not place a premium on engaging with the LGA or other councillors that were seen as hostile. The fact that Corbyn-supportive Labour councillors did not view the LGA as an important body and were uninterested in what it had to say and sought to criticise it demonstrates support for the third hypothesis, that they do not place a premium on engaging with bodies that are seen as hostile to the leadership as demonstrated by this councillor from a rural area.

I've not got the slightest interest in what the councillors say, because I went to the councillors conference for the first time(...)and I was genuinely shocked again, I can still get feeling of where you're coming from. You should have been there. It was sickening, honestly. Those people stood up, the existing councillors, and they just decry. They were talking about the community organisers, and I again in my naivety I hadn't really understood that that was a Corbyn idea.(...)They treated these people like they were the devil incarnate. They were absolutely unpleasant, and I thought, really, at this point, why do I want to be sitting next to these people in this conference room? And I was shocked. I was genuinely shocked because I hadn't been to anything like this before. I've not been involved in the Party in this sort of way. And I was just going along to the conference, going to hear the hustings, pick up some leaflets about the waterboard and all that stuff that's out in the foyer. And it's really unpleasant nastiness.(...)So, I don't really give a whatsit what the council has to say, because I don't believe they were taking an open-minded view/position of the situation(...)It was just ridiculous. You know, it's no way to run anything. I mean, we're doomed, to be honest. And by then they were asking for illegal budgets. Members will always ask for illegal budgets. I've been in the Party since 1983 and I've lived in Lambeth, I've lived in Camden, I know this is the way it is. Of course members will ask for illegal budgets. Get over it. it's why you're elected, isn't it? You've got to sort of manage everybody haven't you? (Interview 129)

This unwillingness to take councillor grievances seriously demonstrated a clear lack of engagement and anger with the councillor group for being sceptical and factional on issues like community organisers, which they viewed as apolitical. This may have led to the attempts, as stated by the executive councillor, to remove councillors they viewed as against Corbyn, seeing them as being unduly negative. This did lead to an increase in Corbyn supporting councillors being elected during his leadership, particularly in 2019. However, the attempts to bring in more

loyal councillors to make the LGA more supportive of Corbyn were never successful, as demonstrated by the LGA's elections for NEC representatives, where all Labour councillors vote for their representatives. These were comfortably won by the moderate duo of Nick Forbes and Alice Perry<sup>14</sup>, with the best result achieved by the hard left being around 30% of the vote, demonstrating that moderates still made up 70% of the LGA despite the best efforts of the leadership to change the LGA. This alienation by Corbynite councillors may cause many of them to stand down as councillors especially given the changes in leadership in the Labour Party, with the councillor quoted above stating that she regretted standing for election and was even attracted to joining the Northern Independence Party. This inability to engage with constitutional groups or attempt to continue to vie for influence after the leader is gone also supports the third hypothesis. The lack of engagement with the LGA or attempt to embed into the structures means that these intra-party populists have no staying power and thus when no longer backed by a friendly leadership will struggle since they do not regard the constitutional groups within the party as being relevant. This, combined with a membership that is changing and moving away from the leadership, demonstrates that this inability to manage dissent by the leadership weakens their faction within the party.

This alienation from the constitutional norms is also relevant to norms within the council group as was forecast in in the second hypothesis, particularly in reaction to the idea of illegal budgets. One of the few interventions by the leadership that councillors universally praised was the statement that they did not expect councils to set illegal budgets. Yet, despite this statement, members still called for councils to set illegal budgets and these calls, which violated the norms of allowing the council group to run its own affairs, were not seen as a serious issue by councillors who supported Corbyn.

The majority of comments disparaging the LGA or other councillors came from newly elected pro-Corbyn councillors. Of those that were around in 2015 there was a greater deference to other bodies, an acceptance that Corbyn had not engaged well with local government, and a greater understanding of the importance of the intervention against setting illegal budgets. Furthermore,

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<sup>14</sup> The results of the NEC election in 2020 were: Alice Perry (moderate) - 2112 votes, Nick Forbes (moderate) - 2110 votes, Jo Bird (Pro-Corbyn) - 870, and Matt White (Pro Corbyn) - 743

these councillors tended to be against the reforms proposed by Corbyn about electing council leaders directly by the membership, instead of by the council group.

In the Democratic Review commissioned by Corbyn's office and headed by John McDonnell, one of the suggestions for local government was that CLPs would be allowed to choose the Labour group leader, which in some areas would be tantamount to choosing the council leader. This suggestion was very poorly received by the LGA. When the executive councillor earlier in this chapter stated that Alice Perry and Nick Forbes fought against proposals by Corbyn, this one was foremost in his mind, indicating the hostile reaction it had from councillors.

The decision to remove the choice of council leader from the council group and hand it to the CLP membership is indicative of the Corbyn leadership's disregard for norms in the Labour Party as hypothesised. The council executive is chosen by the Labour group and is accountable to the Labour group rather than to the membership, allowing for the council group to function and manage council business effectively. Councillors expressed concern that changing this would be illegal and impossible to manage, as some council authorities cover multiple constituencies. They also were upset at the idea that an unprepared leader could be chosen over the heads of councillors who would not be able to serve under this leader or that this leader would not be able to manage dissent. This belief that a council leader cannot serve without the support of their councillors parallels one of the major issues with Corbyn, who was a leader who served without the support of his parliamentarians. The traditional norm within Labour is that councillors are chosen by the membership in their ward but the council group operates independently of the CLP. However, given that councillors and executive councillors in particular were seen as a hostile group, the Corbyn leadership, instead of managing dissent from these councillors aimed to ignore the need to engage with councillors and then attempted to change the norm to suit itself, confirming the second hypothesis. Furthermore, the opposition to this by the LGA does not seem to have been considered at all, despite the fact that it was clear that this idea would face enormous opposition by councillors, even those who were more sympathetic to Corbyn, and indeed the opposition to this proposal was so strong that it was quietly dropped. Andrew Gwynne, as Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary, was aware of this opposition

but clearly Corbyn and the leadership were not listening to him and therefore the leadership was unable to manage this dissent and were forced to back down publicly instead of hearing the opposition quietly and realising this was not a fight the leadership could win.

Overall, the interviews with councillors reveal a clear feeling that Corbyn failed to engage with them or listen to their concerns, and even those figures like Andrew Gwynne who did were ignored at the highest level. Councillors that liked Corbyn regularly delegitimised groups like the LGA who were seen as sceptical and were unable to make any headway in turning that body towards their leader. The next section of this chapter will look at interviews from councillors and Momentum activists about how Corbynite groups on the ground saw councillors and how councillors viewed pro-Corbyn groups and how this hostility further poisoned the relationship between Corbyn and local government.

## Relations Between Councillors and Momentum

‘They’re middle class, jumped-up little prats that don’t know what the working class really need’ - Councillor Darren Rodwell, leader of Barking and Dagenham Council, where Labour has all seats sharing his impression of Momentum (Interview 223)

To compound the fraught relationship between councillors and the leadership, there were also issues between pro-Corbyn membership groups and councillors. The largest of these groups, Momentum, sought to promote Corbyn’s agenda within CLPs and often viewed councillors with suspicion for being too moderate, while councillors saw Momentum activists as annoyances who would often campaign against Labour councils and call for unachievable goals. Interviews were held with local and national Momentum members to complement the interviews with councillors, as the latter had shown that most councillors did not have a favourable view of Momentum. The interviews with Momentum demonstrated a similar level of discontent with councillors within the party. This was a trend at both the local level where ire was mainly focused on individual councillors, and on the national level where there was discontent at the moderate role of the LGA.

The previous section revealed that Corbynite councillors did not view the LGA as an important or worthy group to be involved in, while moderate councillors felt that the LGA was continuously

ignored by Corbyn. This affected how Corbyn's powerbase, mainly Momentum, would engage with local councillors and how they felt about the fact that their local public servants tended to be overwhelmingly more moderate. Momentum interviewees were asked about their view of local government, and whether Corbynites faced a disadvantage in terms of selection, due to the hostility of councillors towards Corbyn and the influence such councillors wielded on the selection process, while councillors were asked about their views on groups like Momentum and how they operated. Examining Momentum's views of councillors and the structures that they operated in is important, as it demonstrates how the new populist leadership regarded the norms and rules of the Labour Party, which are quite similar to other mainstream parties (Poguntke et. al., 2016) and can work to further explore the second hypothesis. As councillors are more likely to be on the ground than parliamentarians they are more likely to face the ire that Corbynites held towards moderates and the party than other groups like MPs, making the relationship between Momentum and councillors relevant (Tan, 1997).

Interviews with Momentum revealed that the dissatisfaction and anger that Corbynite councillors felt with the LGA was mirrored and encouraged by that organisation. A Momentum employee, Rachel Godfrey Wood, discussed how Momentum sought to provide sympathetic councillors with a parallel structure to the LGA due to the hostility they felt from the moderate-controlled body.

Basically we have a councillor network, so that is a network of left wing councillors, who basically became Momentum members, who are councillors. Why do we have a network of left wing councillors? Fundamentally it is bloody hard being a left wing councillor. With a lot of left wing councillors, they are in minorities in their Labour groups, they are often subjected to quite a lot of hostility and stuff like that, particularly from the rest of their Labour group but also being councillors is a very difficult thing and people need a lot of support. (Interview 60)

The onus, according to Godfrey Wood, was to allow Momentum members to work together almost secretly and away from the LGA, and instead of engaging or trying to change the LGA or convince councillors to come over to their side, seemed to be focused on allowing these new Corbynite councillors a space to retrench their views, further supporting the hypothesis that they do not engage with established norms or constitutional bodies in the party when those bodies are viewed as hostile. The former director of the Blairite faction 'Progress', Richard Angell, expressed the moderate side, which was anger at how Momentum ignored the norms of how members and councillors should behave and how only councils who were led by people loyal to their line were getting special treatment.

'They, their supporters, have stormed Lewisham Council, Lambeth Council, and many others, I can't think of some of the examples. They've terrorised the leadership of Sheffield Council. They've actively organised for second rate leadership contenders to go for things like Metro Mayor, think of where Newcastle is, where Nick Forbes was defeated by the most second, third, fourth grade Labour candidate. They have held a Preston, a middle of the road district council as somehow the example of best practice when the things they do are best practice just because they happen to be done by a Corbynista leadership, and are stuff that most Labour Councils are doing all around the country' (Interview 46)

The model of weaponising the membership and using them against constitutional bodies, following the pattern found by Gauja (2017) in demonstrating how the leadership uses the membership to achieve its goals, was used by Momentum and was angrily decried by moderate groups. The feeling that Momentum viewed councillors contemptuously was only exacerbated by the development of parallel structures of councillor representation set up by Momentum, working parallel to, rather than within the constitutionally recognised structure of the LGA. These parallel structures involved setting up mailing lists of pro-Corbyn councillors, allowing them to organise outside the LGA, as well as providing training on how to be selected as a councillor.

Additionally, when looking at norms, Momentum seemed very much at ease with the idea of deselecting councillors for ideological reasons, which in the past was considered not an appropriate reason to deselect a councillor. Michael Chessum, another member of Momentum who served on their national board, demonstrated an enthusiasm for deselection and did not view the selection process of councillors as de-selection, with the justification that councillors have to go through mandatory re-selection, indicating the Momentum view that councillors serve at the pleasure of the members.

I think everybody in principle would like to deselect more. Obviously councillors are slightly different because it's not deselection exactly, as they're selected every time. So, who wins the selection this time it's not necessarily a deselection per se. (Interview 67)

This demonstrates further support for the third hypothesis. However, moderate councillors viewed this as deselection and often found a factional element to the attempts to deselect them, with a Labour councillor in a safe Labour area decrying the fact that Momentum did not value her service to the council and viewed her loyalty to Corbyn as a litmus test.

And when I stood for re-election this time, I was told that there was a move afoot to unseat me as a city councillor. There are three seats in the ward. And two people who never stood before were selected. And I was third choice, even though I've been a councillor for eight years. (...) I was also told a meeting had been held- the prime objective, and the only item on the agenda was to get rid of me, because I'm perceived as moderate. (...). I broke the habit of a lifetime. I've never lobbied for votes before. I've always taken the line people must make their mind upon the day. As secretary, I actually campaigned very hard against having caucuses and lists.' (Interview 27)

Councillors therefore took the attempts to deselect them as factionally-based attacks and saw Momentum as attempting to organise ideologically-based deselections as punishments for disloyalty. Where initially council selections were meant to be non-factional and based on a collegiate selection on the day based on who was the best or most experienced candidate, had turned, in their mind, to an ideological contest where previous service was irrelevant, something that did nothing to heal the rift between Momentum and councillors.

Furthermore, local councillors often felt that Momentum were not interested in helping out during local election campaigns, which in some areas happen annually, and that their attempts at campaigning were often unhelpful.

They had an obsession with setting up stalls on the high road and handing out leaflets as being the chief method of communicating with residents, ignoring the fact that on the high road is our main street in Darlington, before Covid and lockdown, probably a third of the people came from outside Darlington, so it was an utterly ridiculous way, and you can never target your resources. All you were doing whilst handing out leaflets is a very old, sort of hard left view of manning the barricades and all they needed was a brazier to make them absolutely at home. So for all the, 'oh it's all about the campaigning', from what I saw, they just reverted back to very traditional, 1970s, sixties and seventies style of campaigning, which was absolutely of no use at all for anyone who was interested in holding council seats or winning general elections. (Interview 106)

This quote, from a Labour councillor in Darlington, a marginal Labour area, is indicative of the way many councillors viewed Momentum's campaigning activities as being outdated and not helpful for holding council seats and not fitting in with the party's overall campaign. Given that local election campaigning is the main activity for most CLPs and is how members become active, this lack of engagement with running a local election campaign and setting up of a parallel structure to engage new members was quite heavily resented. Moreover, it was even seen as unhelpful as it was moving activists away from constructive activity and keeping them within a bubble in the party. Even when Momentum did manage to engage in doorstepping activity often their efforts were viewed as being very unhelpful, due to their propensity to argue with voters rather than gather data.

A couple of times when they would come out on doors, when it was like a ward that they lived in, then they'd be hard-pressed and do five doors then go home. The last door they did was always a riot between them and the person they were knocking on; and they forgot the golden rule, which is that you're not there to have an argument. You are there to ask the question and leave politely. (Interview 116)

This quote, from Darlington councillor Libby McCollum, in a marginal area underscores the issues with Momentum's campaigning and their unwillingness to work closely with party norms, namely that campaigning is about data gathering not arguing with voters and the briefings from councillors to that effect fell on deaf ears. It even came to the point where councillors actually did not want Momentum to come campaigning in their ward as they viewed their presence as a liability, as demonstrated by this quote from Councillor Sian Taylor in a marginal Labour area.

There certainly wasn't the sense that campaigning means going out, knocking on doors, talking to people, actually listening to what they've got to say, what their issues are. With campaigning, there seemed to be the sense that it was about explaining policy to people, and there were certain people who I really didn't want to come door knocking in my ward, because I thought they were rude to people, elderly people, who had been voting for Labour longer than they'd been shuffling round. (Interview 83)

In some areas Momentum's factional antics were even viewed as damaging the local campaign and their factional jockeying to get their people selected were causing delays, with a Labour councillor in a marginal seat discussing how Momentum's factional tactics to get their members selected damaged the campaign to the point that the local elections being called off in 2020 was seen as a blessing.

Each time the wards turned out and reselected their candidates or selected a sensible candidate, it was an absolute disaster for them, it was quite hilarious, but they pretty much crippled our local election campaign in the meantime. Certainly in our ward where that councillor got reselected and then they lodged a complaint about it, it meant we couldn't campaign, because he wasn't officially the candidate, so for us it was a bit of a relief that the elections got pushed back because we were already really, really worried about how we were going to get it pushed over the line when we were completely hamstrung when other parties were campaigning and we didn't have a candidate (Interview 50)

Some councillors were more positive on Momentum, pointing to their role in campaigning as a welcome event, as it was energising members who might have otherwise not come campaigning. In this quote from Danny Myers, a councillor in Leicester, a safe Labour area we see that their contribution could be positively received, but even then expressed doubts about the benefits of their extreme factionalism.

It's really energetic loads of young people, those people from different backgrounds and different backgrounds. (...) I think it's a really good thing. But you know, I'm very anxious about any particular group that's kind of self appointed, becoming very powerful in any political party really, I get anxious about influence and power. But when I've seen them in practice, and some of the training I've been to training they've done as well, which is really good about campaign techniques. So that could be a very positive thing. But yeah, I worry about the power. (Interview 53)

Thus Momentum's lack of campaigning, or very factional campaigning, was yet another reason why the relationship between Momentum and local councillors soured as Momentum would either



not campaign, disrupted the campaign through their factionalism, or failed to follow instructions while campaigning. This, combined with the parallel structures Momentum councillors set up, and their willingness to deselect councillors for ideological reasoning further poisoned the relationship between Momentum and local councillors.

Overall, the relationship between councillors and Momentum mirrored the frosty relationship between councillors and the leadership and the two relationships may have had an exacerbating effect on each other. Momentum's development of parallel structures to the LGA played a role in allowing Corbynite councillors to distance themselves from the LGA, which soured the relationship and never really gave any side the opportunity to manage dissent and ignored the constitutional standing of the LGA. This, combined with the willingness of Momentum to ignore the norms of campaigning and being willing to deselect councillors for ideological reasons caused further damage to that relationship which then further caused problems between councillors and Corbyn, thereby making it more difficult for him to manage dissent.

## Conclusion

This chapter has revealed how the Corbyn leadership never really engaged with councillors in the Labour Party. Despite their constitutional status within the party and their financial and organisational contribution, Corbyn never felt the need to work with councillors. Interviews with councillors, across the country and in every type of council, from rural councils where Labour may only have one councillor to councils where Labour is the only party to have seats, identified a hostile relationship between councillors and the Labour leadership. Firstly, there was a feeling that Corbyn did not seem to care about local government and those in his Shadow Cabinet who did, like Andrew Gwynne and John McDonnell, were not listened to on that particular subject, meaning there was no easy way for councillors to raise concerns. This provides evidence for the idea that populist leaderships often may not set much store on the views of elected officials within the party and will ignore them when it suits them to do so. Secondly, councillors who were supportive of the leadership did not engage with the LGA or try to raise their ideas through established norms, but instead painted other moderate councillors and the LGA as a hostile body,

furthering the hostility between the constitutional body for councillors and those who were sympathetic to the leadership. Instead of reaching an understanding within the LGA, moderates kept a tight hold over that body and managed to convincingly win all the internal elections, with the hard left's best ever result being around 30% of the vote.

The willingness to ignore the LGA was exacerbated by the creation of parallel structures by pro-Corbyn groups like Momentum, because it encouraged sympathetic councillors to ignore the LGA. The view by pro-leadership councillors was that the LGA was irredeemably hostile and that moderate councillors were dismissive of the leadership. Consequently, they felt no need to engage with the LGA despite the constitutionality of that body, and sought to engage directly with the membership, or the leadership instead, which lends further support to the third hypothesis. The unwillingness of the leadership to listen to the LGA and the inability to stop these parallel structures from forming demonstrated the support of the leadership for these parallel structures and a feeling of ambivalence towards the constitutional standing of the LGA, which is the recognised interlocutor for councillors. Thus, in their interactions with councillors, the leadership ignored the constitutional structures and sought to overturn them by engaging directly with councillors as members, which only sought to further the divide between the majority of councillors and the leadership, with only modest gains in pro-leadership councillors throughout the four years Corbyn held the leadership, as demonstrated by the votes for NEC Rep and chair of the LGA in 2016 and 2020 not seeing very much change, indicating most councillors were still moderates.

On top of ignoring the constitutional body of local government, the Corbyn leadership and their supporters also ignored many of the norms that governed relations with local government and the Labour Party, by organising ideological deselections and ignoring the service of long-standing councillors, hijacking campaigns when their candidates were not selected, and attempting to remove the power of councillors to elect the council leadership. The leadership's unwillingness to accept norms within the party due to them disadvantaging the leadership at the time is indicative of the views of populists within political parties of those norms, that they are to be ignored until

they can be made to be beneficial to the leadership, no matter how much bad feeling and dissent would be generated by ignoring them.

The willingness to ignore constitutional bodies and norms within the party turned what was already a sceptical relationship into an overtly hostile one. Given the anti-party elite nature of Corbyn's leadership campaign and his elevation of his relationship to the membership over the constitutional running of the Labour Party, this issue with managing dissent is unsurprising and may have even been the agenda of some of the people behind his leadership, to continue creating conflicts between councillors, and particularly the councillor elite of the LGA, and the membership to empower Corbyn. Birch and Dennison (2017) point out that protest voters are empowered by 'a vote against a political "elite" and potentially... an expression of dissatisfaction with the political elite's consensus on certain issues and/or with the perceived manners, lifestyles and attitudes of incumbent politicians as a group' (pg. 111). Given the hostility towards Corbyn within local government and the leadership's apparent unwillingness to work to address that hostility and manage dissent, Corbyn's leadership clearly faced obstacles when dealing with constitutional and protected bodies within the Labour Party. A key question therefore is how Corbyn dealt with the more moderate and sceptical PLP. Equally, as this chapter has demonstrated, the leadership's willingness to ignore party norms within local government raises questions about how this would translate to Parliament where those norms are far more entrenched. The next chapter therefore explores how Corbyn interacted with the PLP and managed the very strong dissent that he faced from his MPs.

## Chapter 7: Corbyn and the Parliamentary Labour Party

### Introduction

The previous chapter revealed how local councillors and the LGA felt ignored and threatened by Jeremy Corbyn, and how councillors loyal to Corbyn made very little effort to engage with the LGA or create a middle ground, which led to difficulties in managing the relationship between Corbyn and local councillors. Chapter 3 outlines how populists around the world often struggle to engage with norms and constitutional bodies. To recap, the chapter found how populists often distrust institutions seeing them as elite constructions in the struggle between the elite and the public who they claim to represent, and therefore view party norms and constitutions as tools of the elite to keep the membership in line, so they do not feel as bound by them. This leads to pushback by those constitutional bodies who see the norms as being important to the functioning of an orderly and electable party. Populists who challenge these norms will often struggle to manage dissent within the party as their power base is support from the membership with limited support from elites, despite the role these elites play within the party. This situation sets the stage for tension and conflict as demonstrated in previous chapters. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the PLP, the elite group that members had the most grievance with and against whom Corbyn's leadership campaign aimed to turn them, not least because it was the PLP that grudgingly nominated Corbyn and who would provide the members of the government that he hoped eventually to form. Interviews therefore were held with a number of MPs and former MPs, some of whom were shadow ministers within the Corbyn Shadow Cabinet, to determine how Corbyn managed dissent within the PLP and what the relationship was between the leadership and the top elite body of the Labour Party, and how it compared with the fraught relations with councillors. Councillors seemed to largely take their cues from MPs, meaning that the reasons for the difficult relationship between Corbyn and local government stemmed from there, requiring closer examination. As identified in the literature review with the American case studies, insurgent candidacies and leaderships like Sanders and Trump often do not enjoy much support from legislators of that party as these individuals are seen as destabilising and, especially in the case of Sanders, often unelectable. This chapter will examine how Corbyn managed the concerns of the

PLP and analyse why the PLP was initially so resistant to his leadership and whether that resistance ever changed.

The chapter aims to examine the relationship between the PLP and Jeremy Corbyn. The interviews both with MPs and with pro-Corbyn figures in Momentum provide material for examining how that relationship started and to identify the particular issues that caused the well-publicised fissures in the party and whether there was any attempt by any figures to mend those broken bridges. The first section examines the feelings MPs had about Corbyn when he ran for the leadership and their concerns from the very beginning and how they resolved to respond to his leadership when it was clear he would win. The second section then examines the working relationship between Corbyn and the Shadow Cabinet and how it deteriorated due to failures in communication, before the third assesses the important issues that caused friction. The fourth section discusses these issues, and the final section concludes. Along with the interviews of parliamentarians other interviews that play a role include those of senior figures in Momentum who worked in the Leader of the Opposition's Office (LOTO), and demonstrate a clear gulf between LOTO and the PLP, with LOTO feeling that interventions from senior figures in the PLP which were lauded by parliamentarians were meant to undermine the leadership. Therefore, this chapter makes a substantive empirical contribution to literature both on parliamentary-leadership relations in parties and on how populists manage dissent in parties.

## The 2015 Leadership Election and initial relationship

Under Michelsian party theory, outsiders who gain leadership would aim to come to an accommodation with party elites very quickly and set out areas of issue space where opposing factions could operate. For example, in the 1960s, when Harold Wilson became leader of the Labour Party by appealing to the left of the PLP, he quickly allowed moderates to dictate foreign policy in order to manage dissent (Vickers, 2008). However, populists may struggle to do the same, as they view their mandate as coming directly from the membership, and therefore would view a compromise as unnecessary. However, this would come at the price of increasing dissent within the PLP.

The 2015 election defeat caused Ed Miliband to resign and the subsequent leadership election saw Jeremy Corbyn elected, despite gaining little support from the PLP, who only grudgingly allowed him on the ballot. Interviews with MPs revealed that many of them did not feel that Corbyn had the qualities of a leader and felt that he would not be a successful manager of the PLP nor was he electable. In fact, interviews from his supporters often demonstrated considerable anger at the PLP, particularly over the proposed cuts to welfare that were being discussed, and a feeling that a profound change to the party was needed. Collectively, this set the stage for a hostile relationship between Corbyn and the PLP.

Reflecting on the atmosphere of the leadership election in 2015, parliamentary interviews highlighted the chaos and lack of readiness for a leadership election at that moment. Several interviewees who were critical of Corbyn felt that the previous leader, Ed Miliband, had resigned too soon and did not allow for a sober post-mortem of the election, which perhaps prevented the 'right' conclusions from being drawn. The interviews also revealed that this lack of readiness led to the leadership campaigns being unable to truly capture the imagination of the Labour Party, something which Jeremy Corbyn's campaign was able to do. According to a former MP the exhaustion from the 2015 general election, combined with the changed financial and family situation for Yvette Cooper, one of the leadership candidates, set the stage for an unstable and unpredictable leadership election. A former MP, who supported Cooper, harshly criticised Ed Miliband for calling the leadership election at that point and not allowing the party to rebuild:

During that general election, you have to remember, we were competitive in three quarters of the campaign and its only in the last quarter where we became less competitive, and therefore big figures like Andy and Liz were working really hard, and Yvette (...) other people were tending their allotments, but Andy and Yvette were working really hard, so they were absolutely exhausted and remember in Yvette's case she was also in a household where her husband had lost his seat and having to come to terms with that, so then we were precipitated into a leadership election when we shouldn't have been. A real leader of the Labour Party wouldn't have forced a leadership election at that point as it was inappropriate and we would've had the time for rebuilding (Interview 63)

Mirroring this, another MP highlighted the weakness of the campaign in the aftermath of the 2015 general election, where Labour Party members had felt like victory was in their grasp, only to be sorely disappointed and therefore faced the weaker campaigns of Cooper and Burnham and were unwilling to listen to Kendall's message:

I think that none of the three other candidates who made it onto the ballot paper, were really offering good campaigns at all, and there was such a sort of dearth of excitement about the campaign that in comparison to that, what Jeremy was offering appeared fresh, appeared to have

an excitement about it, that I don't think any of the other, I think that the other candidates all looked, kind of, well I think in terms of Andy and Yvette I think they looked very uncertain, and in terms of Liz who was just telling a prescription the party absolutely didn't want (Interview 59)

It is therefore unsurprising that Corbyn's campaign was seen as the opposite of his three opponents, and was described by a former MP who supported him as:

I felt that there was an energy and a potential that was there, that was quite phenomenal and something that I hadn't seen within the Labour Party for a considerable period of time. I suppose the vote came with hope over common sense. It wasn't typical; when I speak to Tory voters going 'oh go on just hold your nose and vote Labour'. There was concern at the time, but that was overshadowed by genuine hope that we could see a real rush of energy, enthusiasm and thought flow into the party (Interview 101)

Thus the lack of excitement and unpreparedness of the moderate wing, combined with Corbyn's lack of exhaustion and willingness to offer fresh ideas and a positive view of the party meant that despite the PLP's unwillingness to have him as leader, his leadership campaign was off to a good start and on the way to winning.

Once Corbyn emerged as the frontrunner and likely next leader of the Party, the PLP was faced with how they would work with this leader that they had not wished for and had barely made it on to the ballot. By and large most MPs appeared willing to at least give Corbyn the benefit of the doubt and work with him in the Shadow Cabinet (Crines, 2015). There were a few MPs who refused to do so, one MP in particular noted that he did not feel he could go along with the direction of the leadership and believed too strongly in collective responsibility to attach himself to a project he disagreed with:

I refused to serve under him. I just believe that having come from Local Government, that I believe very strongly in collective responsibility and that if you sign up to be a Shadow Minister or a Parliamentary Private Secretary or you become a whip you have to abide by collective responsibility. You can't speak out and I felt that I couldn't sign up to collective responsibility. Because I knew that the areas of policy that I strongly disagree with Jeremy Corbyn on and I wanted the freedom to speak from the backbenches. (Interview 76)

Another Labour MP said that there was initially some hope that Corbyn would unify the party, like other leaders who had stood from the left of the party who ended up being consensus figures (like Harold Wilson):

There was a short period where people thought, well is Jeremy going to be like all other leaders that the LP has had in the past, because most of Labour's leaders have come from the left, admittedly none from the far left as Jeremy came. But then as soon as they became leader, they tried to unite the party and find common ground and pull everyone together really with a common agenda. JC didn't do that, he basically said well I'm the leader, this is what I want, this is what I've always stood for, I'm not going to change, you'll support me. And the result was a largely fractured and incapable PLP (Interview 84)

However, most MPs from across the party agreed to serve in his Shadow Cabinet and were willing to try to make his leadership work despite their misgivings about his electability, with one MP saying that he was happy to accept the verdict of the party and wanted Corbyn to be successful:

It was my view that he was democratically elected, and I wasn't in the business of criticising the Labour leader, I took a frontbench role, I worked and felt it was my duty to make it work for the members. I think deep down I always had a concern that all of his history might come back and be used against him, and of course it did, and I think I felt deep down that there was a real risk that would ultimately make him unviable to be PM, as it proved. I was more than happy to make it work (Interview 66)

Despite Corbyn's ideological rigidity and the feelings of shock from the PLP he ended up choosing a Shadow Cabinet that reflected most of the party, apart from the core that were opposed to him, with a former MP describing the PLP as such:

The PLP divides into different people, so there's a group of people who I would say you'd put around people like Chris Leslie (...) they never really gave Jeremy a chance. From the start, if you're Chris Leslie or Ian Lucas, Jeremy is a failure from the start, so they never gave him a chance. So, they're causing trouble almost immediately, one way or another, but that's a very small group. There's another small group, another very small group, who are enthusiasts, like Diane, John McDonnell, who is basically the brains, (...) the old sort of stalwarts of the hard-left in the Parliamentary Labour Party around John's organisational ability. So, there's a small group that would never give Jeremy a chance, and there's a small group that really gets behind, and tries to shape it going forward. (...) So you got these two small groups, and then you got the rest of the PLP, who are essentially loyal, they understand that the Labour Party and the country has chosen a new leader, it's not the leader they would've chosen, but they get behind, and they want this leader to succeed (Interview 63)

Thus while the PLP was divided most of them could be brought along and Corbyn as leader could unify them and manage dissent, with most MPs being worried about his ability to lead and his electability but being willing to accept his leadership and his offer of working together, and considerable respect for figures like John McDonnell who were seen as consensus builders. Far from it being a challenge to manage dissent, even from a sceptical PLP, the elites within Labour were willing to give up issue-space to Corbyn provided that there was a level of reciprocity. Therefore, the idea that a populist like Corbyn could never have managed dissent in the PLP, as claimed by interviewees who supported Corbyn, seems inaccurate. However, Corbyn's anti-elitism ended up making any such deal impossible, further showing the tension between the anti-elitism of populism and the oligarchic structure of a political party.

Within the Corbyn leadership campaign, which later transformed into Momentum, there was little to any consideration of the PLP's desires. The excitement of having a leader of the Labour Party who was from the hard left, combined with the organisational expertise of figures like Jon Lansman, empowered previously marginalised figures who saw Corbyn's leadership as a chance



to make their impact (or settle scores). As noted in the last chapter the willingness of the hard left to create parallel structures gives them their own organisational structure which does not consider the importance of managing dissent in established bodies. However, given the PLP was less favourable to Corbyn than local government (where he started with 20% of councillors who were favourable to him, in opposition to around 10% of MPs) and had fewer members than local government (232 MPs as opposed to 2278 councillors), such parallel structures were hard to create. Interviews with Momentum figures showed that they viewed the PLP as an entirely hostile body and believed that figures like Hilary Benn were plotting against Corbyn from the start of his leadership.

Given the lack of support for Corbyn's leadership campaign in the PLP, the options for the leadership were limited in how to work with Parliament. One possibility was to work with the PLP, by constructively unifying on the issues where there was a broad consensus, such as on Corbyn's economic ideas and anti-austerity plan, and to hand over ownership of more contentious issues to dissenting voices in the PLP in order to forge a consensus on those particular issues. This approach might achieve unity within the PLP at the risk of diluting some of Corbyn's ideas. The make-up of Corbyn's initial Shadow Cabinet suggested that this was the route he seemed to be taking.

Another approach was to provoke fights with the PLP and attempt to change party policy on issues where there were significant disagreements, such as foreign policy, and to encourage intra-party battles, effectively fighting the PLP over the direction of the party and the policy that it held. Figures working close to Corbyn, like Rachael Godfrey Wood, encouraged the view that the PLP was hostile and took dissent within the PLP as outright hostility:

Hilary Benn was entirely hostile. He made a speech, you probably remember it, in November 2015 on Syria. The entire purpose of that speech was to ruin and undermine Jeremy Corbyn. I think it was in the run up to the Oldham by-election. The right of the party wanted us to lose that by-election, there is no question about it so they could remove Jeremy as quickly as possible. (Interview 60)

The casting of a speech on a free vote, which is the speech referred to in this quote, as being intended to undermine Corbyn, instead of being Benn setting out his stall on an issue where there was dissent is perhaps indicative of the hostile bunker mentality many people close to Corbyn felt towards the PLP. Additionally, many other pro-Corbyn activists sought to diminish the role of the

PLP within the Labour Party's structure, as seen in this quote from Michael Chessum, a member of Momentum:

At the end of the day, my view has always been, however important members of parliament are, that the leader has to carry the overwhelming majority support of the members and the trade unions as well, and JC did that very well. (Interview 67)

Thus, whereas the PLP mostly viewed themselves as sceptical but willing to serve the new leadership, bar a small fringe that weren't, people around Corbyn and in Momentum viewed the PLP as trying to bring Corbyn down. However, if the PLP had wanted to bring Corbyn down from the very beginning then presumably more than just a small fringe would have refused to serve in the Shadow Cabinet. At the early stages of Corbyn's leadership there was always concern about how the PLP would react and if figures like Hilary Benn, Owen Smith, and Lisa Nandy had refused to join the Shadow Cabinet that would have further weakened Corbyn's credibility. Their willingness to be part of the initial Shadow Cabinet demonstrated a desire for the new leadership to succeed. Corbyn loyalists also viewed the PLP as less significant within the wider Labour movement and thus placed less of a premium on managing their dissent, which created a hostile relationship, which was somewhat accidental, rather than a calibrated move (Ford, Bale, Jennings, and Surridge, 2021).

Despite the clear differences that existed on issues like foreign policy there were areas on which Corbyn and the PLP largely agreed and could have worked on together constructively, particularly on the economic front and on opposition to austerity. For example, a Labour MP, when asked on economic policy said:

Anti-austerity of course we are anti austerity, whether we had sufficiently nuanced arguments about what to do about it I'm not sure. Actually John McDonnell was doing some interesting stuff but we never tested it. (Interview 58)

This indicated that there was agreement in the Labour Party on taking an anti-austerity message, which Corbyn largely ran on and that this would not be an issue and that some of the policy ideas, especially from John McDonnell were interesting and that the PLP would be willing to help Corbyn nuance and refine and strengthen his message on austerity. Therefore, Momentum's belief that the PLP was fully hostile on policy issues may have lacked foundation for there did seem to be scope for the PLP to achieve a consensus on economic policy and unify behind Corbyn on that issue. Many MPs also felt that Corbyn's economic policy is what propelled him to the leadership,

rather than his views on foreign policy, meaning that those who accepted the democratic will of the party would be less willing to voice their dissent on those economic issues and did not feel that the disagreements on foreign policy were going against the will of the party.

Despite the overall oligarchic nature of parties, the increasing trends of democratisation require elites to be sensitive to the will of the membership. Therefore, when the membership signals a desire for a change in course around certain policies parliamentarians may be willing to shift their positions. However, if a leader then aims to make changes that elites do not see as endorsed by the membership, as Corbyn did on foreign policy, there may be more resistance and dissent than the mandate from the membership cannot alone manage. A Labour MP underlined this tension:

The biggest problems he had were related to foreign policy in one form or another, and the strongest position he had was in terms of economics. I think the party had moved on really from Ed Miliband and Ed Balls's time, when there was an acceptance of a need for a degree of austerity. And I think the new economic agenda rejected that, and I think that's one of the things why the economics of the Corbyn period were not as bad as the foreign policy aspects. I think to a larger extent, they were going with the general trend in the country, and the mood in the Labour Party. (Interview 84)

This indicated that had the Corbyn leadership aimed to build consensus around economic issues that would have found a strong reception in the PLP. Rachael Godfrey-Wood of Momentum additionally also was able to easily reel off ideas that Corbyn's team had that were supported throughout the party and even admitted that those elements could have been emphasised more:

I think for me the most exciting things were maybe the things that were not resonated enough, or were not communicated enough. But like looking at different forms of public ownership and looking at how ordinary people can get involved in the running of the economy was pretty exciting. There was also the Inclusive Ownership Fund that would give people a stake in their companies, and a decision making stake, to basically discourage companies from this short-termist, speculative behaviour as well, that was really exciting. (Interview 60)

The economic area was one where Corbyn could have built a strong consensus around, and in dealing with it he had two options, either to put someone who was sceptical of him in there in order to build a strong cross-party consensus and then put foreign policy in the hands of an ally in order to see policy closer to his views be created, or to put an ally in there and delegate foreign and defence policy to his sceptics. Initially it appeared that he chose the latter by picking John McDonnell as Shadow Chancellor. However, based on his management of foreign policy it seems he was not willing to follow through on full delegation of foreign policy to his sceptics. This

attempt to take a third option further inflamed tensions between Corbyn and the PLP, who saw him as being unwilling to compromise and delegate issue-space to his sceptics.

Foreign policy was always going to be an area of disagreement between Corbyn and the PLP. Corbyn's alignment with the Bennite faction meant that he took positions that were out of step with the rest of the PLP. For example, Corbyn had long expressed opposition to NATO, which Labour had always supported. He was also committed to unilateral disarmament, when Labour's position had been for multilateralism. Furthermore, Corbyn used as a virtue his opposition to the War in Iraq, which had been unpopular with the Labour membership, but he had also opposed interventions in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and Libya, which had more support both within the PLP and Labour Party. Finally, he had also appeared with hostile leaders to the West and had a record of supporting terrorist groups like the IRA and Hamas, which many in the PLP found objectionable. Therefore, his foreign policy was seen as being out of step with his PLP.

Despite Corbyn's decision to allow sceptical voices to run foreign policy, and his appointment of Hilary Benn as his Shadow Foreign Secretary, Corbyn still attempted to play an active role in foreign policy. However, his delegation meant that there would not be a strong change in Labour's foreign policy as Benn and his shadow ministers remained firmly in favour of Labour's established foreign policy and defence policy regarding Trident and intervention in the Middle East, which meant that under collective responsibility those figures would be the ones who set the policy, as opposed to Corbyn's personal views, which figures like Momentum thought should be official policy. One Shadow minister argued that this demonstrated how little Corbyn was actually willing to work with the rest of the party:

I think lip service is a good term, but I think it became clear that he was making no consensual approach to centre-left politics, and basically he expected the shadow cabinet to follow his dictates and inclinations, and that clearly wasn't working (Interview 84)

Further, a Shadow Cabinet member agreed with this:

It's quite clear Jeremy had an opportunity, a very clear opportunity to take the Labour party into power and he chose a different route, and I am not quite sure why he did that. If controlling the party was much more important than being in government, I'm not quite sure the answer to that. (Interview 92)

The lack of vision Corbyn had for whether foreign policy was going to be an area that he would change or one that he would delegate to his sceptics to unify the party meant that there was no

clear strategy for managing dissent over the discordant views between his close supporters on one hand, who agreed with his anti-Western foreign policy and supported leaving NATO and abandoning Trident, and the PLP on the other, who were more interventionist (Manwaring and Smith, 2019). Corbyn neither sought to force a policy change nor did he allow dissenters to fully control those areas of policy (Strong, 2015). This lack of vision faced with an already sceptical PLP set the state for a chaotic and toxic relationship.

## Corbyn and the Shadow Cabinet

The interviews with parliamentarians made it clear that there was an opportunity for Corbyn to build a constructive relationship between him and the overwhelmingly sceptical Shadow Cabinet and PLP. Though most of them were afraid that his leadership would be a failure, they were also willing to respect the mandate given by the membership of the Labour Party. Within Corbyn's camp, the feeling was one of siege mentality and a feeling that even those who agreed to work with Corbyn were hostile and hoping to see him fail in his endeavours (Donovan, 2015) a stance that did not help to undo any antagonism and disagreements between Corbyn and his Shadow Ministers. This was further exacerbated by the populist tone of Corbyn's leadership campaign which set out his stall as representing a change from the policies and attitudes of the PLP and was one of the primary reasons why many members voted for him, as a way to send a message to the PLP. Combined with a sense of overwhelming support for his initial policies within the party, Corbyn's leadership did not grasp the importance of creating an understanding with the PLP.

As stated previously, Corbyn's initial Shadow Cabinet encompassed of a diverse group from across the party, with all major factions being represented within the Shadow Cabinet, indicating a potential willingness to forge a consensus. A Shadow Minister, on the defence and foreign policy teams, made it clear that a precondition of him serving on the frontbench was a commitment to maintaining Labour's existing foreign policy<sup>15</sup>:

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<sup>15</sup> Labour's policy was committed to staying in NATO, the European Union, and maintaining the Trident nuclear deterrent

I made my views very very clear when I was asked to do a job, I said I favoured multilateral disarmament and strong defence, and I wanted to see the LP as the party supporting that. And I was told by a lot of the leaders' office that that was fine, and they were happy to have me onboard (Interview 84)

Similarly, another MP spoke about how policy seemed at the start to be in the hands of the relevant Shadow Ministers who had a level of latitude in choosing their team:

You saw the mix of people who took front bench jobs so when someone I've known for many years and is a really good friend which is John Healey offered me a job on something that I cared really strongly about which is housing, I wasn't serving Jeremy I was serving John and the party. (Interview 58)

The same willingness to delegate and work with others was reported by another Shadow Defence Minister<sup>16</sup> when discussing Corbyn's willingness to have those who supported Trident and NATO, even though he himself opposed both renewing the nuclear deterrent and staying in the alliance, on the defence team:

I guess he was choosing which fights to have really. I think that you know the guy wanted to be Prime Minister and I think you know the Labour Party is pretty sensitive to the damage we've done to ourselves with the position of unilateral disarmament in the past. (Interview 59)

However, this willingness was soon tested when external issues laid bare the level of division between Corbyn and his foreign policy team, such as the issue of airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria, supported by Benn and opposed by Corbyn, which was resolved by allowing a free vote of Labour MPs. A Shadow Cabinet Member described Corbyn's attitude towards this disagreement as being confrontational:

That was always the thing, that was always the downfall of Corbynism. You were either with him or you were against him. There were no, well people might have a different viewpoint or you might disagree or let's agree to disagree or let's debate it or let's be a broad church and recognise that there will be different views. Corbynism was never about that, it was either their way or no way. (Interview 92)

A former MP, who opposed the airstrikes also demonstrated how Corbyn's inflexibility on what was determined as a free vote caused unnecessary tension:

Jeremy did go through the effort of meeting MPs who he thought were unsure of where they were going to end up voting-I was presumably in that column at the time, so he was doing some sort of operation despite it being a free vote, so again those are contradictions, aren't they. If it's a free vote, you're best as leader to just step back and let it be a free vote, aren't you? You've got to win the argument on the position if you want to vote against it, so again that shows a sort of muddle in his thinking (Interview 63)

A Shadow Minister who served in a later defence team agreed that while Corbyn on the face of it was willing to allow Shadow Ministers to set out a position on an issue, he never was fully willing

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<sup>16</sup> Serving at a different time than the previous shadow minister

to let go when he disagreed with them and this led to unnecessary arguments such as the one detailed below:

I think of two instances in particular. The first was in regard to the deployment of British troops in Estonia, through NATO. After a PMQs, which JC had focused on the NHS, Seumas Milne gave a briefing to journalists afterwards, and the journalists obviously talked amongst themselves and instead of asking questions about the NHS, they asked about NATO, and whether JC supported British troops in Estonia, and instead of answering questions about the NHS, he said 'JC doesn't support the deployment of British troops'. So, the first thing they did was run out and ask Nia Griffith if she supported the deployment of British troops, and she said yes of course, Russia is clearly presenting a threat. At which point, she received a phone call from JC's office, to come to an urgent meeting to discuss it. She spoke to me, and it was decided that I should go with her. When we arrived at the leader's office, I was rudely told, 'we don't want you, we just want Nia'. So, I stayed outside his office initially, but it became clear that she wasn't going in there to discuss better communications, she was going in there for a kangaroo court, and after a few minutes I went inside the leader's office and sat down. In which point, I was told by a member of staff, 'you shouldn't be in here, get out'. And I said I have no intention of getting out, I'm here to support what Nia saying and she said 'no you're not, you're clearly not welcome here, get out'. I said 'if you want me out, you have to throw me out'. So I stayed there and the kangaroo court continued, and Seumas Milne was there pointing the finger at Nia Griffith and saying that she had no right to say what she said, and I spoke up and said that we had a right to say we support NATO and Russia was acting aggressively towards Estonia etc, and the meeting degenerated, and JC who had not said a single word throughout the meeting said 'how are things in your constituency? Are things alright?'. That was the first instance. Neither Nia nor myself were sacked or reprimanded, we simply carried on. Going back to what they were saying, they clearly decided not to make a real issue out of foreign affairs, but at the same time JC and Milne assumed negative attitudes towards NATO, and they couldn't decide that. The second one is a little bit shorter, it's to do with the Skripal poisoning in Salisbury, and Nia was simply against that JC would have accept the reality that Russians had used a chemical agent in Salisbury and as I recall we were coming out with this line that we should cooperate with Russians so they could have an objective study to see if these people had come from Russia, when it was pretty clear that the FSB, or different dissident elements in Russia were responsible. So, Nia was asked to go on the Today programme, and instead of attacking JC she expressed the widely accepted view, and we decided that if she was sacked for that, I would go on the Today programme and say the exact same thing and so would the rest of the team. But as it turned out there were no consequences, and again that showed very very clearly two things, as you suggested, they were not prepared to make an issue of foreign policy, but at the same time could not mask their prejudices in certain areas, and that was going to cause them problems, which it did. (Interview 84)

One of the main forces who exacerbated these issues was the Director of Communications, Seumas Milne, who was a strongly disliked figure within the PLP. As demonstrated above Milne was the instigating factor in an argument against a Shadow Minister who had followed her brief. One MP described a deep and strong revulsion for Milne and laid a lot of the problems between Corbyn and the Shadow Cabinet as being his fault, and stated that his nickname in the PLP was 'Skeletor', a reference to the main villain of the show 'Masters of the Universe'. Other MPs also agreed that Milne was the main issue with another MP describing the main issues with Corbyn and the Shadow frontbench as:

In my view, he's got the wrong people around him. I actually think Jeremy is an honourable, decent man but I think that sadly he's surrounded by people who I would not want to have in the Labour Party or the leader's office.

Even interviewees who were regular Labour members, as opposed to elites recognised the presence of people like Milne was problematic to the relationship between Corbyn and MPs with a Labour member admitting that Corbyn's team was filled with his supporters rather than those who could have forged a productive relationship with MPs:

A lot of his leading hires his team made in the aftermath of the election were not geared towards forming a relationship with Parliament, it was geared towards making a team he was happy working with. The likes of [Andrew] Fisher and Milne (Interview 110)

In fact this issue of communication with the PLP and Corbyn's office was something that rank and file members observed as well, with Luke Akehurst noting 'it's pretty alienating to think that there's this guy whose supporters want you to lose your job', and Dan Ratcliffe, agreeing, commenting 'Corbyn rode in on the back of a factional wave that was trying to claim it wasn't factional. As soon as you look beneath the bonnet, you see how Momentum are set up for this'. Therefore, due to Corbyn's inability to truly abandon issues to his sceptics and his office encouraging a hostile relationship with the Shadow Cabinet, the relationship soon became dysfunctional. This extended beyond the dichotomy presented between economics and foreign policy, into issues like Anti-Semitism and changes to the rules of the Labour Party.

The dysfunctional relationship between Corbyn and his Shadow Cabinet, encouraged by his own staffers caused a major rupture in the party less than a year after Corbyn was elected as leader. In 2016 after the referendum vote to leave the European Union, Jeremy Corbyn sacked his Shadow Foreign Secretary Hilary Benn. This happened after a phone call where Benn stated that he no longer had confidence in Corbyn's leadership. This precipitated a mass resignation within the Shadow Cabinet which triggered a leadership contest, which Corbyn won. Despite the Momentum narrative of an attempted coup, most MPs described this as a shock event that 'ran out of control'. A Shadow Cabinet Minister when discussing the mass resignations discussed how he had gone into the weekend with his usual schedule, which he would not have done:

I think it was the Saturday into the Sunday, wasn't it? I remember. And it shows you how much it wasn't planned from my perspective. I was doing live television at midday on the Sunday and if there was any plan



for me to resign, I certainly wouldn't have gone on to do the run of the mill Sunday shows, I would have stayed well away. (Interview 92)

A former Labour MP described the month of June 2016 as being a terrible time for MPs which left them more open to launching a leadership challenge:

There's a feeling that he as the Labour Leader has got a responsibility to argue strongly for Labour Party policy, and that he is failing to do that, so these tensions are getting stronger. I think to understand what happens after the referendum you need to remember that Jo Cox is murdered a couple of weeks, 10 days, 14 days before the referendum date, and so this is a friend going about doing the job that we all do, and she's murdered in broad daylight. The psychological impact of that on MPs is difficult for people to understand, but it's a colleague in your workplace being murdered doing your job, and that's how it felt. So, I think that creates a vulnerability in terms of collective mental health among Labour MPs which I think is difficult to understate, and it's also difficult to understand now from this point in time, you had to have actually been there at that time. We have to come down to parliament, there's a suspension in the campaign, there are commemorative events for Jo, all of this is going on, we then have the referendum result and it's a small but significant win for leave, so that's a defeat for the Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn comes out faster than anyone else and says we need to trigger article 50 (A50) this afternoon-effectively that-this makes people very angry as it shows a failure to understand where the party is, but it also shows a failure to understand the process of leaving the European Union, the worst thing you can do is to trigger A50 straight away, A50 is the one bit of ammo you've got in your armoury to get the best deal possible from Europe, so Jeremy exposes all his weaknesses doing that (Interview 63)

The same MP expressed that the sacking of Hilary Benn precipitated the mass resignations and those resignations were happening so quickly that even people like him who had not believed that the time was right for a leadership election were forced to go along with the resignations since not to do so would be to show confidence in Corbyn:

What precipitates things is then Jeremy sacks Hilary Benn in the middle of the night, on I think the Sunday morning Hilary is sacked, (...) it happens in some sort of eruption as far as people can understand in the middle of the night, then by the middle of Sunday you've got people like Heidi Alexander resigning and it's like a series of dominoes \*does an impression of dominoes falling\* going aren't they. So by Monday morning when I go down early to Westminster, pretty much 2/3 of the Shadow Cabinet have already resigned, it's out of control, I go to see Jeremy-to be fair Jeremy saw me-and I have a good conversation with Jeremy, and I say look: you have got to stand down, because this is going to end badly-this is going to end badly for the party, and if you stand down now you'll go down in Labour Party history in a positive way, you will have done a decent job, you will have moved the party on, you will have changed its base, you will have built its membership, and you can still have a huge influence in the Labour Party going forward. And I think Jeremy was receptive to that to be fair, I think in many ways Jeremy wanted to go, it's what I call the Robert Mugabe principle, he's basically captured by these other people, these unelected people, who are relying on him pushing forward their ideas for their jobs, for their money, for paying the mortgages, so when-and throughout Monday I don't think I was the only person, I think there was basically a procession of Labour MPs either in small groups or singularly going to see Jeremy and having conversations similar to the one I had with him, and the one I had with him was perfectly amicable, friendly-I've remained friendly with Jeremy throughout all of this-I'm not one of those MPs who said when Jeremy was elected: "who is he?" because I'd always spent time with Jeremy before that, I'd always got on well with him. But by the end of Monday, I'd actually resigned, I'd gone down with no intention of resigning, but it's a tsunami, it's a total tsunami, it's powered by the very fragile mental health condition we were in as a result of Jo's death and the referendum defeat, and then Jeremy's behaviour-his inability to lead-now to be fair to him it's a pretty tough leadership challenge he was facing, but he was just not up to it, and so all of that-and it's a tsunami-and by teatime you've got to

jump one way or the other-there is no dry land, you've got to either go with the tsunami or jump to where the leader is, and so a small group of people are sticking around the leader, but most people have jumped the other way, and at that point probably it looks as though Jeremy will resign if enough pressure is put on him he will go, and actually I think he wanted to go, but they wouldn't let him, and you've got this real tension. (Interview 63)

Another backbench MP also seemed to agree that the leadership challenge was not expected and was not a planned event, in opposition to the narrative of the hard left that there was a planned coup in 2016 and that Benn had been sacked for attempting to organise mass resignations. This further highlights the idea that there was a willingness in the PLP to see Corbyn's leadership succeed and hostile actions towards him were not the result of MPs planning but were instead emotional reactions to Corbyn's failure to manage dissent.

All of that was precipitated by the sacking of Hilary Benn. This idea that it was all Machiavellian, coordinated and highly planned wasn't the case, I think a lot of it was emotionally charged and people making decisions based on what was going on around them. (Interview 56)

Though the leadership challenge was not planned and many MPs believed it was not done at the right time, Corbyn's reaction to the mass resignation and motion of no confidence in his leadership showed limitations in managing dissent. Though the PLP lacks the ability to remove the leader, unlike their compatriots in the Conservative party, within parliamentary politics there is a strong norm that a leader cannot serve without the confidence of their parliamentarians. As demonstrated by a number of MPs at that time the majority of the PLP did not have confidence in Corbyn's leadership, and yet he refused to stand down, deriving his mandate from the Labour membership. A Shadow Minister who did not resign during the leadership challenge and had not vocalised opposition to Corbyn commented:

I actually ended up supporting Owen Smith, and the main reason I did was because I felt that if the Vote of No Confidence was so overwhelming against the leader, it was untenable, whether I thought it was the right thing to do at that time or not, I just felt we couldn't function as a party if a majority of the PLP had no confidence in their leader. (Interview 66)

A former MP also agreed that it was untenable for a leader to serve without the support of their parliamentarians and that almost any other leader of the Labour Party would have resigned had they faced such opposition from the PLP, indicating Corbyn's willingness to ignore norms in the party. That former MP stated:

How can you carry on if your parliamentary party has said they have no confidence in you, how can you carry on? You can't really, can you? It's like if you're the head teacher and your staff say they have no confidence in you in a very public way, you have to question yourself, don't you? You can't really carry on. I think no previous Labour Leader except for perhaps Lansbury would've found themselves in that position and, yeah, I think once a vote of no confidence-you have got to go,

haven't you. But Jeremy doesn't play by the same rules as everybody else-he perhaps does-his instinct perhaps is-but the people around him, it's not about the PLP, it's not about the people close to you, you have got a mandate-and to be fair he had a pretty good mandate-you have got a mandate from the Labour Party in the country, and that mandate trumps this mandate, and that's how they played it in the end. (Interview 63)

Many other members and councillors also agreed with the principle that a leader who did not have the confidence of their parliamentarians could not feasibly be leader but there was a split between the members who believed Corbyn should go and the members who thought that the PLP had to be changed to be more on Corbyn's side. This therefore had the effect of driving a wedge between Corbyn supporting members and the PLP as evidenced by former councillor John Clare:

The fact of the matter is, is that we're not electing you, we're not fighting for you, to go up to Westminster (...) I'm not giving my money and my time to put an MP to go on to how you see fit, and become Westminsterized and increasingly corrupt. (Interview 96)

This split was further encouraged by groups like Momentum who seemed to view causing more ruptures with the PLP as a necessary sacrifice and did not seem to view the current PLP's dissent as an issue to deal with. To Corbynites, the issues in the leadership election was about who ruled the Labour Party, members or the PLP, and the issue of who was supreme in the party defined the 2016 leadership election to them, Rachael Godfrey Wood of Momentum also supported the view of a PLP divorced from the desires of the membership, demonstrating a belief that parliamentarians should not have more of a say than members, which goes against the norms of mainstream parties (Duverger, 1954):

[MPs] are embedded in this kind of Westminster insider sub-world which my understanding is, it is quite toxic, and there is quite a lot of status there. There is a lot of status, there are lots of power plays and there is a lot of manoeuvres and stuff like that, so it is not the ideal kind of context that is necessarily conducive to taking the best decisions for the movement. So, to an extent, it is difficult but then there is a bridge between the membership and the MPs, and at least there was under Jeremy's leadership. You have to find ways to bridge that. The way to bridge that is not just to shut out the members and kind give all of the decision making abilities to the MPs. (Interview 60)

Beyond having issues with the Shadow Cabinet Corbyn also was unable to manage dissent within the wider PLP as well, with most MPs describing a toxic atmosphere in Parliament. One Labour MP noted:

His reaction was basically to put a psychological brick wall between himself and the PLP, and the number of times he would come to the PLP on a Monday night and simply listen to all the criticism and the abuse and gave the impression that it was simply water under a ducks back, (Interview 56)

A former MP agreed, making the observation:

The interaction between Jeremy Corbyn on an actual individual level with MPs was virtually non-existent. There was supposed to be meetings, there was supposed to be cups of tea and so on, but they never materialised. It just became an event to see who would turn up at PLPs, then at the end of the PLP there were lots of briefings and journalists and then whoever was the alternate one and MPs went and listened to it and complained, but there were no answers. (Interview 101)

Corbyn's relationship with the PLP was difficult from the start where in a departure from previous leaders he stopped attending every weekly meeting of the PLP Executive (something that according to an ex-MP every other leader had done), initially appearing in one of every three, and then as the relationship between him and the PLP broke down came to as few as one in every five. Another former MP mentioned that the PLP meetings really became toxic after the 2017 election, rather than after the 2016 leadership challenge and discussed the main issues behind the relationship breaking down:

Why does it become so toxic between 2017 and 2019? Anti-Semitism, I would say. Corbyn's underlying incompetence, the core thing is that Corbyn is basically not a competent leader, he just isn't, and he's surrounded by sinister figures who don't believe in the same things as we believe in, so people who have been lifelong members of the Communist Party, people like Seamus Milne who's a Putin sympathiser, and who's met and been photographed with Putin. People like that, they haven't got the same value-set as us, they're not in the social democratic tradition, they're in a completely different tradition, perfectly viable, reasonable tradition, but not one that's linked to parliamentary democracy, and yet they've captured the leader, so there's all the problems around that, tensions around that, and then you throw in anti-Semitism, and Corbyn's inability to deal with that, and I think that's what makes the relationships in the PLP toxic-because there are people like Luciana and Louise Ellman in areas like Liverpool the old militants have all come back into the party-the local parties have always been quite difficult there-they are hounding these MPs, they are giving these-Angela Eagle's party suspended-they are giving these MPs-they're terrorising these MPs, they're giving them a really hard time at grassroots level. (Interview 63)

Thus Corbyn's wider issues translated into the meetings of the PLP and where usually those meetings were meant to be a pressure valve to deal with issues with the leadership, Corbyn ignored the executive of the PLP and did nothing to deal with the concerns of his parliamentarians which further demonstrates that he was willing to ignore established structures within the Party. Moreover, it further demonstrates how Corbyn was unwilling to accept the norm within parliamentary parties that a leader cannot serve without the confidence of their parliamentarians.

However, the interviews revealed that most MPs claimed they were willing to try to build bridges with Corbyn and even into 2019 with all the issues that had emerged were willing to work with the leadership in order to prepare Labour for government. All MPs but one who were interviewed expressed this willingness. This largely is in line with office-seeking literature on party politics, where most parliamentarians will always aim to position the party in the best possible position to

win government. This is in contrast to the views of Momentum, who saw the PLP as unremittingly hostile. For example one MP stated:

There's a much bigger group – and I would say that I'm part of that – who are not so personally hostile, and who would actually like a Labour government. I actually, like many of us, liked the manifesto last time – it was the things that many of us would have wanted a Labour government to have done over many years. So, we are a bit torn. I don't dispute the fact that he did touch a chord with the British public, and I got a huge majority in 2017 on the back of that, so this is not as simple as it sometimes seems. (Interview 110)

Similarly many Shadow Cabinet ministers noted that they were given a lot of independence when setting out the policies for both the 2017 and 2019 manifesto, with very little micromanagement from the leadership. None of the manifestos contained many of the totemic issues of the hard left on foreign and defence policy such as scrapping Trident or withdrawing from NATO. Therefore, the leadership, despite the hostile environment they created within the PLP and Shadow frontbench, largely kept to their commitments to focus on economic policy and allow defence and foreign policies to remain in the hands of the moderates, instead of provoking a fight as some forces like Seumas Milne undoubtedly wanted. In fact many MPs spoke about how the 2017 manifesto-writing process was quite consensus based and never had an issue with the sections of the manifesto they had to write (though took issues with other sections they had no involvement with) and described the Clause 5 meeting<sup>17</sup> as being pleasant and non-confrontational. Several interviewees noted the key role of Andrew Fisher, the Director of Policy, in creating a collaborative manifesto. In discussions with one Shadow Minister the favourable view of their area (defence) and the contrast with other areas was clear:

The 2017 Manifesto was written largely by Andrew Fisher I think, and it surprised us what a good manifesto it was, because it didn't consist of impossible demands, but was actually quite a reasonable statement, whether or not there was much detailed policy formulation behind that is another thing. But nevertheless, just in terms of a statement of what generally Labour wanted to do, I thought it was a pretty good manifesto, and I think that it did go down very well with electorate, and that's one of the reasons why we did better in that election than we thought we would do. The manifesto two years later was a big disappointment, which was a far more detailed manifesto, but was consistent with things that I thought were totally unrealistic. Some of which was undesirable, but impossible to achieve in one term of a Labour government. The one exception I would say was with defence, because basically Nia got on very well with Andrew Fisher, he was one of the better ones, basically wrote the section on defence herself, and I think that's one of the strong points of that manifesto. But again, it goes back to what you were saying earlier, they decided not to make a

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<sup>17</sup> Labour Party Rulebook, Clause 5, Section 4 reads: When not in Government the NEC, the Shadow Cabinet, the Parliamentary Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party ('PLP'), the Leaders of the Scottish and Welsh Labour Parties, and the Chair and three vice Chairs of the NPF and eight Trade Union members of the TULO Contact Group shall decide which items from the Party programme shall be included in the manifesto that shall be issued by the NEC prior to every general election. The joint meeting shall also define the attitude of the Party to the principal issues raised by the election which are not covered by the manifesto.

divisive issue out of defence issues. But the manifesto as a whole, I was disappointed and quite worried about it, because I think that manifesto, just take one example, was harking back to a form of socialism which I think has long been discredited, and really showed the porcelain thinking of the far left about what modern democratic socialism should mean, and what relationship should it have with the market, and what will public ownership have with the market, and how it will be defined. (Interview 84)

Other MPs from sections like health and housing felt that their views had been consulted however.

A Shadow Health Minister stated:

Quite a lot of things that I suggested ended up in the manifesto, not just in my brief but in other areas where I'd suggested things, so I don't know what the process was, because they had a sort of conference where they write it and thrash it all out, but I presume that's what happened this time. But whatever process followed, the manifesto, as it commonly recognised, was fantastic, because it did have a lot of good things in there that people had been asking for, for a long time, and had assumed it was too much for a Labour government to deliver on. (Interview 66)

Similarly Shadow Cabinet members who had criticised the leadership for not engaging with them during the course of the Parliaments also agreed that their views were included in both manifestos, though generally their views on 2019 were more negative than in 2017. One former MP even noted the similarities between the 2017 and 2015 manifestos, demonstrating that Corbyn had not forced a massive move in Labour Party policy:

The manifesto is the same as 2015, it's just simplified a bit, they haven't added things to it, it's a manifesto that was reasonably well thought out presented in 2015, and it's presented in a simpler way in 2017 (Interview 63)

Therefore, from a party management perspective, where there is a need to create at least the appearance of unity, it appears odd that Corbyn created such a toxic environment in the PLP. Given that there was no attempt to radically change Labour policy or the manifesto there seems to have been no reason for this. Most leaders who force a confrontation do so in search of a change (Gauja, 2017), deciding that changing the party merits a direct debate and suppression of dissent. Yet, Corbyn did not seek to actively make any changes to Labour Party Policy but seemed to be willing to ignore party policy to make his own views heard regardless of the damage that would cause to the cohesion of the Shadow Cabinet or the norm of collective responsibility. Thus, this fits well with the hypothesis that populists in mainstream parties are willing to ignore the constitutional norms when they do not suit their agenda, and Corbyn was willing to ignore collective responsibility but could not fully change policy and never really tried, creating a space where dissent was allowed to flourish without either being compromised with or crushed, the worst of all possible worlds (Stafford, 2016).

As stated in previous chapters there was a large feeling of disenchantment with the PLP amongst the Labour membership, which was largely responsible for Corbyn's leadership. A former councillor who voted for Corbyn discussed her reasons as wanting to bring new life and policy to the Labour Party:

I thought that the Labour Party needed to do something very different to what it had been doing in the five years out of power, and actually in the latter stages of being in power, that there had been to my mind a moral and policy drift. And I thought that the energy, the freshness, the radicalism could reinvigorate a tired party. (Interview 9)

Thus by appearing to ignore the PLP Corbyn was largely in line with the ideas of members but this never substantively changed the policy of the Labour Party in either of their manifestos (Manwaring and Smith, 2019), demonstrating an inability to actually deliver on what he was elected due to his unwillingness to work closely with the PLP but at the same time create a hostile environment. In fact the Manifesto Party Database showed that on a majority of issues the main shift in the Labour Party's policy, particularly on economics and public ownership of services, which were the main issues people supported Corbyn on, happened between 2010-2015 under Ed Miliband's leadership, rather than under Jeremy Corbyn (Manifesto Project, 2021). The willingness of Corbyn to ignore the PLP and not necessarily follow Labour Party policy when it conflicted with him was therefore in line with the reasons why he won, to be a check on the ideas of the PLP which were out of step with the membership of the party (Diamond, 2016, Watts and Bale, 2018). As outlined in Chapter 2, populists view themselves as representing the people against the out-of-touch and wrong elite (Mudde, 2010, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017) and Corbyn's interactions with the PLP were certainly consistent with that perspective.

## Issues Between Corbyn and the PLP

As stated previously in this chapter there were serious policy differences between members of the Shadow Cabinet and Jeremy Corbyn's office, which led to a toxic environment within Parliament and caused the 2016 leadership challenge, particularly on foreign and defence policy where Corbyn's stances were out of step with the PLP in general. However, there were a number of other issues which also caused problems with the PLP and Corbyn that further worsened the relationship, due in large part to a perceived reluctance of Corbyn to take action to solve them. The interviews with these MPs further demonstrate Corbyn's willingness to sideline the PLP and

ignore their desire for him to work on them on crucial issues such as Brexit, Anti-Semitism, and abuse by hard-left factions like Momentum which were all seen as serious issues by MPs, indicating that their issues were with more than just foreign policy.

One of the key issues for MPs that they felt Corbyn failed to deal with was the increased level of Anti-Semitism in the Labour Party and assorted scandals and abuse Jews were facing in the party, with a particularly strong feeling that Jewish MPs and colleagues like Luciana Berger and Louise Ellman were being ignored by the leadership. This issue went beyond disagreements on issues and was seen as a moral issue for the Labour Party, with the PLP believing that Labour was at risk of becoming institutionally racist. However, since populist leadership tends to personalise all traits to the leader, there is reluctance by populist factions to admit that a leader has failed or that some of his supporters are unsavoury, which was an issue for Corbyn. One MP noted that a big issue was that Corbyn's time as a backbencher associated with fringe views left him open to figures with potentially anti-Semitic views:

I think the problem for Corbyn has partly been that as someone who was an opposition backbencher for decades he basically could associate with whole range of splinter groups, some of whom – to my mind – had some pretty unpalatable people associated with them (Interview 110)

This problem for Corbyn in managing the views of people who supported him in the Labour Party but were engaging in anti-Semitic behaviour was outlined by a former MP in his belief that the Labour Party had failed to protect Jewish people and that Corbyn's leadership had failed to manage this issue:

There was no handling of it. I was in PLP meetings where you truly wept about the abuse that Jewish MPs, Jewish members, Jewish councillors, the Jewish community, were getting at the hands of people who were brandishing the badge of Labour. It was just appalling. It's disgusting and it's unforgivable and you look at the report from EHCR and to try and seek forgiveness from a community that historically, intellectually, have supported the Labour movement from day one, there is nothing that we can do to say that we are sorry for what we have put that group through. What frightens me is that when you look today at the polling about where the United Kingdom is moving, where its group of citizens are moving on anti-Semitism, well we are going the wrong way. This is so frighteningly like the 20s and 30s; I am genuinely scared for the future. That whole period of Corbyn was, at its most polite, an accelerant in that view, but actually was probably was as much a cause for a lot of it (Interview 101)

A Shadow Minister claimed that a large part of Corbyn's inability to handle anti-Semitism was his particular position on the Israel-Palestine conflict and his inability to recognise how complicated the entire situation was and how a more flexible and understanding approach was needed:



It was disastrous, but it's far more complicated as I'm sure you appreciate, than many people acknowledge, but it required a sensitivity and awareness which JC was not able to get to grips with and present. He's a very straightforward and dare I say dogmatic politician, and during a thing like anti-Semitism which requires sensitivity and understanding, that was something he was unable to get his head around. (...) the way he responded to that criticism showed that he was unable to understand the sensitivity that the issue required. (...) I remember in 2015 when JC had been first elected, he was invited to the Labour friends of Israel reception at party conference, and everybody was hoping that he genuinely would try and work with everyone. And he came into the hall, and it was a large gathering. And I was standing at the back with Hilary Benn, and he came over and said 'what do you think I should say?', and I said, you should be critical of what Israel is doing, but strongly say you are in favour of the two state solution, reiterate how important it is for people to live together and work together, and he said fine. So he got up on the platform, and not only did he not mention that, but he refused to use the word Israel, at a Labour friends of Israel event, and people were just stunned, and he was going through all sorts of contortions to avoid saying Israel, and people started shouting say Israel, but he still wouldn't say it. And from that point onwards, his relationship with the Jewish community just got worse and worse and worse (Interview 84)

Furthermore, MPs noted that Corbyn himself, though initially upset at anti-Semitism soon began to believe the theories promulgated by people close to him that anti-Semitism was being used as a weapon to get rid of him:

At the beginning he believed himself to be an anti-racist (...) and for someone to question that, he was genuinely hurt and confused by it, that was at the beginning. His behaviour and response to anti-semitism and him ignoring it empowered people to continue to do it and get worse and his lack of intervention meant that it got worse and worse and worse and then the response got more and more hostile to him, genuinely in the media and in the PLP (...) I think by the time we got to the 'Enough is Enough' demonstration, he did view it as a conspiracy against him, he did view it as a smear against him personally and then he started to really not like Jews (Interview 208)

Thus the interviews with MPs demonstrated that the issues around Anti-Semitism were a huge issue for them that they felt Corbyn was unable to recognise and engage with them on and it further toxified the relationship between the leadership and the PLP.

Corbyn's willingness to ignore the abuse of MPs by people acting in his name or from groups like Momentum also caused serious problems within the ranks of the PLP. Momentum as a group existed to further Corbyn's objectives and as demonstrated previously had senior figures who uniformly viewed the PLP as a hostile body who wished to bring down Corbyn and therefore treated MPs as the enemy. This led to MPs often facing online or in person abuse from party members who accused them of treachery against Corbyn and never faced an adequate reaction from Corbyn and his office, as was angrily noted by an MP:

Jeremy would get very angry and say they are not doing it in my name. And people would reply but they are. They have #JC4PM in their tweets and in their Twitter bios and they are doing this because they think they are supporting you (Interview 56)

Corbyn's lack of reaction or delayed reaction to the abuse MPs were getting was often seen as a sign that he did not have a problem with the abuse and his messages were often described as lacking in depth, as noted by another MP:

There is no passion even when he is using the right words it sounds like he doesn't mean them and then he doesn't use the right words (Interview 58)

When Corbyn did speak out it was often seen as him being forced into action by other people (mainly John McDonnell) and one former MP said that it would usually take 'three times' for Corbyn to adequately speak out, with the first time being him not wanting to say anything, the second time him making an inadequate statement, and him only getting it correct on the third go. This inaction in the face of abuse by members acting in his name made many MPs believe he was signing off on that abuse and that he was unwilling to act on it and allow politics to be safe for MPs, and the fact that this abuse was mainly targeted towards Jewish women meant that MPs felt he was complicit in creating a hostile environment for them.

Many MPs also took issue with the leadership's pursuing of mandatory re-selection. This issue, totemic for the hard left, was a major point of contention amongst MPs who saw this as an attempt to purge the PLP. One MP commented:

That was a huge mistake. I think that it consumed a huge amount of energy in the run up to the 2019 election, the time that I was spending on that contest, was dominating the summer that I should have been spending preparing for the general election, it was clear an election was imminent, and the entire PLP was dominated, with our thoughts were dominated by winning an internal contest, so I think that was hugely damaging. (Interview 59)

MPs by and large felt that their role was outward facing and aimed to speak to the constituency rather than Labour members, and felt that this measure would force them to spend more time on inward debates, especially in the critical time before an election and viewed this as another example of Corbyn prioritising control of the party over winning elections. While mandatory re-selection, where all MPs would have to go through a full selection process instead of being automatically re-selected unless a large portion of their CLP objected, was not fully imposed the threshold needed to trigger a full re-selection was reduced. MPs and Former MPs realised that this reduced threshold could pose a threat to them when Diane Johnson was the first MP to be triggered for re-selection. While no MPs were deselected in this process, partially due to the general election being called which caused automatic re-selection of any MP who had not yet

been formally re-selected, the entire process caused anger within the PLP and as noted by the MP above meant that some constituencies had spent the summer in an internal conflict rather than prepping for an election. Furthermore, the fact that all but one of the MPs who were triggered were either women or BAME caused further concern.

The reduction of the threshold to trigger a re-selection meant that MPs could be forced to go through a full re-selection if a third of the branches or affiliates in their CLP triggered one, which was down from a half. While MPs were happy that the proposal for mandatory re-selection failed they felt that this reduction still allowed their Labour Parties to be held to ransom by a small group of extremists. This decision also demonstrated the difference between the parliamentary view of the party and Corbyn's more populist view of the party, where Corbyn and his supporters treated MPs as servants of party members first and foremost, while MPs, viewing the disparity between the membership of their local parties and the numbers of constituents, saw themselves as working on behalf of all constituents rather than their members. This differing view of the importance of party members was a cause for great frustration for MPs as they viewed the internal battles that they would have to fight to stave off a full reselection as being not only a distraction but forcing them to move to the left in order to be re-selected which would make it less likely for them to be re-elected. A former MP said:

We also could see no benefit whatsoever to us as a PLP or indeed to the Labour Party to having more internal strife-one of the problems with Corbyn's leadership was that it was too internally focused when you win elections by being externally focused, so MPs were very exercised by it, some MPs like Angela Eagle, she actually was quite pleased we had a GE since she knew she could win a GE, what she didn't know whether she could win-although she spent a lot of time, she spent pretty much all her time fighting her deselection-massive amounts of time as she wasn't certain she could win that battle, whereas if you have a GE you're safe until the next one, aren't you. So, ironically, some people in those larger majority Labour areas welcomed the fact the GE came because it saved them facing potential deselection, which is madness (Interview 63)

Thus, this change to MPs demonstrated Corbyn's unwillingness to work together with the PLP and its continued focus on internal party fights rather than on building a consensus that could win elections.

The issue of Brexit and the European Union also demonstrated an inability to communicate one of the few times he was able to manage dissent within the Shadow Cabinet, as on that issue he did try to build a consensus according to a former MEP

In many of the discussions that I've been involved in, he's not been the hard liner. He's cautious, keeps his cards close to his chest and moves, as I said earlier, really cautiously, but he's not been the one sticking his neck out to stop the evolution of the party's position to a more vigorous opposition to Brexit. It's been more people like Ian Lavery, Richard Burgon and others who have done that, and, and he's occasionally faced them down. So, one could say that, from a strong pro-European perspective, you wouldn't consider Jeremy to be an ally. But he's not been the biggest obstacle. (Interview 8)

However, despite this many MPs felt that Corbyn dragged his feet on Brexit and was in fact a closet Brexiteer who wanted the UK to leave. Much of this was due to Corbyn's perceived ambivalence during the referendum in 2016 which some MPs blame for the loss of the referendum in the first place, and necessitated a complex policy to keep both Labour voters who voted Leave and Labour voters in metropolitan seats who voted Remain (along with the overwhelmingly Remain membership). A Shadow Minister harshly criticised Corbyn's actions in the referendum:

Going back to the referendum campaign, JC, Seumas Milne, were basically Eurosceptics at heart, basically decided that it wouldn't be the end of the world if Britain left the EU, because they thought that we could have a far more interventionist industrial policy without their rules, so there were opportunities for the left to be outside of the EU. But they couldn't really put that argument within the LP, so they decided to follow the approach of sitting on the fence, and that's what basically happened. He dishonestly of course denied that, and gave limp speeches in favour of the EU, but his heart was never in it, and certainly resources were not allocated by the LP in any meaningful way to help the campaign. And certainly in areas like mine, the message went out to many working class people who usually voted Labour, that it wouldn't be the end of the world, and JC really wanted and many of them were willing to vote no, and that happened in an area like mine, a labour area that voted to leave the EU. (Interview 84)

However, by and large many MPs recognised how difficult the situation was as Labour held both the strongest pro-Remain and pro-Leave seats which was an unenviable position to be in.

The final issue that damaged Corbyn amongst MPs was his unpopularity within the wider electorate and how MPs felt that he was leading them to an electoral defeat. One former MP when asked for the main reason people in his seat said they would not vote Labour replied:

Corbyn. Corbyn, Corbyn, Corbyn, Corbyn, Corbyn, Corbyn, Corbyn (...) I thought all along if we could kick the GE beyond the end of January we would be in a position where we could hold on to seats like mine. The experience of the GE makes me question that as actually Brexit wasn't the issue, Corbyn was the issue (...) in 2017 they gave Jeremy the benefit of the doubt, I think what's happened in 2019 is that they've given Boris the benefit of the doubt. The one thing they didn't want to happen in 2019 is that they didn't want that terrorist-hugging, anti-Semite, stuck with policies in the 1970s

anywhere near Downing Street-that was the one thing they knew-that's what dominated their voting intention. They didn't like Johnson, they didn't trust Johnson, they think he's untrustworthy and that he's a charlatan, but they gave him the benefit of the doubt (...) around here who I didn't know at a music gig a couple of months after the GE and she'd sought me out and she sympathised with me, she said "I'm really disappointed you lost," but she was acting as in charge of one of the polling stations in one of the traditional Labour areas locally and she said people were coming in and saying "I'm going to vote against Jeremy Corbyn," so for people to actually be going into a polling station and telling to polling clerks that the reason they're voting is they're voting to stop that man getting anywhere near Downing Street is quite remarkable. I've never known anything like it, they really did hate him (Interview 63)

Many MPs felt that Corbyn was unelectable and his failures of leadership were causing the party to face electoral disaster, and while they were relieved that this disaster did not happen in 2017, they predicted it in 2019. Many MPs like the former one quoted above kept hearing on the doorstep hostility by voters to Corbyn and this worried them. This worry was compounded by the fact that Corbyn did not seem to care about defeats like those Labour experienced in several local elections and parliamentary by-elections, preferring to focus more on factional fights like mandatory re-selection and he was unable to articulate a clear position on major issues like Brexit. Therefore, Corbyn's leadership, which was unable to handle scandals like anti-semitism and the personal abuse of some MPs, looked unelectable, meaning that MPs did not even have the potential benefit of being in government as a way of soothing their concerns about the direction of the Labour Party.

## Discussion

The examination of the PLP and Corbyn's relationship with it in this chapter further supports the second and third hypotheses: that populist leaders will ignore the unwritten rules and constitutional bodies, claiming a mandate from the membership as a reason why they do not need to manage dissent.

The PLP was initially sceptical of Corbyn but most MPs - apart from a small contingent - were willing to work with him to forge a consensus within the party unifying around economic policy, which they all agreed upon, but with strong concerns about foreign policy. Moreover, initially Corbyn's Shadow Cabinet appeared to be aiming for that unity, allowing moderates like Hilary

Benn to control foreign policy while allowing his allies like McDonnell to run economic policy, specifically re-assuring Shadow Ministers that commitments to NATO and Trident would remain official party policy. However, Corbyn's interest in foreign policy caused him to take stands different from the views of the majority of the PLP. This demonstrated a lack of willingness to adhere to the norms of the Shadow Cabinet, where policy is made by the relevant Shadow Minister, or accept collective responsibility, which requires all members of the Shadow Cabinet to go along with the majority decision, including the leader. Corbyn viewed himself as above that rule due to the mandate he had received from the membership and often sought to use pressure from the grassroots to pressure Shadow Cabinet members to his side.

Regarding the composition of the PLP Jeremy Corbyn faced very similar arithmetic in terms of supporters and opponents to a previous Labour leader, who also had occasional issues with managing dissent, Tony Blair, but unlike Blair he was unable to recognise which figures he could not alienate and fared far worse in keeping MPs in line (Manwaring and Smith, 2020). Like Blair, Corbyn enjoyed the support of a core group of people who were completely signed up to his agenda, as well as facing a group of critics who would not entertain working with him. However, with both leaders the majority of the PLP were filled with MPs who varied from scepticism but willingness to work closely with the leader, to those who broadly agreed but had concerns over particular elements of the leader's agenda. Furthermore, both leaders had important figures who could serve as ambassadors to the sceptical groups, either as their Deputy Leaders or as an important figure in the Shadow Cabinet who had responsibility over the area of most concern. In Blair's case his Deputy Leader, John Prescott, was seen as more of a figure on the soft left of the party who could reach out and pacify those who were more concerned about Blair but were willing to work with him for the time being, and was often employed by Blair to take soundings and relay concerns. Additionally, to MPs who were concerned about Blair's economic stance being too right-wing, he had Gordon Brown as Shadow Chancellor. By giving Brown large elements of power over Labour's economic plan and allowing him nearly free rein, he was able to assuage the concerns of the moderates who were generally more Keynesian than Blair. The trade-off for Blair was that Brown became the one member of the Shadow Cabinet he could not fire without facing a huge rebellion, and therefore Blair had to listen and manage any opposing

views from Brown in order to manage dissent. While Blair, especially around the end of his premiership became less effective at managing Brown and the divides between the two men became stronger, Blair was able to leverage a sceptical PLP for 13 years and win an election. Despite being seen by MPs, including interviewees who were in the PLP during Blair's leadership, as a control freak who increased the power of the leader's office, Blair succeeded in keeping the PLP on side by having clear bridges to sceptical elements who were in his tent and therefore could be used to manage dissent. Additionally, Blair had the advantage of being electable and winning three general elections, which was a very effective way of managing dissent.

In parallel to Blair, Corbyn also had two figures who he could use as ambassadors to the sceptical elements of the party, who if he kept those two on side could unify the PLP and keep them all working in the same direction: one of them was his Deputy Leader Tom Watson, the other was Hilary Benn. As with Prescott and Brown, one of them was elected and could not be sacked (Watson), the other was a figure in the party who was largely supportive of Corbyn but was able to potentially re-assure the figures in the party who were worried about specific elements of the leader's programme (Benn).

Tom Watson was a figure who was good at reaching out to the moderates in the Labour Party who were sceptical of Corbyn but willing to work with him, which was largely where Watson himself stood, a figure who was willing to help Corbyn's leadership at the start and be a lightning rod for dissent, though he was immediately marginalised by Corbyn who did not even let him deputise for him at Prime Minister's Questions. Benn, as Shadow Foreign Secretary, was in a similar position to Brown as someone who was largely supportive of Corbyn but was more mainstream on the biggest potential issue of contention, foreign policy, meaning that if he was given full control of foreign policy this could help assuage concerns in the PLP and create unity. However, Corbyn's actions over issues like Syria demonstrated that he was unwilling to allow Benn to take the lead on foreign policy and was unwilling to forge an agreement to manage dissent in the PLP which caused the dissent to overflow.

This chapter finds that Corbyn inherited a difficult situation in the PLP but did not attempt to ameliorate the situation or aim for a united front of MPs. This is in direct contravention of the norm that the leader of a party cannot govern without the consent of their parliamentarians, and demonstrates further support for the hypothesis that populists in left-wing parties are willing to ignore norms. It is almost certain that no other leader of the Labour Party would have continued to serve after losing a vote of no confidence of their MPs. As outlined in Chapter 2, successful parties are primarily oligarchical and parliamentarians tend to make up most of the oligarchy and therefore most leaders recognise the need to manage dissent (Michels, 1968). However, despite Corbyn's professed desire for a more pluralistic Labour Party and need for the membership to have a bigger say, he still sought to replace rebellious members of the PLP with MPs who were more loyal to him as well as more responsive to the membership and encouraged the replacement of the party elite, indicating that they were not against the norms of sharing power with the PLP, but merely aimed to reshape it in their image. Michels (1968) notes that elites do often rotate and party leaders can play a large role in bringing in a new elite and that rebellious bodies when found in the leadership often co-opt the constitutional mechanisms to empower their faction when it is in power. The need for a small coterie of leadership to make decisions is important as 'the power of determination comes to be considered one of the specific attributes of leadership, and is gradually withdrawn from the masses to be concentrated in the hands of the leaders alone' (Michels, 1968). In the modern-day Gauja also notes that leaders take advantage of intra-party democracy to use the membership as a tool to implement their will over elites and eventually replace rebellious groups (Gauja, 2017). Therefore, it is not accurate to say Corbyn did not care about the PLP, he just sought to ignore it until it could be reformed with loyalists to him and did not consider the dissent that would arise from that attitude to be an issue for his leadership.

The findings of the chapter demonstrate that intra-party populists, despite their anti-elite stance, are willing to engage in elite structures when the elite benefits them. However, it also demonstrates that when faced with an elite that is unfriendly populist leaders will aim to



marginalise and ignore that elite and will not place much emphasis on managing dissent. Given that increased democratisation of party politics risks seeing more populist leaders, this unwillingness to manage dissent will see more unstable political parties that are more obviously divided, something that party literature states parties attempt to avoid if possible. The Corbyn leadership did not attempt to build unity in the PLP over the issues that united all MPs and only exacerbated the differences which caused huge consternation on those issues as demonstrated by the issues around Syria. Furthermore, the leadership when faced with disagreements did nothing to deal with the abuse MPs were receiving by people acting in Corbyn's name, and far from attempting to cool tensions made it easier for MPs to be deselected. The interviews reveal that MPs felt upset and ignored by Corbyn and were particularly upset about his inaction on the anti-Semitic abuse their Jewish female colleagues (particularly Luciana Berger) were receiving. This, combined with the general revulsion voters had for Corbyn, which they experienced while knocking doors every weekend, meant that they could foresee electoral disaster and blamed Corbyn for the inevitable election defeat.

Corbyn's leadership squandered every attempt to reset the party, such as after the better than expected result in 2017, where he could have unified the party on the issues that drew them together and appointed a cohesive Shadow Cabinet. Instead he continued to not take action on the abuse MPs and Jewish members were receiving, and while he did manage to build a consensus position on Brexit that was not apparent to anyone outside of the Shadow Cabinet. Instead he viewed the 2017 result as a vindication of his leadership and an invitation to restructure the party more in his image in order to produce a more radical agenda, ignoring the fact that the PLP remained moderate and sceptical of him on a number of issues. This backs up the findings in Chapter 4, which demonstrate the general willingness of populists to ignore those who they do not deem on their side and willingness to have a powerful leader who is the final authority on all issues, no matter how much it contravenes the norms and even the constitution of the relevant party. Thus the findings of this chapter indicate that Corbyn did not see the PLP as a relevant body to work with and was unwilling to settle the differences between him and the rest of the party no matter how much rancour that would cause. Corbyn and his leadership saw the PLP as irrevocably opposed to him and thus sought to minimise its role within the party. However, as

demonstrated above, that was not the case, and had the PLP been as irrevocably opposed he would not have been able to construct a broad Shadow Cabinet as he initially did, and his actions and view of the PLP furthered the alienation between the leader's office and the PLP. At the start of his leadership in 2015 most of the PLP were willing to work with him. These numbers diminished throughout 2015 and 2016 culminating in the unplanned mass resignations and leadership challenge, which was the point at which the majority of the PLP became opposed to Corbyn. Even then, after the unsuccessful leadership challenge most members of the PLP were willing to serve as Shadow Ministers, disputing the narrative Corbyn and Momentum give about a completely hostile PLP.

## Conclusion

Jeremy Corbyn's leadership represented a large potential change within the Labour Party and even the PLP felt that this was a message they could not ignore and wished to advance. As such, apart from a small cabal, most MPs were willing to work with and support Corbyn. Understanding how the relationship between Corbyn and the PLP became so dysfunctional is important, as the PLP are one of the most important bodies within the Labour Party and would provide the figures who would form a future Labour government. Dissent from the PLP in many ways matters more than from any other body within the Labour Party and is critical for a leader to manage, and the way that an intra-party populist leader manages (or fails to manage) this dissent has not been strongly researched. Based on interviews with Members of Parliament and figures close to Corbyn's office this chapter has presented an in-depth and qualitative evaluation of how the relationship between the PLP and Jeremy Corbyn became toxic.

In conducting this analysis this chapter has tested the second and third hypotheses of the thesis and found support for them, providing validity to the argument that populists in mainstream parties struggle to manage dissent. The chapter has shed light on how Corbyn ignored norms within the party such as the idea that a leader must have the support of their parliamentarians. It is clear from the interviews that Corbyn did not consider the support of the PLP important and sought to sideline them until he could bring in more supportive people, which he did through his

reforms. Moreover, the analysis has revealed that Corbyn sought to use the membership against the PLP and even the Shadow Cabinet, discarding the constitutional idea of collective responsibility and attempting to reach out directly to the membership to push them to influence Shadow Ministers with threats of de-selection on issues where they disagreed with the leadership, such as over the airstrikes in Syria. Interestingly, despite all his distancing from the PLP he still allowed Shadow Ministers leeway to write their section of the manifestos, indicating either that he respected his ministers enough to let them write policy or understood he could not stop them from doing so. Thus, despite his willingness to ignore norms in general, he was still willing to avoid stage managing the Shadow Cabinet and most of the fights were when he or someone in his office made an unscripted intervention that clashed with Labour policy. In examining the dynamic between an intra-party populist leader and the PLP this chapter makes a significant contribution to political party and factionalism literature.

## Chapter 8: Corbyn and Trade Unions

### Introduction

As the previous chapters outlined, Corbyn's main support came from the membership which was positively inclined towards him and supported his more radical views and attempts to democratise the party, while local government representatives and parliamentarians were sceptical verging on hostile, who saw him as unelectable and difficult to work with. However, there has been little analysis either in the literature or in public debate of Corbyn's relationship with Labour's affiliated trade unions and how their dissent was managed by the leadership. Examining trade union relationships with Corbyn allows us to develop a more comprehensive picture of how he managed dissent across the many constituent parts of the Labour Party.

The current chapter therefore examines the relationship between Jeremy Corbyn's office and several affiliated trade unions within the Labour Party, mainly focusing on the relationship with Unite and the GMB Union, two of the largest unions in the UK. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section examines the role of trade unions and how the Corbyn leadership was seen as one that could be more friendly to unions and how this view was shared by members. The second and third section discuss his relationships with aligned unions and unaligned unions respectively, before the fourth section discusses how Corbyn ended up only working with unions regarded as 'friendly', rather than with the actual framework of the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Office (TULO) where all unions were represented, and would be the trade union body with which a Labour leader would normally engage. The fifth section concludes..

### Unions in the Labour Party and Corbyn

Trade unions play an active institutional role in most left-wing parties within Europe, and therefore can be seen as an elite within a political party following Michels (1968)'s framework. Michels specifically mentions unions as being part of the oligarchical framework of political parties and therefore it would be possible that unions would be seen by intra-party populists as being part of the corrupt elite that populists define themselves against (see Mudde, 2010, Webb and Bale,

2018). Historically, trade unions have had a moderating influence within social democratic parties, particularly so in the case of the Labour Party (Allern and Bale, 2017), lending further credence to the idea that a populist leadership within the party would find themselves at loggerheads with trade unions, who would seek to support the norms and constitutional standings within the party. As noted 'getting the Labour Party elected still matters to the UK's trade unions—possibly all the more so after receiving two harsh reminders since 2010 of what can happen when they fail' (Allern and Bale, 2017: 263). However, Labour members considered Corbyn's relationship with the unions to be amongst his greatest strengths, reflecting the general leftwards trend of trade union leaders (Quinn, 2010).

Many social democratic parties originated from an alliance of trade unions and socialist groups, who combined in pursuit of parliamentary representation. Unions have tended to view their relationship with social democratic parties as being transactional, with them providing money and personnel for the party to elect representatives, who would then advance the interests of the trade union (Taylor, 1993). This relationship was critical to the early success of social democratic parties and throughout the 1950s and 1960s union members strongly favoured social democratic parties, and unions held constitutional status within most European mainstream left-wing parties. Unions played a strong role in validating the working class voice within parties on the left and served as a counter-weight to middle-class intellectuals. However, during the 1970s and 1980s this relationship began to decline as unions lost influence and mainstream left-wing parties had to broaden their coalition and react to the general re-alignment of politics (Howell, 2001).

Nevertheless, unions still retain constitutional status within most social democratic politics and tend to represent the working class membership more. This often means that they are a moderating influence within these parties, avoiding radical stances on foreign policy or social issues, in line with the more patriotic and socially conservative working class (Rathgeb and Wolkenstein, 2021).

The Labour Party broadly followed a similar pattern, with unions playing a moderating role in factional disputes, such as resisting efforts to scrap the nuclear deterrent (Minkin, 1991). Unions have also opposed attempts to remove power from elites, such as mandatory reselection of MPs.

The relationship between unions and Labour suffered in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly following the industrial unrest characterised as the 'winter of discontent'. During that time, a number of trade union leaders who were affiliated to Labour began to move to the left, led by Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Miners (NUM). This shift became evident when the hard-left Tony Benn challenged the moderate Dennis Healey for Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and was supported by nearly 20% of union votes. In fact, as part of the modernising agenda of leaders like Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party began to distance itself from trade unions and reduce their power in the Labour Party, a trend that was followed by leaders such as John Smith, Tony Blair and Ed Miliband (Kinnock, 2008, Smith, 1994). Under New Labour, a number of large trade unions, such as UNISON, the Communications Workers Union (CWU), Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the GMB, and the precursor unions to Unite saw the election of more left-wing general secretaries (Quinn, 2010). Therefore, since at least the 1980s, there were a number of unions who identified with the left of the Labour Party and would be inclined to support a leader like Corbyn. However, many union bodies like TULO remained moderate. TULO, in fact was created in 1994 by Tony Blair to consolidate all the different trade union-Labour links into a formal body that would create bilateral communication between union leadership and the Labour Party leadership. All affiliated trade unions are members of TULO, which is chaired jointly by the Leader of the Labour Party and a general secretary of one of the trade unions, chosen by the affiliates and it serves as the main official body for trade unions to speak to and agree policy with the Labour leader.

Many rank and file members who were interviewed seemed to believe that Corbyn's leadership was friendly towards trade unions. They said that his support of trade unionism was his strength and cited the support his leadership campaigns had, especially from the large union UNITE, as well as the decision by the Fire Brigades Union to re-affiliate to the Labour Party. Indeed, in the leadership election union affiliates regularly polled high support for Corbyn's campaign. One of his highest profile allies was the General Secretary of UNITE, Len McCluskey, who regularly appeared on television during Corbyn's leadership supporting him. Momentum, the faction that was formed out of Corbyn's leadership campaign to support his leadership, boasted of a strong relationship with the Transport Salaried Staffs Association, who leased them office space during their nascent years. Additionally, his longstanding support of causes like the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign allowed him to gain support from smaller unions within Labour like the National

Union of Miners, who despite not endorsing him in 2015 did not support Owen Smith in 2016. This closeness with smaller unions, like the Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union, also helped perpetuate the idea that Corbyn and the unions were close. Additionally, during the 2015 leadership election other candidates seemed keen to distance themselves from unions. Candidates like Andy Burnham refused to take any money from trade unions for their leadership campaigns, possibly afraid of the legacy of the previous leader, Ed Miliband, who had been accused of being propped up by unions. Moreover the introduction of One Member One Vote had watered down the power of the unions so other candidates also did not court trade union support. Corbyn, on the other hand, was more openly warm towards the trade unions and did not seem to shun or distance himself from them, which led to the perception that he was friendly with trade unions. Additionally, his anti-austerity message was in line with what was for many trade unions their priority issue, further cementing a link in the membership's mind.

However, not all unions were as friendly towards Corbyn. Some never supported him, like the GMB, USDAW, and Community, while others who supported him initially became more lukewarm, like Unison. Therefore, despite the perception from non-union interviewees it is not true that all unions were uniformly supportive of Corbyn and there was dissent within the unions. This dissent largely rose during the 2018 Democracy Review commissioned by the leadership which included several reforms that would have weakened the power of trade unions particularly in relation to CLPs and parliamentary selections. It is largely the Democracy Review which ended the support of the large unions with the exception of Unite, and caused UNISON to stop being allied to Corbyn's leadership. The next section will examine the relationship between Corbyn and unions and how it differed between friendly and unfriendly unions. The aim is to analyse how he managed dissenting unions and to contrast how he managed friendly unions within the Labour Party and how constitutional bodies like TULO were treated. Table 8.1 shows all affiliated unions to the Labour Party, their membership, and who they endorsed in the 2015 leadership election, along with the Fire Brigades Union, which while not affiliated at that election did later become affiliated and played a supportive role in Corbyn's leadership.

**Table 8.1: Affiliated Unions and How they Voted**

Union	Membership	Endorsement in 2015 Leadership Election
Associated Society of Local Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF)	23,261	Jeremy Corbyn
Bakers, Food and Allies Workers Union (BFAWU)	17,007	Jeremy Corbyn
Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph, and Theatre Union (BECTU)	40,000	Did not Endorse
Community	29,421	Yvette Cooper
Communications Workers Union (CWU)	196,173	Jeremy Corbyn
Fire Brigades Union (FBU)	32,664	Non-Affiliated (but endorsed Jeremy Corbyn)
General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union (GMB)	608,929	Did not Endorse
Musicians Union (MU)	31,748	Andy Burnham
National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)	311	Yvette Cooper
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA)	17,856	Jeremy Corbyn
Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT)	47,433	Andy Burnham
UNISON	1,278,971	Jeremy Corbyn
Unite the Union (Unite)	1,400,000	Jeremy Corbyn
Unity	3,906	Did not Endorse
Union of Shop, Distributive, and Allied Workers (USDAW)	402,958	Andy Burnham

## Corbyn's Relationship with Friendly Unions

In the 2015 leadership election Corbyn was endorsed by six trade unions including the two largest ones in the Labour Party, UNISON and Unite (Syal, 2015). His commitment to opposing austerity was largely cited by them as well as the fact that he was a vocal supporter of unions, instead of shunning any connection (Garland, 2015). This was unique amongst the leadership candidates,



who were either almost ignoring the unions like Liz Kendall, or emphasising the independence of their campaigns by refusing to take union donations, like Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham. This created a vacuum for trade union support, one which Corbyn was more easily able to fill with his enthusiasm for unions and willingness to accept their help, which led to two of the three biggest unions (UNISON and Unite) endorsing him while the third largest (GMB) staying neutral. The endorsements of UNISON and Unite were joined by a number of smaller unions, such as the Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union (BAFUWU), the Communication Workers Union (CWU), the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA), and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF). Additionally, outside bodies like the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) endorsed Corbyn and promptly re-affiliated to the party when he was elected as leader, and served as one of his most consistent and enthusiastic supporters, along with all of the trade unions mentioned above apart from UNISON. Notably, all of these unions would also endorse Corbyn in the 2016 leadership election, indicating continuing friendly relations with them. In particular, Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey was a frequent and fervent defender of Corbyn on national television and often provided Unite's support to changes Corbyn made within the Labour Party and regularly engaged in close relations with the Corbynite faction Momentum. Unite also provided a large number of staff for the Leader of the Opposition's Office (LOTO) as well as party headquarters. This direct influence on the leadership of the Labour Party offered Unite more power within the party and therefore guaranteed their support. Therefore, Unite are a key union to look at when examining Corbyn's relationship with the trade unions as it was his largest backer as well as the union most members cited as working well with him (Watts and Bale, 2018).

The support for Corbyn from many of the trade unions came from a feeling of being unappreciated and marginalised within the party (Howell, 2001, Smith, 1994). A Unite political officer noted:

Previously we felt, and this is probably going to be the case moving forward, we are just that embarrassing rich uncle at a wedding, you have to invite them along, they've got a few quid, you'd get that off of them but we don't really want them and that was the view prior to Jeremy's election. Certainly that did change and when he's been around here we've been able to get a hold of him and ask him to come speak to Unite activists and shop stewards when we are doing training. He always asks when he's in the region if he can pop in and talk to people we've got him for workplace visits, which we'd also do for other Shadow Cabinet members as well. (Interview 71)

Unions had long felt that the party did not appreciate them despite being the main funders of the party and that this had accelerated under Ed Miliband, who had abolished the unions block vote for leadership elections after a scandal regarding Unite in the Falkirk selection (Allen and Bale, 2017). Additionally, Unite and the unions that backed Corbyn spoke of his message as one that they supported. Throughout his leadership Corbyn wrote about his belief in trade unions as a positive force within the party and backed their messages on fighting austerity and appeared on many picket lines (Corbyn, 2016b). Immediately after Corbyn's election unions reported an increase in engagement by Corbyn (Roe-Crines, 2021) and the Labour leadership as noted by the same Unite political officer:

He's a trade unionist first and foremost, (...) he's proud of his record as an activist within what is now UNISON. So yeah, we had a much better relationship with him than we had with other leaders. We had a good relationship with the Miliband's leadership team but certainly under Jeremy's leadership it was much more of a working relationship where he would be prepared to listen to policy ideas or we would be able to get engaged in those policy ideas. (Interview 71)

Additionally Crines, et. al. (2017) discuss how most members of Parliament were not members of Unite or of the other unions who endorsed Corbyn but were members of more moderate unions, such as GMB or UNISON, meaning that most pro-Corbyn unions did not have the more sceptical voices of MPs to moderate their stance. With union membership, particularly those who had opted into the Labour leadership election overwhelmingly supportive of Corbyn, union leaders faced little, if any backlash from supporting and engaging with Corbyn. Even unions like the NUM who had endorsed Yvette Cooper felt well supported (Stafford, 2016). Corbyn's support for campaigns dear to the NUM like the Orgreave Truth and Justice campaign, the effort by the NUM to push for an inquiry into the events of the Battle of Orgreave, a key clash between miners and the police in the 1984 Miners' Strike, won him wide acclaim. This support encouraged the NUM to stay neutral in 2016, where they had previously supported a non-Corbyn candidate. Additionally, Stafford (2016) argues that some of the Corbyn-supporting unions with smaller memberships which were more overtly leftist saw Corbyn's leadership as a chance to have greater influence in the party, which had historically been dominated by moderate unions. Supportive unions argued that Corbyn's unambiguously socialist economic stance would allow Labour to clearly differentiate themselves from the Conservatives and therefore gain more votes from their base (Stafford, 2016). This was a particular concern given Labour's defeat in Scotland, which many on Corbyn's side of the party attributed to the party being too moderate and not left-

wing enough for Scotland, meaning a perceived return to its roots would be electorally beneficial as well as useful for unions (Stafford, 2016).

The support of the unions left Corbyn indebted to them. Since most of the PLP was sceptical of him, as seen in Chapter 6, unions were a vital part of the elite for him to court, as they were the only constitutionally protected body apart from the membership that were not sceptical about Corbyn from the outset. Their seats on the NEC were necessary for his majority. Given his support amongst the membership but scepticism from socialist societies and the PLP, in order to make any changes within the NEC Corbyn came to rely on the union vote and therefore he was obliged to give them more influence over policy and his office. Therefore, smaller unions felt that they could use the leadership's indebtedness to them to see their policies backed and have allies in the highest echelons of the party (Seddon and Beckett, 2018). Further, Unite saw this as an opportunity to become the strongest union within Labour, with their general secretary Len McCluskey seeking to complete his transformation from the more moderate figure he was in 2010 to one supported by the hard left in Unite, who came from the Community Membership scheme he created in the union, where lay-members who were not in trades that Unite represented could join Unite and be part of the union. (Seymour, 2016).

UNISON, on the other hand, endorsed Corbyn to placate its membership which had increasingly grown disenchanted with Labour leaving previous general secretaries wifacing challenges from their left, a threat that UNISON's general secretary Dave Prentis sought to disarm by endorsing Corbyn (Schulman, 2019). This set UNISON apart from the other more friendly unions in that their endorsement was to stave off rather than embrace a hard-left takeover. Therefore, UNISON's support was more conditional than Unite's or any of the smaller unions as they had a stable power base in the party that did not rely on a special relationship with the leader's office. Therefore, when the leadership launched the Democracy Review in 2018, which would have weakened the power unions had at the constituency level, UNISON opposed such changes and stopped supporting the leadership.

Therefore, with the exception of UNISON, pro-Corbyn unions seemed interested in using a potential Corbyn leadership to increase their relative power in the Labour Party. The fact that Corbyn as a leader seemed more interested in engaging directly with them rather than through TULO where larger unions held more sway was something that disproportionately benefitted unions like the CWU and indeed Unite. Usually the more radical unions would be out-organised at TULO by the alliance between moderate unions and the leadership. However, with Corbyn, they could cut out the moderate unions and have a direct and bilateral line to LOTO, which would give them more power. An official from the GMB was dismissive about Unite's organisational ability. His statement indicated that Unite may have viewed Corbyn's leadership as a way of gaining more power in the Labour Party:

If you want my honest opinion, Unite don't know how to organise. In our region, a lot of talk, don't know how to organise on the ground. Not political organisers and that came home in spades in many seats. I think it is alright saying what you want, it's the hard yards you gotta put in organising wise to deliver that. (Interview 72)

This also ensured that trade unions who supported Corbyn were less opposed to the reforms Corbyn made which would have weakened the power of the unions. Unite in particular had been prioritising close relationships with the leadership of the Labour Party since 2010, with McCluskey often attempting to speak directly to the previous leader Ed Miliband (Cowley and Kavanagh, 2018). Therefore, McCluskey's engagement with Corbyn was a continuation of this strategy of working with the leadership and marginalising TULO. In fact, TULO was not mentioned by any of the Unite interviewees, or by the CWU or FBU interviewees, it was only discussed by moderate unions.

Wainwright (2018) argues that trade unions since the 1980s have seen an increasingly radicalised membership, which was reflected in their leadership and meant that there was less onus on unions to be the moderating influence in the Party they had traditionally been. This was particularly true of smaller unions like the ones that endorsed Corbyn, and for larger unions like Unite the introduction of the previously mentioned Community Membership scheme allowed radical voices to join the union who had less connection to its traditionally working class roots, allowing McCluskey to play an active role in Corbyn's inner circle (Honeyman, 2018). This radicalisation of union members played a key role in electing Corbyn and maintaining union support for him as well as support for his grassroots initiatives that were opposed by moderate

and more organised unions. Bale (2016a) argues as well that the majority of trade union support for Corbyn was constructive rather than destructive, viewing their interactions with him as transactional rather than ideological, differing from the view that Corbyn supporters were entryists and aiming to destroy Labour (2016a). The unions who had traditionally lost out in the debates within TULO sought to have a direct line to the leadership and saw the leadership's pro-Union stance as being more welcoming to them. Due to their engagement being transactional the Corbyn-supporting unions all had different approaches and interests, which put them at odds with pro-Corbyn factions like Momentum (Honeyman, 2018). Momentum, particularly under Lansman, sought to create an organised body that would support the Corbyn leadership, and many unions like the Fire Brigades Union pushed for a more policy-making approach rather than an organisational supportive approach. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this played into an already existing split in Momentum, meaning that those unions were closer to the idea of the new activist membership that was advanced by Corbyn (Honeyman, 2018). An official from the Fire Brigades Union expressed his disappointment in the undemocratic nature of Momentum, furthering the view that these radical unions engaged in a transactional relationship with the leadership and wanted to change the policy of the party instead of just supporting the leadership:

We were the first trade union to affiliate to Momentum and took an active role in it until about 2017. We then never ended our affiliation but withdrew from our seat on the National Coordinating Group, the NCG, and we did that because we felt that the constitution had been changed undemocratically and actually been changed to remove much of the democratic oversight of the organisation (Interview 73)

Massey (2020) outlines how this increased demand for policymaking ended up shoehorning many of these unions into the corner of the hard left. This has managed to damage the status of some of these unions in the eyes of the new party leader, Keir Starmer, and has led to some disaffiliating and other union leaders who were seen as allies of Corbyn to stand down, such as the BFAWU, possibly to allow a new relationship with Labour (Heppell, 2021).

Despite their differences with pro-Corbyn groups like Momentum, these unions still felt there was a clear net benefit to working closely with the Corbyn office and even ended up providing staff within that office (Panitch and Leys, 2020), particularly Unite, who ended up playing a large role in LOTO and the Labour HQ. Given that Corbyn was often under attack from other elite figures in the Labour Party, having the backing of unions and control of TULO was useful for the leadership in advancing their agenda, particularly on party democracy and anti-austerity, as well as the need

for union votes to help control the NEC (Bale, 2016c, Manwaring and Smith, 2019). Additionally, Corbyn-supportive unions, particularly the smaller ones were more keen on rule changes like reducing the threshold necessary to deselect an MP or bringing in All Member Meetings and abolishing the delegate structure when larger unions were against those (Bale, 2021, Bassett, 2019, Rustin, 2020, Thompson, et. al., 2020). Therefore, Corbyn's leadership required the support of unions and TULO which both helped friendly unions but also gave more sceptical unions a bigger potential veto particularly when union interests diverged (Quinn, 2018).

The loud and vociferous support from pro-Corbyn trade unions continued to build the impression throughout the leadership amongst interviewed lay-members that Corbyn was doing well with the affiliated trade unions and certainly that was the perception of lay members in the Labour Party, even if the situation within unions was more complicated (Diamond, et. al., 2016). For example, less than one year after Corbyn won the leadership the moderate candidate for the Unite General Secretary election nearly unseated McCluskey and UNISON only narrowly voted to endorse Corbyn in the 2016 leadership election (Liddle, 2017). Therefore, trade union leaders, particularly in unions like Unite and UNISON faced a split membership, and their respective general secretaries had to decide whether to embrace the leadership as McCluskey did, or to distance themselves, as Prentis did. Due to Corbyn's inability to engage with groups like the PLP or LGA his leadership relied on the institutional power of the unions (Gamble, 2016). Therefore, the Corbyn leadership had to keep full discipline amongst the unions that were supportive of him, which became doubly important as UNISON began to distance itself from him in 2018 particularly after the Democracy Review was released, with unions requiring concessions such as giving up mandatory re-selection and giving unions a gatekeeping role on the leadership ballot, where leadership candidates were required to obtain a number of union nominations to get on the ballot (Monahan, 2021). Thus the engagement and transactionalism with friendly unions increased and was moved outside of the formal structures of TULO into bilateral meetings mostly between the leadership and Unite who the smaller unions would often follow, meaning that Corbyn had to draw himself ever closer to Unite and potentially alienate his membership core within Momentum, further demonstrating how managing dissent and dealing with constitutional bodies was particularly difficult for Corbyn (Honeyman, 2018).

Unions did not only back Corbyn in order to gain more power in the party. They also were very supportive of Corbyn's policies and provided much needed elite support to his messages, which is critical in a party (Michels, 1968). As stated previously, Corbyn needed unions to maintain his majority in the NEC. This was also true when it came to policy and Corbyn often worked closely with unions to formulate Labour Party policy and as important elites in the party who were necessary for policy formulation (Minkin, 1991). With the PLP having serious concerns about areas of Corbyn's policy, he needed another elite group in the party to help advance those policy changes (Gauja, 2017). The friendliness of some unions allowed Corbyn to use the legitimate constitutional bodies within the party to shift the 2017 and 2019 manifestos to the left (Allen and Bara, 2019). Unite's influence in the 2019 manifesto was probably at its highest ebb in the party and saw unprecedented engagement with Corbyn-friendly unions and the Shadow Cabinet (Allen and Bara, 2021).

As established previously, Corbyn often would ignore bodies and norms that he felt were unfriendly to him, which would frequently alienate elites within the party and cause problems when there were disagreements with the more moderate elements within the party (Crines, et. al., 2017). When this happens to a leader, their main course of action is to keep their circle comparatively tight and avoid defections (Gauja, 2017: 31), and Corbyn was no exception to this approach, meaning that his policy offer to his allied unions had to be particularly strong. Indeed, many unions had supported him due to his economic policy in the first place. Trade union officials spoke about his commitment to fight austerity and his Keynesian economic approach as the main reason that they supported him. They also spoke very positively about his Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, and the outreach they received from him, indicating that Corbyn understood just how reliant he was on his group of friendly trade unions, just as they relied on him. They were thus able to take full advantage of his marginalisation of groups like the National Policy Forum, or the PLP to effectively play the main role of policy formulator within the leadership, knowing that Corbyn had limited options if he disagreed. Therefore, unions often did find the policy offer of the Labour Party under Corbyn to be substantially more favourable than under previous leaders. This positive relationship was largely how Corbyn was able to ignore and

not manage so much dissent amongst other bodies due to the way friendly unions closed ranks around him.

Corbyn's leadership ended up having more influence over setting the manifesto, given that he presided over two snap elections and thus did not have input from Labour's elected National Policy Forum. Though Corbyn did delegate much of the manifesto to portfolio holders the increased control over the manifesto allowed Corbyn-friendly unions more say in the manifesto process since it was more controlled by the leadership than had the election been at a regularly scheduled time and therefore unions that were close to the leadership took full advantage of this opportunity. Smaller unions like the National Union of Miners were able to get key priorities like an inquiry over Orgreave to be put within the manifesto, and larger unions like Unite, who often agreed with Corbyn on economic matters, such as anti-austerity or the need for stronger investment in public services were able to speak directly with Shadow Cabinet members. Given that economic policy was often an area that had wide agreement within the Corbyn Shadow Cabinet and most of the disagreements were on foreign policy this was somewhat to be expected. However, it was mentioned in interviews with Shadow Ministers that they were spending more time with Unite and that Andrew Fisher, Corbyn's Director of Policy, who wrote the manifesto in 2017, was spending more time with sympathetic unions. Therefore, Corbyn's relationship with some of these unions saw them have more of a say on policy matters.

On top of policy changes, Corbyn-supportive unions were much more supportive of the rule changes advanced by the leadership. Given that unions have often had protected status in the Labour Party the party was structured to favour the trade unions and the heresthetical changes proposed by Corbyn would have changed that (Riker, 1962, Riker, 1982) but Unite and smaller unions were in favour, seeing the changes as potentially the best of both worlds, as elaborated by a Unite official speaking in favour of changing constituency meetings away from a delegate structure which most unions found favourable to an All Member Meeting:

I'm all in favour of open meetings, although having been to many CLP meetings I'm not sure people would come back more than 2 or 3 times. I'm not sure there are enough politics being talked in those meetings. I don't think most people want to know about potholes or wheelie bins. They want to know about jobs, employment, and what the Labour Party is going to do for workers and single families and young people, not dustbin men and what day your bin is going to be emptied and getting potholes filled. (Interview 71)



Simon Edwards, a political officer in the CWU, also demonstrated his union's position in favour of All Member Meetings being one of convenience since unions would still get representation on the Executive but it would be chosen by members not by union branches, meaning that Corbyn-supportive unions would have a greater chance of getting seats on the Executive Committee:

We moved to all member meetings and we also have an executive committee that then affiliates get a delegate to, so all the trade union affiliates get a delegate to the CLP's executive, so you weren't distilling the power away from the unions (Interview 77)

The move from delegate structures to All Member Meetings was something that did not face much factional infighting within the party but did face opposition from major trade unions like GMB and UNISON who felt that the power of unions to have their own branches and send delegates would be dramatically weakened. Therefore, the comments above may seem odd that union officials would seek to end their semi-independent status. However, the fact that Corbyn-supportive unions were smaller and less organised helps make sense of this support, as this changed who these unions needed to appeal to. This does fit with Riker's (1980) discussion of Heresthetics and demonstrates how smaller unions were benefitting from Corbyn's leadership by restructuring the party so they could win, by ignoring union branches dominated by moderate unions and instead being able to take their case to the membership who were more supportive of Corbyn and would elect like-minded trade unionists to the Executive Committees. Additionally, given their attachment to Corbyn, which increasingly alienated them in the eyes of moderate trade unions the only way that these unions would be able to consolidate the gains they made under his leadership was to change the rules to favour the hard left. The Corbyn Democracy Review did just that (Lavery, 2018, Ward, 2021). In the same way that the changes to All Member Meetings benefitted lay members over active ones who would have been delegates, these rule changes restructured union involvement so that larger unions would not necessarily have the best chance of winning, which would enable more Corbyn-friendly voices on CLP Executives making it easier for those groups to secure control of the party (Riker, 1980). Given that Corbyn supporters tended to be lay members who were less actively involved, as discussed in previous chapters, these initiatives aimed at getting more members to have a say were beneficial for Corbyn, and Manuel Cortes, the General Secretary of the TSSA used the same language when discussing All Member Meetings:

Our view is that if you get more people involved in the Labour Party it must be a good thing, the more people that you can get involved in decision-making, is a good thing too. (Interview 80)

Therefore, when it came to the rule change that would weaken unions, the smaller ones were not as concerned and did not fight against that rule, which ended up being the least factional of Corbyn's rule changes and one of the few that were not abolished by Starmer in the 2021 conference. Therefore, this could be seen as one of the lasting legacies of Corbyn in terms of party management, a change that makes it easier for smaller unions to gain a larger say in their CLPs, and it demonstrated that the smaller unions have gained through their transactional relationship with Corbyn (Riker, 1980). This further boosts the hypothesis that Corbyn only ignored groups when they did not agree with him. When constitutional bodies such as the trade unions supported him he could create a relatively positive relationship with those who agreed and bring them along to support his more deliberative model of party democracy (Wolkenstein, 2015).

Additionally, Corbyn's efforts to move towards mandatory reelection were supported by sympathetic trade unions within the party, even if they were opposed by sceptical ones. A Unite official defended the reselections by saying:

I am perfectly comfortable with open selection. As a shop steward I have to stand for election every three years. All shop stewards in Unite have to stand for election every three years. Why should MPs think they have a job for life? ... Jeremy is in favour of open selection but he could never get that through the PLP and that's why the sort of dog's breakfast of what we arrived at was what we arrived at. It was a compromise. (Interview 71)

This indicated that the move towards open selection was supported by Unite and that the reduction of the threshold necessary to trigger a selection in a sitting MP did not go as far as they would have liked. While trade unions were often seen as the biggest opponent to some of Corbyn's rule changes by other elite interviewees in the Labour Party this was clearly not the case within Unite. Unite played a large role in the Democracy Review which recommended the changes to make it easier to deselect a sitting MP (as well as making it easier for Constituency Labour Party to hold All Member Meetings) and clearly were on the side it did not go far enough. The Democracy Review itself did not include many proposals made by Unite or Corbyn-supportive unions again hinting at their lack of organisation (Labour Party, 2018). Unite and small union support for the reduced threshold to trigger a reselection is uncharacteristic of expected union behaviour. Unions usually benefit from having MPs who are supportive of them. Making it easier to deselect an MP would reduce the influence unions have on selection as the members of a constituency could outvote the unions. This change would subsequently water down the power unions currently had within the party oligarchy through their right to reserve certain numbers of

parliamentary seats for their members and limit their status as potential funders, meaning that from an oligarchic perspective this makes little sense (Michels, 1968). While smaller unions like ASLEF and the FBU had few MPs, there seems to be less rationale for a big union like Unite to support such changes and would seem to undermine the idea of a transactional relationship.

However, when considering the lack of organisation present within Unite and how they often were outmaneuvered within TULO by moderate unions this support of direct democracy makes sense (Ward, 2021). Their alliance with Corbyn allowed unions like Unite to have a stronger chance of getting their candidates selected through the membership rather than through deals with other unions. Additionally, this was also the reason why smaller unions were also supportive of this move, and justified it, as seen by an FBU official, as supporting direct democracy:

We were in favour of true democracy and I think if you try and compromise on democracy you don't deliver it. The truth is that is exactly why we support it and we support it to this day. We're moving now to discuss a more broader policy on true democracy and open selection for instance. We've called for it within the PLP, the Labour Party. We need to be calling everything widely across the Labour Party in terms of mayoral selections, councillor selections etcetera, etcetera. In our trade union it doesn't matter if you're a branch rep or a branch member or a national officer, you can run for our General Secretary position. You can run to be the General Secretary of our trade union. And I think if you take open selection as the debate unfolded that the compromise didn't allow for lay members to ultimately to make challenges. (Interview 73)

The CWU were also in agreement, with Simon Edwards, one of their officials stating:

My gut feeling is that we would support reselections to re-stand at the next election, so candidates don't get a seat for life, kind of thing. (Interview 77)

Therefore, we can see that Corbyn-supportive unions supported these changes for factional reasons and supported their faction and leader, which far from being populist behaviour demonstrates the worldview of a traditional view of party politics (Duverger, 1954), and was done despite the misgivings of some of the union's own members, as Simon Edwards followed up on the issue of open selections:

My personal view is that you shouldn't really deselect an MP, which is effectively what you are doing, unless that MP has done something particularly wrong in terms of going against the whip, other than in specific local circumstances. I use this example, if you were the Labour MP for Barrow, where they build the submarines, we have a nuclear disarmament thing, then maybe you have to vote against the whip on some of those decisions that affects a huge tranche of your local workforce. Generally, I think, unless MPs do something particularly wrong, and are not supportive of the manifesto they have stood on they shouldn't be deselected. (Interview 77)

Thus, examining the relationship between Corbyn and friendly trade unions we can see that this was a positive but transactional relationship. The unions that became his most vociferous supporters were the ones who were usually out-organised. Unions that initially backed him but

had a strong organisational base in the Labour Party ended up not working well with him.

Therefore, the unions that remained were either smaller and more radical unions or large ones who had traditionally not done well within the organisational structures of the Labour Party and sought more power. For example, Unite, despite having the largest membership had fewer MPs than UNISON or GMB. Their power came at the cost of constitutional bodies like TULO.

This analysis fits with the discussion of Heresthetics by Riker (1984) and demonstrates the willingness of these particular unions to restructure the Labour Party so they could win. The alliance with the leadership and key role of these unions in providing Corbyn with a majority on the NEC meant that these unions got more access to the Shadow Cabinet and to LOTO than their moderate counterparts. Additionally, their relative organisational weakness within the Labour Party meant that they were not opposed to many of the changes in the Democratic Review that would have weakened the power of unions in general. This reinforces the hypothesis that populists often seek to cloak themselves as acting in the interests of party members against the party elites, and we saw that Corbyn-friendly unions also spoke the language of intra-party democracy (Corbyn, 2015c, Gauja, 2015) and followed the trend of party leaders and their allies trying to reach out to the rank-and-file membership as well as appear to be speaking for their movement and be seen as the public leader of their group (McCluskey, 2020, Gauja, 2015). These unions sought to redefine and break the alliance between Labour moderates and the moderates in the trade unions which had been seen as having governed the party in the late 1980s and 1990s (Minkin, 1991) and sought to create a new alliance between more radical trade unions and the hard left who had been seeking reinvention (Panitch and Leys, 2020). Therefore, these unions found a natural ally in Corbyn and supported his populist movement within Labour. It also further emphasises the transactional nature of factionalism in party politics, where factions support the leader in exchange for concessions. Therefore, populists have to be willing to make and commit to concessions in order to gain control of the party, and Corbyn, despite his unwillingness to work with the PLP as seen in Chapter 6, was more successful with unions like Unite.

## Corbyn's Relationship with Sceptical Unions

While there was much discussion about how Corbyn was endorsed by two of Labour's biggest unions (Watt, 2015), a number of unions either stayed neutral or endorsed other candidates for leader, and the relationship with these bodies has to be examined (Harrison, 1960). These unions largely represented the moderating tradition of unions in the Labour Party. Unions like the GMB, Union of Shop, Distributive, and Allied Workers (USDAW), and Community either stayed neutral as with the former, or supported other candidates as with the latter two, which was in line with the views of their members (Diamond, et. al., 2016) and therefore the relationship between Corbyn and these unions could be different (Liddle, 2017). Many of these unions also felt the issues that were detailed by Corbyn-supportive unions and therefore on the face of it were not hostile to him at the start of his leadership. However, many of them cited concerns with electability and his ties to the hard left which they had traditionally opposed as reasons for why they withheld their support. As stated earlier in this chapter, unions have traditionally been opposed to the hard left within social democratic parties and mainly view their relationship with the parliamentary left as transactional. Therefore, their goal is to see those parties in power to make policies which benefit them, and a leader like Corbyn, who they viewed as unelectable would not be able to pass pro-union policies. While within many of these unions there were members and even leaders who supported Corbyn, the unions were not ready to fully pledge their support. However, as with most other sceptical stakeholders in the party these more moderate unions were prepared to help a Corbyn leadership achieve its goals and were willing to assist him as leader. This was helped by the personal support for Corbyn of GMB General Secretary Tim Roache. Additionally, given the weakening of trade union influence after the Collins Review, which abolished the electoral college where Trade Unions had one third of the vote and limited the power of union elites to dictate that vote, many trade union leaders even in moderate unions saw Corbyn as a way of restoring their power (Massey, 2021). Trade Unions, especially after the Collins Review, commissioned by former leader Ed Miliband in the wake of a scandal where a union was attempting to influence a selection in a safe Labour seat and who abolished the electoral college for picking a Labour leader, and with it the block vote of unions, were feeling more distant from the Labour Party, and this included moderate trade unions as well, who felt that the changes made by Ed Miliband and Lord Collins was reducing their voice and casting them out of the elite. These factors, combined

with the previous leader's attempts to distance himself from unions, meant that Corbyn was seen by many as a way to reinvigorate their power in the party. With moderate unions also suffering a decline in power (Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011) even some of their members felt that Corbyn would be a positive change and backed him, as seen by this GMB officer:

I thought we needed a change. I felt like there wasn't a strong offer from any of the other candidates, for kind of a clear break with the past, and what had been extremely unsuccessful previously. (Interview 69)

Therefore, Corbyn had ample opportunity to create a positive working relationship even with those unions who did not support him, because they also felt they were losers during the previous leadership and felt that changes in the party oligarchy were needed (Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011).

The frustration with the Labour leadership and PLP was mentioned by an official of the GMB who differentiated himself from the class of MPs and councillors:

There are two Labour parties: there is the Labour Party of officialdom, MPs and certain high ranking councillors and people like that and there is the Labour Party of ordinary members who principally never took to Blair and the only reason why they took to Blair was because he won elections. They felt a little short changed, nothing much has changed to be honest. (Interview 74)

Another official from USDAW also spoke about the effect the Collins Review had on trade unions and how Corbyn was somewhat countering that:

A lot of the reforms like the Collins stuff came out almost of an awkwardness on Miliband's part that he won the vote or was perceived to have won the vote with the backing of the unions, there was an awkwardness, I'm sure he felt he had a weak point there, which whilst is understandable doesn't necessarily sit right if you are the trade union that is watching this, you want someone who's like- there's nothing to be ashamed of in your connection to ordinary working people, the money that comes from trade unions into the Labour party I think it's been said it is some of the cleanest money in politics in that it's accountable, it's traceable, it's reported about three different ways every year under different reporting regimes, so to have Corbyn stand up and publicly defend that, there was something refreshing there and something welcome there (Interview 79)

Though the Collins Review itself talked about the union link in positive terms in practice ending the electoral college meant that only union members that were part of Labour could vote, rather than all union members, further reducing the moderating influence of unions, since those union members who were part of Labour were more radical (Collins, 2014), something Lord Collins himself defended as part of the direction Labour had gone in over its entire political life:

if you read the Collins report you'll see I did a chronology of reforms, basically going back to 1920 and actually looking at the different changes politically, the gradual decline post-war of the two major parties, the resurgence of third parties, the nationalists and also from the Labour Party's perspective the huge decline in trade unions and trade unionists. So even the means for us to engage with our core support was declining (Interview 62)

Therefore, with unions seeing themselves as unwanted, even moderate unions had members who were willing to support Corbyn and his agenda due to their increasing marginalisation in the Labour Party (Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011). The hard left unions, on the other hand, were unified in their support for Corbyn, allowing them to be enthusiastic, while moderate unions had to deal with a divided membership.

At the start of Corbyn's leadership the relationship even with sceptical unions seemed to be positive. A GMB official discussed Corbyn's openness towards trade unions and his willingness to engage at the start:

the relationship with Jeremy's office and the Union was completely different to, what I had come across before. Unions were seen as sort of partners in all parts of the Labour Party activity, in all areas of campaigning and policy development and everywhere. Organisationally we were sort of seen as partners in previously we would have probably been treated sceptically. So that was a big change I think that a lot of Unions would say that, they're similar. I think over time it became much less like the whole trade union was, were in partnership with the leadership office, but certainly that was the experience initially. (Interview 69)

Bale also notes that the number of people rejoining Labour, many doing so through the trade union movement, built a real sense of optimism that even moderate unions could not be immune to at the start (2016a). In a time where party and union membership was declining as a whole Corbyn's leadership was seen as a way to change that and this would also benefit unions that had not supported him (Scarrow, 2005). Nevertheless, already from the very start there were feelings that some unions were more important than others, with the ones who had backed him receiving more attention and even neutral unions like GMB being left out of the loop, as was expressed with frustration by another GMB official:

There wasn't a huge engagement with the region and probably nationally our Union would say they had difficulties with the leader's office. My perception of Jeremy was that he was very much focused on public services and his big backers were Unite. He was a former NUPE official, if he were serving in a Trade Union now he would be a UNISON official and his big backers were Unite, so we didn't have very much engagement with him to be honest. (Interview 62)

Therefore, the unity between large trade unions that characterised their strong endorsement of Ed Miliband in 2010 (Hasan and MacIntyre, 2011) was already beginning to fray. Corbyn's already asymmetric involvement with unions based on their endorsement of him was causing moderate unions to feel alienated within the first year of his leadership and to feel validated for not endorsing Corbyn in 2015, which gave moderate union leaders the chance to pivot away from Corbyn (Dorey and Denham, 2016). Unlike Ed Miliband who also owed his leadership to trade

unions, but dealt with all unions equally (Bale, 2015), Corbyn favoured some, furthering the splits within TULO. As a result unity amongst the trade unions which was clear in 2010 was called into question. Though Corbyn was speaking the language of trade unionism and collective bargaining, moderate unions felt that he could not deliver on this and thus were looking for positive electoral outcomes (Gamble, 2016). The lack of progress in the polls and the general unfavourable reaction towards Corbyn did nothing to assuage these concerns. However, the economic message Corbyn espoused was supported by many moderate trade unions and there was some feeling of relief that the leadership was taking a strong anti-austerity stance, a stance that many unions cited when backing Corbyn in the first place (Watt, 2015). Thus, less-favoured unions may not have minded being less engaged with by Corbyn, provided that the favouritism was less obvious.

From an early-stage moderate unions had a sceptical but hopeful relationship with Jeremy Corbyn and were hoping that a positive relationship could be built. However, electability remained a key concern as did the threat of hard-left backed rule changes that would further damage trade unions like the GMB. The relatively strong organisation of those unions meant that they would resist rule changes. Therefore, the leadership's asymmetric treatment of unions based on support in the leadership election and the fact that most of the unions who supported Corbyn were smaller and less well organised spelled trouble for the relationship between moderate unions and the leader of the party.

One of the main issues that alienated moderate unions from Corbyn was the organisational reforms that he and Momentum pursued to make the party more friendly towards the hard left, which had the effect of undermining the structures trade unions relied on to influence the party. Unions from the earliest days relied on established branches and delegate systems to make their voices heard, and this structure was often controlled by moderate unions (Harrison, 1960). This was often seen as a moderating influence against the more radical membership of the party (Harrison, 1960). Therefore, the Democracy Review was disfavoured by unions who benefitted from the changes as much as it was favoured by the unions who had been out-organised by moderates. Since moderate unions also viewed the Labour Party transactionally from the start,



Corbyn was not providing them the same value with those reforms (Allern and Bale, 2017, Harrison, 1960, Minkin, 1991).

Far from re-entrenching union power within the Labour Party sceptical unions feared that the reforms in the Democracy Review would further weaken their power. For example, GMB and USDAW found themselves against the move to All Member Meetings as this would end the delegate system, which would give their union branches less power. While this benefitted smaller and less organised unions as mentioned above, it hurt these unions. This calls back to a long-standing tension within the Labour Party of the hard-left seeking to weaken union power and empower the membership (Harrison, 1960). One of the strongest concerns named by moderate unions facing the prospect of Corbyn as leader was the threat of him settling scores and furthering the hard-left agendas that had been defeated in the 1980s, and the reforms to CLP structures brought those fears very much to life, now backed by, in the eyes of mainstream unions, extreme and small unions that were not representative of the broader movement. Therefore, the initial friendliness of the leader's office to these unions was undercut by these attempted reforms. An USDAW representative expressed these concerns of the union voice being drowned out in all member meetings:

We along with the rest of TULO agreed a joint statement that we are opposed to the meetings and that we prefer general committee delegate structures and that comes from that collective engagement point of view. When our branches affiliate to constituency Labour parties and therefore gain the ability to send formal delegates, that formal interaction gives a voice to our members and to our local branches and to their concerns. That gets drowned out in all member meetings, in our opinion. It's basically that ability to weigh voices and if everybody turns up and speaks equally and actually our people there are speaking on behalf of their branch of an affiliated organisation then the likelihood of being drowned out is far more prevalent. (Interview 79)

The GMB also shared these concerns about All Member Meetings and how it risked the union link:

Losing the link at a local level weakens the link and is therefore difficult to get it back. You have a structure nationally and regionally that recognises the link and builds it into the constitution of the party so nationally you go to conference and regionally you go to conference and the trade unions are guaranteed seats at those meetings and a guaranteed place on the executive of the party both nationally and regionally with trade union seats and then locally you have no recognition of that so from my perspective we again we opposed attempts by the party to do the all member route. (Interview 76)

As a result of the leadership's reliance on trade unions the Democracy Review did not force a change to All Member Meetings, where all members can attend a CLP meeting and vote, instead of votes being restricted by delegates selected by branches of the CLP. Instead, due to the

influence of moderate trade unions, local parties were allowed to choose and the process for switching to All Member Meetings was made easier.

The same opposition was found towards reducing the threshold for trigger ballots, again a totemic issue for Corbyn and the hard left, who wanted mandatory reelection. Unions like the GMB and UNISON who had a large number of MPs did not want them to be threatened by the more radical membership. This was in large part responsible for the compromise that the Democracy Review brought in, which was that it required a third of branches and affiliates to trigger a re-selection rather than it being mandatory each time, a change that was short-lived and quickly changed by the subsequent Labour leadership, having lasted three years and only throughout two conferences, demonstrating the narrowness of Corbyn's majority and his reliance on certain unions. This was in large part due to moderate unions like the GMB not approving of Corbyn's reforms, hardening their scepticism of him, and being joined by UNISON, which demonstrates that Corbyn struggled to manage dissent even in groups that appeared to be favourable to him.

The organisational chaos around elections and referendums also caused a wedge between Corbyn and some unions. Corbyn's agenda was viewed as factionally driven instead of aimed at electoral success. This was particularly apparent in the 2019 election where moderate unions decried the targeting of electoral resources. The closing of the ranks within the leader's office which cut out any group that was not fully committed to Corbyn led to a chaotic system that misallocated resources in the 2019 election (Pogrund and Maguire, 2020). This led to vulnerable MPs who were supported by moderate unions not having enough resources given to them, as claimed by an interviewee who believed that this policy cost seats like Redcar, which was held by the Corbyn-sceptic and GMB-aligned Anna Turley MP. Interviewees from moderate unions also felt at the same time that candidates affiliated to Unite were getting more support from the party demonstrating the favouritism of the leader's office towards one of their fellow unions and undercutting the idea of the union movement working together towards a common goal. The lack of leadership in the campaign and the excessive favouritism also in their minds were a harbinger of electoral doom and since moderate unions had large numbers of MPs this was a blow to their power (Labour Together, 2020). The moderate unions who were campaigning for the Labour Party

in marginal seats knew that Labour was headed for defeat and that Corbyn's unpopularity with the electorate was a significant factor for why Labour would lose. Unions like the GMB and UNISON sought to work with the leadership to learn the lessons from the 2017 election and why it was not a win and what needed to be done in order to win the next election but found the leadership unreceptive (SurrIDGE, 2020). Additionally, unions like the GMB found Corbyn's Brexit policy and his reluctance to engage in the referendum in 2016 to have been a serious catalyst for defeat and disillusionment in the Party (Cutts, et. al., 2020). Therefore, the electoral actions of Corbyn further caused dissent from moderate unions.

Underpinning the election issues was the feeling of these moderate unions that a Labour government was needed to support their working class members, an issue that has historically put unions on the moderate side of Labour (Harrison, 1960). Unions have traditionally used their influence to reduce Labour's support for unpopular ventures which has put them in conflict with the hard left (Harrison, 1960). Given that the unions who were sceptical of Corbyn overwhelmingly had working class members and were not radicalised by the Community Membership scheme like Unite, this was an important consideration. While many of these unions did have working class members, they were more open to non working-class lay people who wanted to be a member of a union, which was enabled by the Community Membership scheme of Unite, meaning that there was a middle class cohort of people who joined the union for ideological reasons and were able to exercise influence over decisions. In fact political officers of moderate unions often considered Corbyn's love of unions to be misplaced, stating the need for a Labour government to work with employers to deal with grievances before strike action, rather than supporting every industrial dispute after negotiations had broken down, which was only possible with Labour in government. Additionally, unions like the GMB represented workers in areas that Corbyn was opposed to, such as the Trident shipyards and found that Corbyn's longstanding opposition to Trident was both electorally unappealing in areas like Copeland and Barrow but also posed a threat to their workers, who they were sworn to defend and thus fought hard against any change to Labour's nuclear policy and were often frustrated by Corbyn's off-script and off-policy interventions on this issue (Diamond, 2016). This further complicated the relationship between unions like GMB and Corbyn, since they were largely blocking any change to Labour's stated policy, but were still faced with a leader whose opposing stances were known.

Additionally, since Corbyn regularly would contradict Labour policy in his speeches, an issue that also caused problems with the PLP as noted in Chapter 6, this caused further confusion which further heightened tensions

While Corbyn's leadership and notably his anti-austerity stance could have worked even with the unions that did not initially endorse him, his inability to manage their concerns doomed that relationship. His favouritism of Unite and his sidelining of TULO led to moderate unions like the GMB and USDAW feeling left out and outflanked by the more radical small unions that were militantly pro-Corbyn. Additionally, the lack of electoral gains and backlash against Corbyn, particularly his foreign policy which went against both established Labour policy and union policy frustrated unions like the GMB and contributed to their endorsement of Owen Smith. Finally, as with many members of Parliament, the feeling that Corbyn would never get into government fully alienated these unions as they have historically seen their primary goal to bring in a Labour government (Harrison, 1960, Minkin, 1991, Taylor, 1993).

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between Corbyn and trade unions, separating the view shared by the membership of cordial engagement and support from the fact that this was also an area where Corbyn struggled to manage dissent effectively. Unions viewed the relationship as transactional and the ones who backed Corbyn were those traditionally marginalised and disenfranchised by the moderate union majority on TULO, meaning that they sought to use the leadership to increase their power by undercutting TULO, the constitutional body representing the unions, and were backed in this by the Corbyn leadership. This alienated moderate unions who were upset at Corbyn ignoring norms within the party and marginalising them despite initial promising signs and agreement. This, combined with Corbyn's democratic reforms which would have further weakened the role of moderate unions led them to have an unfavourable view of his leadership. Therefore, this chapter provides further evidence confirming the hypothesis about populists not being willing to engage with constitutional bodies, as evidenced by Corbyn not engaging with TULO and preferring bilateral relations with sympathetic unions while ignoring unions who he viewed as hostile.

# Chapter 9: Conclusion - How Populists in Mainstream Parties

## Manage Dissent

### Introduction

This thesis has examined the increasing phenomenon of populists taking over mainstream political parties and the effects on the party of such a takeover. It focused on three questions for examination, how populists take over parties, how they interact with established party factions, and how they respect norms and rules within the party that they lead. The initial plan for this thesis was to compare two different parties that had both been taken over by populists and observe any trends that emerged. However, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a change in approach to a single case study, the UK Labour Party and the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. It aimed to use interviews and archival work to gain an understanding of the different dynamics within the Labour Party under Corbyn, both on the ground in different areas of the country and with different elites within the Labour Party.

Political parties will continue to face issues of populism within them and the relevance of populist factionalism will continue to grow as an issue even within mainstream parties with all the challenges that this will entail. Managing dissent within a political party remains important, particularly in mainstream political parties which remain oligarchic rather than autocratic and have a large number of factions who are all vying for influence and need to be effectively managed. The distaste populists have for elites presents a challenge for such factions within mainstream parties that are not faced by other factions and therefore with populism on the rise within mainstream parties and members being increasingly at odds with elites such challenges seem likely to increase. Long-standing parties have largely created oligarchic systems within their parties and therefore leaders must manage the views and dissent of other elites. Yet, at the same time members within these parties are becoming more empowered and able to influence the party's direction, meaning that the odds of a populist leader emerging increase (Scarrow, 2015). As such, those radical members who are out of step with the electorate and the party's voter base

may have more of a say in choosing a leader. This presents a danger to the elite-structured view of party politics and may destabilise parties by damaging their oligarchic structures.

Parties largely run on a series of norms and rules that are designed to maintain a balance of power between factions. Whether it is how a presidential candidate is nominated or how different stakeholders in the party can maintain a level of involvement even when outside the leadership, these rules and norms are responsible for maintaining a level of order and keeping the party united, which is critical to their goal of electoral success. When these rules and norms are challenged by leaders who do not wish to manage dissent, it has an effect on the party overall and changes the unspoken rules of engagement, setting the stage for more conflict within the party. Even if a populist faction does not actually take over its presence can have an effect on the rules and may further increase the trend of empowering the membership with all the destabilising effects that such action may cause.

The literature about managing dissent tends not to cover populist factions and mainly covers groups that support the oligarchic ground rules. Furthermore, the literature about populism does not tend to cover the repercussions of populism entering mainstream political parties or how populist leaders within non-autocratic parties are able to operate. Literature looking at how populists in mainstream parties operate and the challenges they face is therefore hard to find. This thesis aimed to fill that gap by looking at a case study of a political party where the membership chose a populist leader and examined how he managed dissent. This thesis therefore contributes to two bodies of literature. The party politics literature sets the scene for the framework political parties work in - with a decreasing and more radicalised membership gaining more power within the party - while the populism literature examines how populists would eschew norms and seek to curtail the power of elites and how this could apply to a political party. This thesis bridges these two literatures to make sense of the research puzzle, how a populist leader of a mainstream party who has been elected by the membership will manage dissent within the party. Moreover, by combining the two literatures, it also helps fill gaps in each.

The thesis had three hypotheses: that populists take over parties by appealing to the membership over elites and derive their mandate directly from the membership, that populists ignore the unwritten rules and norms that exist to avoid factional warfare, and that populists use the membership to override constitutional bodies until they can be turned to support them. The thesis confirms all three hypotheses with regard to the Labour Party. For Corbyn, his strategy as leader was to speak directly to the membership and often spoke in opposition to elites, particularly parliamentarians. He ignored norms like collective responsibility and allowing shadow ministers to set the party line on issues, making unscripted remarks especially on defence, and he sidelined constitutional bodies like the LGA and TULO in favour of engaging directly with people who were favourable to him.

The conclusion contains five sections. The first section discusses the argument and summarises the findings of the thesis. The second section then looks at the relevance to wider subjects and how generalisable the thesis is, before the third section examines the limitations. The fourth section will discuss the potential for future research and then the final section will conclude.

## Empirical Findings and Argument

The thesis uses a framework informed by the Iron Law of Oligarchy (Michels, 1968) to understand party politics as they should normally work and the importance of managing dissent from elites, and how parties are structured in an oligarchic way. The thesis then applied populist theory by looking at populism through the lens built by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, of an ideology pitting the people against elites and focusing on suppressing the power of elites (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). The populism literature shows the importance of anti-elitism within this ideological grouping and how populists will avoid previous agreements that have empowered elites (Dalton, 2014, de Lange and Mudde, 2005, Marzouki, et. al., 2016, Mudde, 2004). How populists manage the elite structures of mainstream parties thus becomes important as this phenomenon may be more frequently observed. However, populist literature does not really discuss what happens when a populist leader takes control of a mainstream party and how they deal with the oligarchy. Chapter 3 therefore takes a theoretical look at populism and seeks to provide a theoretical framework for populism in mainstream parties on the left and right.

Therefore, it fills a gap in the populism literature by providing a theoretical discussion about this recent trend and highlighting examples where populists have taken over parties and examined their fate. Moreover, as the chapter does discuss political parties as well it provides the link between the two literatures that will play an important role in this thesis, about the role an anti-elite ideology plays in an organisation that is defined by its elitism.

Given the effect on all levels of a party of a new populist leadership a qualitative approach was taken involving a deep dive into a political party to examine the dynamics operating in that party, just as previous studies of political trends have looked at individual parties (Bale, 2018). The justification for this approach was to understand how each level and stakeholder within the political party felt about the leadership and how it managed dissent. Members were either chosen due to being Shadow Ministers, political liaisons for trade unions, figures in the LGA, or in individual areas taken from the list of people who ran for council from 2011-2019, to understand local dynamics. Having carried out over 200 interviews with all types of party figures from paper candidates in seats Labour would never win to Shadow Cabinet members, this thesis represents a strong empirical contribution to the field.

Chapter 3 also looks at discussions within the literature on party politics. The chapter found that political parties are increasingly willing to accommodate populists. The decline of methods like *cordon sanitaire* open the door for a different paradigm (Bergmann Einarsson, 2017, Eatwell and Mudde, 2004, March and Mudde, 2005, Mudde and Ambrose, 2015). This paradigm also involves mainstream parties becoming more populist, Chapter 3 looked at the reasons for why mainstream parties may be more likely to elect populist leaders and found that there are two primary reasons why mainstream parties may elect populist leaders. They may either do so in a membership revolt against the elites due to increasing radicalism amongst party members, who prize ideology over electability and will seek a leader who will speak to their views over their own party's electorate. The evidence from this broad overview addresses the first research question and indicates support for the first hypothesis. Alternatively, parties may seek a populist leader because elites judge it to be electorally viable and are willing to allow a more autocratic model in order to reap electoral benefits. At any rate, populist leaders within mainstream parties have



largely sought to implement their own rules and move the party towards a more autocratic direction, subverting the power of elites and therefore providing a level of strife within the party which ends up seeing their reforms and changes quickly undone the moment they surrender the leadership. This addresses the second and third research questions about how populists engage with other elements of the party and the rules and norms. It also indicates that the second and third hypotheses are viable, showing that populists theoretically do not wish to engage with rules and norms that keep parties unified nor do they respect constitutional bodies.

Yet, this chapter did not look at how the membership itself felt during a populist leader's tenure or how populists actually dealt with the different levels of the party. Most of the literature on populism in mainstream parties was about how those parties at the elite level aimed to incorporate populist ideas (see Rooduin, et. al., 2012). Therefore, the thesis sought to examine the effect of a populist leader like Jeremy Corbyn on all the different levels of the Labour Party, with Chapter 4 looking at the membership, Chapters 5 and 6 looking at elected officials, and Chapter 7 examining the relationship with affiliated trade unions, using in depth interviews with all such stakeholders. However, the thesis is not simply interested in what was said by the different stakeholders but also in the ways that the Corbyn leadership worked with them and tried to manage dissenters who were not fully accepting of Corbyn. It aimed to examine the three hypotheses set out in the literature review; that populists see their mandate as only from the membership, that they ignored norms that were created to manage dissent, and they failed to engage with constitutional bodies and sought to bend those bodies to their will.

The existing literature on party politics has described the radicalisation and alienation of party members from elites, but has failed to discuss the aftermath of installing a membership-friendly leader and whether members retain their faith in such populists after being elected. Chapter 4 therefore looked at the Labour membership and how they viewed Corbyn and his leadership. It examined whether they believed he was good at managing dissent. Additionally, the chapter evaluated whether members supported his pro-membership stance and reforms throughout his leadership, understanding the true attitudes of the membership and evaluating the true nature of any divides that may have existed over Corbyn. In addition, the chapter, based on a large number

of interviews assessed whether the location of members played a role in how supportive they were of Corbyn, finding less support for him in marginal constituencies than in others, notably rural seats where there was no hope of a Labour victory.

Research into party membership has shown an increasing desire for members to play a role in the party (Ignazi, 2017, Scarrow, 2005) and therefore the existence of a leadership candidate that speaks directly to the wishes and interests of the membership and ignores elites is a trend that could end up continuing within political parties as members become more enfranchised. Chapter 4 demonstrated that such a trend could see more populist leaders be elected because the members welcome this empowerment. This finding again links back to the first research question, about how populists weaponise the membership over elites to gain power, and rely on discord between the membership and the elite. Instead of seeing the membership as a part of the party in conjunction with the elite, populists only wish to derive their mandate from the membership. However, this is not the case for all members, some of whom accept the oligarchic structure and elite-centrism of the party as necessary for election. Such members may be wary of a leader who does not seem to have the ability to manage dissenting voices as they fear it may undermine party unity. The findings of this chapter show that while a majority of members were supportive of Corbyn and welcomed his view that the membership were sovereign there was a strong minority opposed to this view. These members valued unity and election winning and saw Corbyn as posing a threat to those outcomes.

Corbyn's reaction to the membership backs up the first hypothesis. His leadership campaign and many of his democratic reforms were carried out in the name of empowering the membership at the expense of elites, such as making it easier for the membership to deselect a sitting MP, demonstrating that he viewed his mandate as coming from members. His actions can be seen through a heresthetical lens as trying to restructure the Labour Party in a populist direction (Baylor, 2018, McLean, 2002, Riker, 1984). By providing the membership with more power he aimed to use the membership against the party elite and provide ideological security at the expense of party unity. The findings of Chapter 4 feed into the literature about the growing power of party membership and the implications that will have for how political parties operate in a future

characterised by a more widely enfranchised membership. Furthermore, the chapter also examines how members will react to a leader that puts them first and foremost, discovering that while many members may appreciate this, there will be those who understand the necessity of managing dissent and not needlessly provoking elites and will not want the party democracy strengthened at the cost of causing strife with elites in ways that may be damaging to the party's electoral prospects.

To ensure coverage of all elements of the party it was therefore important to examine the views of second-order elites. Councillors within the Labour Party play a large role and Chapter 5 sought to see how they viewed the populist leadership of Corbyn. Interestingly, the chapter discovered that councillors largely viewed themselves as part of the oligarchy and sided with parliamentarians over members, a trend that was particularly noticeable amongst executive councillors. This provides us with a chance to examine the second and third research questions, as local government represents an elite in the party, particularly with the LGA, and therefore, how Corbyn engaged with that group and respected the norms and rules of the party would provide answers to those questions. The leadership of the LGA were strong opponents of Corbyn. Chapter 5 provided more weight to the third hypothesis that populists will ignore constitutional rules and aim to change them to favour their view, as Corbyn did not seek to engage with the LGA. Instead, his leadership chose to marginalise and ignore this body and even set up a parallel body for councillors that supported Corbyn. The fact that the LGA group was constitutionally part of the party and had seats on the NEC did not seem to impact this decision, which caused consternation amongst councillors, combined with attempts to allow members, rather than councillors to elect council leaders.

Chapter 6 explored the relationship between Corbyn and Labour parliamentarians. While intense media coverage at the time meant that it was well-known that this relationship had been strained Chapter 6 explores the reasons for why it was so uneasy. Building on Chapter 5 it was a further way to explore the second and third research questions by examining the largest and most powerful elite within the Labour Party. It discovered that firstly, while MPs were sceptical of Corbyn they were willing to work with him but found that doing so became impossible. Secondly,

Corbyn's leadership did not see any profound change in the policy of the Shadow Cabinet specifically on foreign policy, meaning that the disagreements and fights that happened did not strengthen his ideological hold on the party and were easily reversed after he was replaced as leader. Therefore, many of the issues concerned how Corbyn engaged with the PLP and his disregard for the norms that usually governed the relationship between the leader and parliamentarians, supporting the second hypothesis.

These findings fit with the established behaviour of populists where they are willing to ignore the rules and norms that bound other leaders because of their distaste for elites, feeling that their mandate does not come from such elites, which is the second hypothesis. Corbyn's lack of engagement with the Parliamentary Labour Party Executive, only attending one meeting one very three, was a departure from other leaders, even those who were famously personalistic and marginalised the PLP like Tony Blair, indicating an unwillingness to even view the PLP as a legitimate body in the party. Additionally, as seen with issues like Syria, despite Corbyn appointing figures from other factions in the party to the Shadow Cabinet, when it came to policy disagreements he was willing to ignore constitutional principles like collective responsibility to force his own view across. In fact, many of the conflicts between him and the Shadow Cabinet would arise from Corbyn making unscripted interventions on issues like a NATO buildup in Estonia that contravened party policy, and ended up contradicting previous statements by shadow ministers, and then calling those ministers in to criticise them when they had just followed the official party line. Though ministers were able to write their own sections of the manifesto for both general elections, they found Corbyn and his confidantes making policy proposals that had not been cleared with them, a further norm within the party that Corbyn ignored.

Chapter 7 moved beyond parliamentary elites to the affiliated trade unions, which are a constitutional part of the party and were not obviously supportive or critical of Corbyn in the same way the membership or parliamentarians were, meaning that they could be seen as a swing constituency within the Labour Party. It also was a way of exploring the second and third research questions due to their status as an elite grouping, albeit a more divided one. It also had implications for the first question since unions had more rank-and-file membership and thus

Corbyn's reaction to the supportive union membership as opposed to the more sceptical leadership would be worth evaluating. While there was a perception amongst lay members that Corbyn was close to trade unions, councillors who were part of sceptical trade unions did not share that view, neither did MPs who were privy to more detailed information about the dynamics at the top.

Though unions like Unite were major Corbyn-backers, the union chapter showed that other unions were very sceptical of Corbyn from the start and backed the PLP over him and had many of the same concerns as they did. Unions like USDAW and Community, whose base was a larger working population thought Corbyn was unelectable and therefore backed moderate candidates who they thought would be able to deliver a Labour government, and felt that the fights Corbyn picked with other elites were unnecessary and destructive from the start and were amongst the first bodies to back Owen Smith in his leadership challenge to Corbyn in 2016. In contrast, unions that backed Corbyn tended to be smaller and more extreme, meaning that electability was less of an issue.

The scepticism of unions like USDAW and Community was only strengthened by the factional strife caused by the Corbyn leadership, and they were joined in the sceptical column by the GMB union, who had been neutral in the 2015 leadership election but by 2016 were backing the leadership challenge. In contrast, the factional dynamics were only strengthening the support of most of the unions that initially supported Corbyn in 2015. Corbyn's engagement with the groups that supported him ended up giving these unions more power than they previously had within the Labour Party, with small unions like the Fire Brigades Union feeling that they had more influence than before. In addition, unions like Unite found that more of their members were being appointed to work in Corbyn's office and therefore were able to advance the union's interests within the Labour Party by creating a bilateral relationship that benefitted them. Combined with the democratic review that Corbyn commissioned, which weakened the power of moderate unions within the Labour Party, unions like Unite felt well rewarded for their loyalty.

The union that swung the most was UNISON, which initially supported Corbyn's leadership campaign in 2015 but then quickly reacted negatively to some of his ideas and proposed changes in the Labour Party, and came out strongly against the Democratic Review. UNISON was an example of a moderate union that did not require a strong bilateral relationship with the leadership office, meaning its relationship was not as transactional as Unite's. As such, when changes were made that would have weakened its constitutional power, like eliminating constituency delegate systems, it did not hesitate to publicly oppose such ideas. In contrast, unions like Unite, who on paper would have also been weakened by getting rid of delegates (which included unions) remained supportive. The reason being that unions like UNISON and GMB regularly out-organised Unite, meaning that they could rely on the constitutional structures while Unite needed the bilateral relationship.

The chapter makes a significant contribution to party political literature by highlighting why affiliated organisations may choose to support a populist leader. The chapter's findings feed into the discussion of how unions view their links with left-wing parties as mainly transactional and confirms that even within the bloc of affiliated organisations those bodies who are out-organised within that bloc may support populist leaders. The chapter confirms many of the trends found in other parts of this thesis, that Corbyn prioritised the membership over his relations with unions and sought to empower and weaken even those unions that supported him, the first hypothesis. Although many unions felt that he initially engaged with them, the sceptical ones quickly felt alienated by his approach and his reforms and were upset at his lack of engagement with the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO) and his more bilateral relations with unions that were outwardly supporting him, relegating them to what they saw as second-class status within the Labour Party and not taking their concerns about electability or policy implications seriously, the second and third hypotheses. The interviews with trade unions found that unions like Unite were not able to organise effectively within TULO and thus welcomed Corbyn's reliance on them as that gave them more power than they would have had under any other leader who would have engaged with the norms of working within TULO, which confirms the second hypothesis. Likewise, the watering down of union power by abolishing delegate systems in constituencies was not as harmful for them as they would often lose delegate elections and thus be unable to influence CLPs as easily, whereas in an All Member Meeting they needed to win

a vote of all members, and could thus leverage their support for Corbyn for votes from the pro-Corbyn membership. Within the moderate trade unions these changes were harmful and the leadership's disregard for TULO and the norms of working with all unions together instead of engaging in bilateral relations was upsetting to them as they felt they were being unfairly treated. As such, Chapter 7 supports the second and third hypotheses that populist leaders will ignore norms and constitutional bodies when it benefits them and will aim to work with those who are already seen as on their side rather than managing dissent.

By analysing the different elements of the Labour Party the thesis demonstrates that Corbyn as leader only engaged positively with groups that were in favour of him and refused to manage dissent. Much of this can be traced to prevailing populist views of the virtuous membership against the corrupt elite and the view that the members of a party should be sovereign and the rules and norms of a party are designed to empower elites and subvert the membership. Populists in mainstream parties will struggle to manage dissent by operating within the oligarchic nature of the political party and working with opposing factions within the party. The thesis therefore argues that populists in mainstream parties face challenges not faced by mainstream factions when leading the party. Paradoxically, the thesis also argues that trends towards empowering membership will increase the potential for populist leadership to be elected in. Furthermore, within these parties the groups that may support the populist leadership do so through a transactional lens, meaning that they see that leadership as a way to gain more power than they would initially have, and are willing to subvert established party norms to do so. Therefore, this thesis has found strong evidence that largely confirms the three hypotheses.

## Further Relevance of the Thesis

This section discusses how the thesis can be applied to further cases. It will first discuss how the current argument and findings from the research link up and work with related literature in populism and party politics, and then will discuss how the investigation undertaken might be applied to other countries and issues.

By engaging with the literature on populism and party politics concerning the management of dissent and how populists work within their groups, this thesis has filled a gap in the literature on how populists in mainstream parties manage dissent. Moreover, it has helped to explain trends in mainstream parties stemming from the enfranchisement of members within political parties. It also on a broader level discusses the alienation of members from their party elites and how they need 'a consistent and consequent effort to overcome this distrust' (Mudde and Ambrose, 2015) and feeds into the wider literature of populism (Gervais and Morris, 2018, March and Mudde, 2005, Mudde, 2002, Mudde, 2009, Mudde and Ambrose, 2015, Rosenfeld, 2018). The thesis also informs discussions on party politics and factionalism (Baylor, 2018, McLean, 2002, Riker, 1984). Additionally, the argument advanced in this thesis, that populist factions in mainstream parties will struggle to manage dissent, addresses related literature about managing dissent in parties (e.g. Bloch Rubin, 2017, Bolleyer, et. al., 2016,) which highlights the importance of managing dissent and the methods mainstream party leaders use, which often differ from what populists do. Therefore, the thesis and its conclusions contribute to a growing debate in party politics literature, specifically on the effects of enfranchising members in a party.

Additionally, as shown in the literature review there is extensive contemporary literature focusing on populism in fringe parties and traditional factionalism in mainstream parties, and how mainstream parties deal with external populism. This thesis examines what happens when populists gain control of a mainstream party and its implications. Moreover, it explores the impact of a group that dislikes elite-made norms and rules taking over a body that is intrinsically oligarchic and elite centred and who has created those rules in order to maintain unity. Thus, by focusing on populist factionalism, the thesis is able to bridge these two literatures and shed light on a trend in mainstream parties that is becoming more important ever since parties began the mass enfranchisement of their members. The thesis also has value for scholars interested in factionalism more generally and organisational structures within politics, which can affect not just parties but interest groups too and further sheds light on developments within the Michelsian framework (e.g. DiSalvo, 2012, Mair, 2002).



Further, given that the thesis discusses the importance of intra-party rules and norms for the continued functioning of political parties, the findings of the thesis speak to literature on intra-party conflict (Close, 2016, Close and Gherghina, 2019, Gherghina, et. al., 2019). In particular, as this thesis finds that populist factionalism damages the rules that keep parties united the thesis lends support to Sjöblom's (1968) and Blondel's (1978) arguments about factions using rules and norms to create an equal playing field. The thesis thus demonstrates the importance of those norms. Beyond that the thesis also is able to identify the consequences of not following the rules that are set up to prevent elite infighting within a mainstream political party and identifies the staying power of the factions that do follow those rules. As such the thesis is able to not only demonstrate Sjöblom and Blondel's continued validity but also modernises it in the context of political parties who enfranchise their members.

Finally, by using a large number of interviews to examine the changes within the Labour Party and the feelings of the major stakeholders the thesis represents a contribution to the literature on the Labour Party, providing one of the most detailed collection of views and stances of a British political party. Using such a large number of interviews to draw conclusions from such a variety of sources will be of interest to other scholars looking to examine the workings of a party.

The thesis has examined populism in mainstream political parties through using a case study of the Labour Party. The thesis should, however, be generalisable to other political parties within other countries, mainly in democratic nations in Western Europe but also to the Americas, Eastern Europe, and other developed nations.

The arguments made in this thesis are applicable to other mainstream parties that share oligarchic structures and factions. Thus, in most countries that have mainstream political parties that have led the government or are primarily office-seeking and thus contain an oligarchic structure; where members have been increasingly enfranchised; and where there is increasing radicalisation of the membership combined with falling numbers overall; the argument put forward in this thesis can help understand the consequences of a populist faction within the party and the troubles that they will have in managing dissent within their party.

Most other nations in Western Europe have parties that share these features and therefore this thesis could be applicable to them, as shown by examples in Austria and France. The Global Party Survey demonstrates that a large number of non-populist Western European Parties have increasingly taken populist stances and espoused populist values, such as the ÖVP in Austria, Les Republicains in France, the Socialist Party in Belgium and the Danish Social Democratic Party all having reasonably high scores in terms of populist values (Norris, 2020). Furthermore, between the 2014 and 2019 versions of the Chapel-Hill Expert Survey non-populist parties have seen increased salience in anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric, indicating that parties in Western Europe are increasingly considering populist rhetoric and being suspicious of elites (Jolly, et. al., 2019). It is less clear, however, whether this argument is applicable to dominant party systems where the main party is almost always assured of power. Here the membership may not be as radical or enfranchised as the party is primarily a vehicle for elites who are less willing to share power with the membership and have easier methods of getting rid of leaders. Examples of this would be the LDP in Japan or the ANC in South Africa who either have strong entrenched rights for their internal factions which are very difficult to break or have set term limits for their leaders allowing opposing factions to wait out a populist leader (Bettcher, 2005, Mac Giollabhuí, 2011). It is also unclear how much this thesis applies to countries like Brazil where parties are primarily political vehicles of their leaders (Epstein, 2009), meaning that factionalism is a lesser force and the importance of managing dissent is less apparent, allowing for a populist leader like Bolsonaro to use the machinery of his party with little opposition.

Given that mainstream parties naturally 'favour the development of cliques' (Duverger, 1954: 52) the issues around managing dissent and working with parliamentarians and managing the tensions of members can apply to other factions than just populists. Other factions may also aim to gain full control of their party not because of an anti-elite ideology but in order to force personal opponents out. The argument regarding populists might therefore be helpful in explaining how other factions who are less interested in managing dissent may aim to exploit existing tensions in the party to gain power and concentrate it within a new elite and crush dissent from the other factions that have been defeated, along with the challenges and obstacles they will face in doing

so. Thus the argument of this thesis potentially helps us to understand what might become a destabilised future of political parties where membership can be used as a weapon by factions to try to overturn the norms and constitutions of a party, which are designed to balance factional power and instead create more autocratic parties that are run by one particular group, which can be particularly relevant in PR systems.

## Limitations of the Study

The thesis and its research has a number of limitations, which the following section will summarise. They relate to the single case study, the validity of the overall argument, the methodology, and the interview process.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the initial plan for a comparative study of the Labour Party and the ÖVP in Austria had to be shelved in favour of a single case study of Corbyn and the Labour Party. Single case studies have some limitations for deriving generalisable trends in the field as they may end up just telling us about one particular party and the thesis could be argued to be more in line with Labour Party literature (e.g. Cowley, 2002). By examining the Labour Party in Britain the findings may be more indicative of a party within a majoritarian system where the exit costs are too high and therefore the ability of elites to leave the party as a form of dissent may be more prevalent in other systems. Proportional systems have significantly lower exit costs and therefore elites who are unsatisfied can choose to leave the party with fewer consequences. However, even in other systems there is relatively little defection or exiting of parties due to anti-defection laws or difficulty in setting up new parties (Nikolenyi, 2019). Additionally, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, populist factions have made their way in both mainstream left and right wing parties. Thus, the key question about how populists manage dissent is relevant to other parties as well as Labour. Similarly, all parties have oligarchic structures and norms to maintain a level of unity within the party, which is something that populists would tend to be ideologically against. Therefore, the operations of a similar oligarchic framework and how populists would disrupt that is something that is relevant to all mainstream parties regardless of electoral system and would still be relevant even in the cases of PR systems as an exodus of

elites would demonstrate failure to manage dissent. Therefore, the case remains relevant even if it does cover just one case in one particular system.

Moreover, the use of a single case study of a left-wing political party could also lead to struggles to generalise the data as often the mainstream left is organised differently from other parties. For example, the use of a left-wing party means that the inclusion of trade unions, bodies who often have constitutional powers in mainstream left-wing parties, has to be considered, with no such body mirroring them on the mainstream right. Indeed, most mainstream right parties are more autocratic than oligarchic, meaning that the reasons for embracing populism and the challenges and risks for populists in those parties would be different from the mainstream left, as shown in Chapter 3 with right wing parties. However, the fact that populist leaders on the mainstream right have also suffered quick replacement shows that the issues of managing dissent are still valid on the right. Moreover, the ideological anti-elitism of populism will still provoke clashes on the mainstream right as well.

The methodology of using multiple interviews with different people in the Labour Party is one that could have limitations due to the impossibility of truly interviewing everyone in the Labour Party and also due to implicit bias with the researcher himself allowing for a potentially skewed sample. The limitations, however, do not seem to have weakened the overall argument made in the thesis since a large number of interviewees had supported Jeremy Corbyn and the even supporters of him admitted managing dissent was not a strength of his. In fact, his supporters were more of the opinion that managing dissent was less important than bringing forth his changes and therefore, this would have limited impact on the thesis.

The interview process also yielded a few challenges that merit discussion. Though there were over two hundred interviews over a wide variety of Labour Party members and stakeholders the interviews were not necessarily evenly spread. It was significantly more difficult to get members of Momentum to agree to be interviewed about Corbyn particularly since the author's own views on the subject were not hard to find. Similarly, MPs were more difficult to pin down since they had busier schedules and certainly at the start almost no MPs responded to the invitations,

though this did get better. As such, many of the interviews, particularly with factions and MPs favoured moderates. However, all of the elite interviews were with people who had insight and influence and lasted for over an hour allowing for conclusions to be reached and this included the few members of Momentum who did sit down who offered invaluable insight. The initial interviews were undertaken in certain areas that the author was familiar with, Cambridge and York, where it would be easy to track down members and party elites but were shorter and more structured, with later interviews becoming semi-structured. Later interviews were longer and more in-depth, and saw more stakeholders with one exception. Despite multiple attempts to reach political officers from UNISON, the swing union that moved away from Corbyn and cost him TULO, no interviews were secured, only with rank and file members who were found in other ways. Disappointingly, there was no response to any of the emails sent to their political contacts. However, the interviews with other stakeholders were of good enough equality and with other unions, that it did shed light on UNISON's position albeit through secondary sources.

## Directions for Future Research

Looking at the research of the thesis and the discussion of its relevance and limitations as seen earlier in the conclusion we can therefore find a number of avenues for future research.

Firstly, it would be beneficial to run a comparative study of this data with a different system that also has a mainstream party taken over by a populist leader. This would allow us to assess whether these hypotheses are valid in other types of parties and are truly as generalisable as stated. The thesis has highlighted trends in a majoritarian system and therefore using a proportional system may be useful to see how factions respond to a leader who does not wish to manage dissent and how those factions handle that situation. A good example of this would be examining the ÖVP in Austria under Sebastian Kurz, which was initially planned for this thesis and remains an interesting case study due to Austria having proportional representation and being a federal system. Building on existing literature it would be interesting to develop more case studies of the internal dynamics of parties (see Carty, 2015), and for these dynamics to focus on not just top-level party elites but also on the membership and second-level elected figures to see if the trends found in this thesis follow throughout parties. Parties that would be particularly

interesting to examine would be the Parti Socialiste in France, the CDU in Germany, and Fine Gael in Ireland, all of which are established mainstream parties whose internal dynamics would be worth looking into,

Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 5, it would be useful to do more research on second-level elites in parties, as there is very little literature on where they stand within political parties and whether they align more with the elite or the membership within a mainstream political party and what role they play in factional politics within a party. Related to this, the inclusion of more surveys of councillors at the local level in other countries would be useful for the findings of this thesis to compare the views of second-order representatives across the world and how they feel compared to parliamentarians. Future research could aim to catalogue this data and demonstrate if there are new trends emerging from second-order representatives in mainstream parties and whether their connection to the elite is something that is a solely British phenomenon or if it is something that can be seen across all parties.

Thirdly, the focus of this thesis has been on parties in a multi-party system. However, parties in one-party or dominant party systems also have factions that require investigation and can be leveraged by populists, particularly if they too are democratising and enfranchising their members as well as losing members overall. Given that these parties do not have to worry about electoral competition almost all competition is intra-party. Therefore, examining the actions of populist factions within these dominant parties and examining whether they too are member focused would be interesting, as would their adherence to the unwritten rules that tend to be even more present in these parties to maintain dominance by creating a strong winning coalition. Interesting examples of dominant party systems that could be explored could be South Africa with the ANC, Botswana with the BDP, or Japan with the LDP as perhaps the archetypal example of a dominant party system.

## Conclusion

By combining the literature on party politics and factionalism along with populism, this thesis has sought to explain an increasing trend in mainstream political parties where populist leaders have

been elected to lead those parties and have struggled to manage dissent within the oligarchic structures of the party. It has identified a gap in the literature on what happens when populists take over mainstream parties, with the populism literature discussing populist parties and their methods of appealing to people as well as their internal autocratic tendencies and the party politics literature mainly discussing factionalism within the framework of an oligarchic party where certain norms are accepted. The thesis has used the case study of the Labour Party to examine the effect of a populist taking over a mainstream party, consequently it provides strong empirical contributions to the study of the Labour Party. By using this in depth case study the thesis contributes to multiple bodies of literature. Firstly, by examining the role of populist ideology and how it has played an increasing role in mainstream political parties the thesis fills a gap in populist literature which mainly focuses on non-mainstream fringe parties. Secondly, by focusing on how factions in mainstream parties respond to populist leaders the thesis makes an important contribution to party politics literature, which mainly focuses on factional strife within factional rules. Thirdly, by combining the two literatures, the thesis sheds light on the effects of parties enfranchising their members and how it can lead to more populist leaders being elected and refusing to follow party norms, which is a phenomenon that may well continue.

The Labour Party was chosen because Corbyn had been elected on a manifesto of listening to the members and going against the conventional wisdom of the Parliamentary Labour Party and therefore would be a useful case study of this phenomenon as it seemed that the obvious conflicts represented more than just traditional intra-party factional fighting. The investigation was conducted through semi-structured interviews, starting with interviews in a number of locations around the country and then moving to organisations within the Labour Party that represent the main stakeholders, like the LGA or TULO.

Firstly, the thesis has found that populists in mainstream parties consider that their mandate from the membership trumps any other concerns about managing dissent, and that they seek to use the membership as a shield against other factions. As such, the thesis argues that unlike other intra-party factions, populist factions do not place a high premium on managing dissent or keeping other factions in line.

Secondly, the thesis found that populist factions in mainstream political parties will disregard norms within a political party that are designed to manage dissent from elites in favour of fully enacting their own agenda. Ideas like collective responsibility and not speaking over the designated party spokesman on an issue tend to be discarded. However, the findings of this thesis do challenge the idea that this will actually see a change in party policy, since despite all the rhetoric very little actually forcibly changed where there was dissent. Rather, the thesis demonstrates that despite their best efforts populists will not be able to change very much even by breaking the rules that are meant to hinder change.

Thirdly, the thesis has identified that populists in mainstream parties will struggle to engage with constitutional bodies in the party and will aim to either sideline or ignore them until they can influence them to be more friendly to their side, instead of working with them and managing dissent as seen from the way Corbyn handled the LGA and TULO. Moreover, the existence of parallel structures and bilateral relationships with supporters supports the argument in the thesis that unfriendly constitutional bodies are ignored.

Lastly, through examining supportive bodies like Unite, who were on Corbyn's side, the thesis is able to shed some light on the reasons some party institutions support populist factions. Based on the interviews with trade unionists it was found that many of the unions that supported Corbyn were regularly out-organised by the ones who were less supportive and thus saw Corbyn as providing a different means to gain power in the Labour Party. Therefore, while ideology may have played a part, elites bodies who are being out organised in their particular section of a political party will have more incentives to support a disruptive leadership change in order to facilitate a transactional relationship with the new leadership and provide them a level of institutional support for them to make some changes in exchange for higher access to policy making and more influence for their members. This finding emphasises that even some elite groups that are continuously out-organised may be willing to work with populists and destroy norms and constitutional protections if they feel that this may be the best option for them to gain power.



# Appendices

## Appendix I. Initial interview script

1. How long have you been a member of the Labour Party and what roles have you held either as an elected official or within the party or affiliated organisations?
2. In 2015 for the leadership election who did you support and why?
3. What issues do you feel contributed to Jeremy Corbyn's victory in 2015 in the leadership election?
4. How do you feel Corbyn and his team's relations with Trade Unions have been and what are the reasons for those relations?
5. How do you feel Corbyn and his team has engaged with individual party members and Constituency Labour Parties and to what extent has this been different from his predecessors?
6. How do you feel Corbyn and his team have engaged with local government representatives within the Labour Party?
7. Since Corbyn's victory how do you feel relations have been between him and the Parliamentary Labour Party and what are the reasons for those relations?
8. What do you think about members running on openly pro-Corbyn slates for internal elections like the NEC?
9. What is your view about groups like Momentum and how they operate?
10. Is this different in any way to your view about groups like Labour First and Progress?
11. To what extent do you feel that an individual's proximity to Corbyn has played in terms advancement within the Labour Party?
12. How do you feel about the reforms Corbyn and the party have made to how the leader is chosen and to the structure of Constituency Labour Parties?
13. Why do you think membership in the Labour Party has increased since 2015?
14. How has the membership increase changed the Party?
15. Why do you think membership is on the decline again in Labour?
16. How do you feel about Corbyn's views on austerity and his economic agenda on the whole?
17. How do you feel about Corbyn's position on Brexit and the European Union?

18. How do you feel about Corbyn's reaction to the Anti-Semitism scandals in the Labour Party?

19. On the whole do you feel Corbyn's leadership has been a net positive or negative for the Labour Party and how well do you feel he delivered on the promises he made in 2015?

## Appendix II. List of interviewees

1. Anonymous Labour Member - July 17th 2019
2. Tom Mayer - August 22nd 2019 (Labour member in South Cambridgeshire)
3. Rob Grayston - July 19th 2019 (Labour member in Cambridge)
4. John Beresford - July 30 2019 (Labour member in South Cambridgeshire)
5. Anonymous Labour Member - August 20 2019
6. Anonymous Labour Student - July 22 2019
7. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 29 2019
8. Anonymous former MEP - August 29 2019
9. Anonymous former Councillor - August 31 2019
10. Rebecca Denness - August 25 2019 (Labour member in East Cambridgeshire)
11. Jes Hibbert - August 27 2019 (Labour member in Fenland)
12. Anonymous Labour Member - July 18 2019
13. Anonymous UNISON member - August 1 2019
14. Patrick Kitterick - September 10 2019 (Councillor in Leicester)
15. Anonymous former member - September 10 2019
16. Anonymous Labour Member - July 7 2019
17. Anonymous Labour Councillor - July 16 2019
18. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 16 2019
19. Julie Lawrence - August 25 2019 (Former Labour HQ Staffer)
20. Sonja Crisp - August 20 2019 (Former Labour Councillor)
21. Anonymous Labour Member - August 18 2019
22. Anna Semlyen - August 19 2019 (Former Councillor in York)
23. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 9 2019
24. Janet Looker - August 23 2019 (Councillor in York)
25. Anonymous Labour Councillor - October 2 2019
26. Anonymous Labour Member - October 23 2019
27. Anonymous Labour Councillor - September 1 2019
28. Christy McMorrow - July 18 2019 (Former CLP Secretary in Cambridge)
29. Luke Akehurst - July 17 2019 (Secretary of Labour First)

30. Dan Ratcliffe - September 1 2019 (Former Councillor in Cambridge)
31. Kevin Maton - September 25 2019 (Councillor in Coventry)
32. Anonymous Labour Member - July 31 2019
33. Anonymous Labour Member - August 20 2019
34. Kallum Taylor - August 30 2019 (Councillor in York)
35. Anonymous Labour Member - September 2 2019
36. James Alexander - August 22 2019 (Former Leader of the York City Councillor)
37. Nobby Clarke - September 23 2019 (Labour member in Coventry)
38. Anonymous Former Labour Councillor - September 17 2019
39. Anonymous Labour Councillor - October 8 2019
40. Anonymous Labour Member - October 11 2019
41. Lord Andrew Adonis - December 18 2019
42. Anonymous Labour Councillor - December 5 2019
43. Anonymous Labour Member - December 31 2019
44. Malcolm Kennedy - October 7 2019 (Former Labour Councillor in Liverpool)
45. Anonymous Labour Activist - January 1 2020
46. Richard Angell - July 17 2019 (Former Director of Progress)
47. Philippa Davey - January 10 2020
48. Anonymous Labour Councillor - January 20 2020
49. Trish Oliver - January 3 2020 (Councillor in Exeter)
50. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 24 2020
51. Matt Noble - January 31 2020 (Councillor in Westminster)
52. Anonymous Labour Group leader - May 15 2020
53. Danny Myers - October 9 2020 (Councillor in Leicester)
54. Anonymous Council Leader - May 21 2020
55. Nathan Yeowell - September 9 2020 (Director of Progress)
56. Anonymous Labour MP - June 10 2020
57. Anonymous Labour Councillor - 28 April 2020
58. Anonymous Labour MP - June 11 2020
59. Anonymous Labour MP - June 19 2020
60. Rachael Godfrey-Wood - June 21 2020 (Staff Member for Momentum)

61. Anonymous Momentum Member - June 16 2020
62. Lord Ray Collins - June 22 2020 (Former General Secretary of the Labour Party)
63. Anonymous Former MP - June 9 2020
64. Anonymous Labour Together Member - June 25 2020
65. Lord Iain McNicol - June 16 2020 (Former General Secretary of the Labour Party)
66. Anonymous MP - July 2 2020
67. Michael Chessum - June 24 2020 (Executive Member of Momentum)
68. Chris Kitchen - July 9 2020 (General Secretary of the National Union of Miners)
69. Anonymous GMB Officer - July 12 2020
70. Anonymous Open Labour Member - June 20 2020
71. Anonymous Unite Officer - July 7 2020
72. Anonymous GMB Officer - July 9 2020
73. Anonymous FBU Officer - July 22 2020
74. Anonymous GMB Officer - July 14 2020
75. Anonymous CWU Officer - July 21 2020
76. Anonymous GMB Officer - July 17 2020
77. Simon Edwards - July 27 2020 (Officer in the CWU)
78. Anonymous MP - July 28 2020
79. Anonymous USDAW Officer - July 27 2020
80. Manuel Cortes - August 17 2020 (General Secretary of the TSSA)
81. Anonymous Labour Member - August 17 2020
82. Andrew Hornsby Smith - August 18 2020 (Labour member in Reading)
83. Sian Taylor - August 28 2020 (Labour Councillor in Oxford)
84. Anonymous MP - June 6 2020
85. Ann Black - August 19 2020 (NEC Member)
86. Anonymous Labour Councillor - September 2 2020
87. Anonymous Council Leader - August 29 2020
88. Anonymous Labour Member - September 6 2020
89. Anonymous Labour Councillor - September 3 2020
90. Anonymous Labour Member - September 11 2020
91. Anonymous Labour Councillor - October 9 2020

92. Anonymous Shadow Cabinet Member - September 17 2020
93. Anonymous Labour Councillor - November 27 2020
94. Anonymous Labour Councillor - July 6 2020
95. Anonymous Labour Councillor - July 3 2019
96. John Clare - December 18 2020 (Former Labour Councillor in County Durham)
97. Edward Papaloziou - July 5 2019 (Former Vice Chair of Cambridge CLP)
98. Anonymous Labour Member - July 7 2019
99. Ed Ruane - January 15 2021 (Labour Councillor in Coventry)
100. Anonymous Labour Councillor - January 31 2021
101. Anonymous Former MP - January 18 2021
102. Peter Brooks - January 9 2021 (Former Labour Councillor in County Durham)
103. Steve King - July 17 2019 (Labour Member in Cambridge)
104. Joe Dale - July 17 2019 (Labour Member in Cambridge)
105. Jeremy Benstead - July 6 2019 (Former Labour Councillor in Cambridge)
106. Anonymous Labour Councillor - February 8 2021
107. Anonymous Labour Member - July 18 2019
108. Andrew Scott - February 17 2021 (Labour Councillor in Darlington)
109. Anonymous Former MP - February 10 2021
110. Anonymous MP - July 19 2019
111. Frank Gawthrop - July 18 2019
112. Adam Pounds - July 19 2019 (Labour Member in Cambridge)
113. Kevin Price - July 19 2019 (Former Labour Councillor in Cambridge)
114. Anonymous Labour Councillor - March 9 2021
115. Anonymous Labour Member - February 16 2021
116. Libby McCollum - February 26 2021 (Labour Councillor in Darlington)
117. Anonymous Labour Councillor - March 15 2021
118. Anonymous Labour Councillor - March 17 2021
119. Anonymous Labour Councillor - March 19 2021
120. Anonymous Labour Councillor - July 20 2019
121. Paddy Tipping - March 26 2021 (Former Labour MP and Former Labour Police and Crime Commissioner)

122. Anonymous Former Labour Councillor - July 31 2019
123. Cathie Rae - August 30 2019 (Labour Councillor in Cambridgeshire)
124. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 1 2019
125. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 1 2019
126. Anonymous Labour Councillor - July 19 2019
127. Isabel Lambourne - August 1 2019 (Labour Member in Cambridge)
128. Anonymous Labour Member - August 17 2019
129. Anonymous Labour Councillor - April 11 2021
130. Patrick Sheil - July 25 2019 (Labour Councillor in Cambridge)
131. Anonymous Former Labour Councillor - July 27 2019
132. Jane Goodland - August 24 2019 (Labour Member in East Cambridgeshire)
133. Anonymous Labour Councillor - August 16 2019
134. David Lewis - August 26 2019 (Labour Member in Fenland)
135. Martin Field - August 28 2019 (Labour Member in Fenland)
136. Anonymous Labour Member - August 24 2019
137. William Owen - August 21 2019 (Former chair of York CLP)
138. Liz Walter - August 28 2019 (Former Labour Member in Cambridge)
139. Anonymous Labour Councillor - May 28 2021
140. Anonymous Labour Member - August 29 2019
141. Beverley Cottrell - September 1 2019 (Labour Member in South Cambridgeshire)
142. Paul Sales - September 2 2019 (Former Labour Councillor in Cambridgeshire)
143. Peter Tyson - September 12 2019 (Labour Member in East Cambridgeshire)
144. Anonymous Labour Member - August 28 2019
145. Anonymous Labour Member - September 3 2019
146. Peter Kilbane - September 20 2019
147. Dave Hanratty - October 6 2019 (Former Labour Councillor in Liverpool)
148. Anonymous Labour Councillor - October 8 2019
149. Anonymous Labour Councillor - October 9 2019
150. Anonymous Police and Crime Commissioner - October 28 2019
151. Liam Robinson - October 25 2019 (Labour Councillor in Liverpool)
152. Gary O'Donnell - October 12 2019 (Labour Councillor in Leicester)

- 153.Nick Small - November 2 2019 (Labour Councillor in Liverpool)
- 154.Gary Millar - November 2 2019 (Labour Councillor in Liverpool)
- 155.Anonymous CLP Chair - December 16 2019
- 156.Paula Black - November 23 2019 (Labour Member in Devon)
- 157.Rose Arno - January 5 2020 (Labour Member in Devon)
- 158.Guthrie McKie - January 13 2020 (Labour Councillor in Westminster)
- 159.Anonymous Labour Councillor - January 25 2020
- 160.Emily Brothers - January 27 2020 (Labour Member in Richmond)
- 161.Anonymous Labour Member - January 28 2020
- 162.Anonymous Labour Councillor - February 1 2020
- 163.Anonymous Labour Member - February 11 2020
- 164.Anonymous London Assembly Member - February 12 2020
- 165.Andy Hannan - February 14 2020 (Labour Member in Exeter)
- 166.Jonathan Orchard - February 21 2020 (Labour Member in Huntington)
- 167.Samuel Sweek - February 22 2020 (Labour Member in Huntington)
- 168.Rowan Draper - March 3 2020 (Labour Member in Stafford)
- 169.John Anderson - March 4 2020 (Labour Member in East Staffordshire)
- 170.Tom Snape - March 4 2020 (Labour Member in Newcastle-under-Lyme)
- 171.Anonymous Labour Member - March 8 2020
- 172.Anonymous Labour Organiser - March 11 2020
- 173.John McKiernan - March 11 2020 (Labour Member in East Staffordshire)
- 174.Shelagh McKiernan - March 11 2020 (Labour Councillor in Staffordshire)
- 175.Anonymous Labour Member - March 18 2020
- 176.Steve Funnell - March 19 2020 (Labour Councillor in Stoke-on-Trent)
- 177.Jane Ashworth - March 20 2020 (Labour Councillor in Stoke-on-Trent)
- 178.Anonymous Labour Member - March 22 2020
- 179.Anonymous Labour Member - March 23 2020
- 180.Birgit Allport - March 24 2020 (Labour Member in Stafford)
- 181.Connor Brady - March 26 2020 (Labour Councillor in Staffordshire Moorlands)
- 182.Anonymous Labour Councillor - March 27 2020
- 183.Anonymous Labour Member - March 28 2020



184. Anonymous Labour Member - March 29 2020

185. Neil Singh - March 30 2020 (Labour Member in Staffordshire Moorlands)

186. Laura Robinson-Powner - March 31 2020 (Labour Member in Staffordshire Moorlands)

187. Jamie Tennant - April 1 2020 (Labour Member in Staffordshire Moorlands)

188. Anonymous Labour Councillor - April 3 2020

189. Jack Barber - April 4 2020 (Labour Member in Stafford)

190. Anonymous Labour Member - April 7 2020

191. John Boyle - April 8 2020 (Labour Member in Stafford)

192. Anonymous Labour Member - April 11 2020

193. Anonymous Labour Member - April 13 2020

194. Anonymous Labour Member - April 14 2020

195. Anonymous Former Labour Councillor - April 15 2020

196. Adam Freeman - April 18 2020 (Labour Member in South Staffordshire)

197. Anonymous Labour Councillor - April 20 2020

198. Anonymous Labour Councillor - April 23 2020

199. Anonymous Labour Member - April 27 2020

200. Anonymous Labour Councillor - April 29 2020

201. Paul Bidwell - April 30 2020 (Labour Member in Bracknell Forrest)

202. Paul Gittings - May 2 2020 (Labour Councillor in Reading)

203. Anonymous Labour Member - May 3 2020

204. Tony Page - May 4 2020 (Labour Councillor in Reading)

205. Steve Scholar - May 7 2020 (Labour Member in West Berkshire)

206. Anonymous Labour Member - May 9 2020

207. Anonymous Labour Member - May 10 2020

208. Anonymous Former MP - May 11 2020

209. Michael Wakelyn-Green - May 11 2020 (Labour Member in West Berkshire)

210. Anonymous Labour Member - May 12 2020

211. Anonymous Labour Member - May 13 2020

212. Chris Ryder - May 14 2020 (Labour Member in West Berkshire)

213. Judi Billing - May 16 2020 (Labour Group Leader in North Hertfordshire and LGA lead)

214. Anonymous NEC Member - May 17 2020

215.Kate Haigh - May 18 2020 (Labour Councillor in Gloucester and Regional Representative on the LGA)

216.Bryony Rudkin - May 18 2020 (Labour Councillor in Ipswich)

217.Anonymous Labour Councillor - May 18 2020

218.Graham Chapman - May 19 2020 (Labour Councillor in Nottingham)

219.Julie Ward - May 20 2020 (Former Labour MEP)

220.Helen Holland - May 20 2020 (Labour Councillor in Bristol)

221.John Healey - May 20 2020 (Shadow Secretary of State for Defence)

222.Joanne Harding - May 20 2020 (Labour Councillor in Trafford)

223.Darren Rodwell - May 22 2020 (Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council)

224.Anonymous Labour Councillor - May 22 2020

225.Mary Wimbury - May 25 2020 (Labour Member in Wrexham)

226.Anonymous Labour National Policy Forum Member - May 27 2020

227.Anonymous Labour Councillor - June 2 2020

228.Anonymous Labour Member - June 7 2020

229.Helen Goodman - June 8 2020 (Former MP for Bishop Auckland)

230.Anonymous Labour Member - June 11 2020

231.Joyce Still - June 15 2020 (Labour NPF Member)

232.Anonymous Labour Member - June 27 2020

233.Anonymous Labour Member - June 28 2020

234.Anonymous Labour Member - June 29 2020

235.Ian Steers - July 4 2020 (Labour Member in Windsor and Maidenhead)

236.Margery Thorogood - July 6 2020 (Labour Member in Windsor and Maidenhead)

237.Anonymous MP - July 11 2020

238.Anonymous Shadow Cabinet Member - July 20 2020

239.Preston Brooker - July 22 2020 (Labour Councillor in Slough)

240.Anonymous Labour Councillor - 29 July 2020

241.Anonymous Unite Officer - 30 July 2020

242.Anonymous Labour Member - August 4 2020

243.Anonymous Labour Council Leader - August 25 2020

244.Anonymous Labour Member - August 30 2020

245. Anonymous Labour Member - September 18 2020

246. Dave Gernon - September 19 2020 (Labour Member in Oxfordshire)

247. George Lindars-Hammond - September 23 2020 (Labour Councillor in Sheffield)

248. Matt Dent - September 25 2020 (Labour Councillor in Southend)

249. Robert Evans - October 2 2020 (Labour Councillor in Surrey)

250. Anonymous Labour Member - October 3 2020

251. Rodney Bates - October 6 2020 (Labour Councillor in Surrey Heath)

252. Anonymous Labour Member - October 17 2020

253. Anonymous Labour Member - October 17 2020

254. Veronica Monks - October 18 2020 (Labour Member in Surrey)

255. Luke Wenman - October 19 2020 (Labour Member in Guildford)

256. Anonymous Labour Member - October 20 2020

257. Anonymous Labour Member - October 29 2020

258. Anonymous Labour Member - October 30 2020

259. Ed Mayne - November 15 2020 (Labour Member in Hounslow)

260. Anonymous Labour Member - November 16 2020

261. Anonymous Labour Member - November 20 2020

262. Anonymous Former Labour Member - November 28 2020

263. Anonymous Labour Member - December 12 2020

264. Anonymous Labour Councillor - December 28 2020

265. Ben Goree - January 8 2021 (Labour Member in County Durham)

266. Joe Kirwin - January 11 2021 (Labour Councillor in Gateshead)

267. Anonymous Labour Councillor - January 19 2021

268. Anonymous Labour Councillor - January 22 2021

269. Kane Emerson - January 23 2021 (Labour Member in Labour Party Irish)

270. Anonymous Labour Member - January 23 2021

271. Anonymous Labour Member - January 26 2021

272. Bill Dixon - February 5 2021 (Former Labour Councillor in Darlington)

273. Mohammed Aslam - March 5 2021 (Former Labour Councillor in Nottinghamshire)

274. Richard Cotton - March 20 2021 (Labour Councillor in Camden)

275. Robin Hay - March 22 2021 (Labour Member in Nottingham)

276. Anonymous Labour Member - April 5 2021

277. Anonymous Labour Member - April 8 2021

278. Anonymous Labour Councillor - April 9 2021

279. Anonymous Labour Member - April 11 2021

280. Graham Smith - April 21 2021 (Labour Member in Camden)

281. Anonymous Labour Councillor - June 23 2021

# Abbreviations

<b>AfD</b>	Alternative für Deutschland
<b>AMM</b>	All Member Meeting
<b>ASLEF</b>	Associated Society of Local Engineers and Firemen
<b>BAME</b>	Black, Asian, Minority ethnic
<b>BECTU</b>	Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph, and Theatre Union
<b>BFAWU</b>	Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
<b>CLP</b>	Constituency Labour Party
<b>CDU</b>	Christian Democratic Union
<b>CWU</b>	Communications Workers Union
<b>EC</b>	Executive Committee
<b>FBU</b>	Fire Brigades Union
<b>FPÖ</b>	Freedom Party of Austria
<b>FSB</b>	Federal Security Service
<b>GC</b>	General Committee
<b>GE</b>	General Election
<b>GMB</b>	General, Municipal, Boilermakers, and Allied Trade Union
<b>JC</b>	Jeremy Corbyn
<b>LDP</b>	Liberal Democratic Party of Japan
<b>LGA</b>	Labour Group on the Local Government Association
<b>LGBTQ</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer
<b>LOTO</b>	Leader of the Opposition's Office
<b>MEP</b>	Member of the European Parliament
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>MU</b>	Musicians' Union
<b>NEC</b>	National Executive Committee
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NUM</b>	National Union of Miners

<b>ÖVP</b>	Austrian People's Party
<b>PLP</b>	Parliamentary Labour Party
<b>PSOE</b>	Spanish Socialist Workers Party
<b>PVV</b>	Party for Freedom
<b>SVP</b>	Swiss People's Party
<b>TSSA</b>	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
<b>TULO</b>	Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation
<b>UCATT</b>	Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
<b>Unite</b>	Unite the Union
<b>USDAW</b>	Union of Shop, Distributive, and Allied Workers
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
<b>VVD</b>	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

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