PARTYCRAFT AND THE LABOUR PARTY

LEADERSHIP OF JEREMY CORBYN

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<u>Intellectual Property and Publications Statement</u>

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The euphoric ups and disappointing downs from following Bath City, Bath Rugby, Sheffield Steelers, Northern Superchargers, Leeds Rhinos, Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia Phillies, and Lewis Hamilton/Lando Norris.

Finally, the time I write this thesis is during a time where transgender rights are under attack in the United Kingdom, and the political establishment have thrown trans people under the bus for cynical political gain. I believe unequivocally that there is no LGB without the T, and trans rights are human rights: that trans men are men, that trans women are women, that non-binary people are non-binary, that every trans person should be able to live their live without fear of prejudice, and that trans healthcare should be accessible and fully funded. To all the LGBT+ people in my life: you are loved, you are valid, and you are seen. Today, every day, and always.

Abstract

Jeremy Corbyn's election as party leader marked a seismic moment in Labour history. Where Aneurin Bevan and Tony Benn failed, Corbyn was able to succeed in becoming leader of the Labour Party from the left of the party, being elected on a platform of pro-nationalisation and anti-austerity economics following Labour's 2015 general election defeat. His leadership faced many challenges, including a hostile Parliamentary Labour Party, the issue of Brexit dividing his own party and voter base, and criticisms of the handling of antisemitism in the party. Corbyn's Labour Party were able to win 40% of the vote and deny Theresa May a Parliamentary majority in 2017 yet, 2 years later, with the issue of Brexit dividing the country further, Labour lost over 2.5 million votes and the Conservative Party won their largest Parliamentary majority since 1987. Party leadership models have been used to analyse the effectiveness of political party leadership, however there is a research gap in regard to analysing the effectiveness of opposition leaders. To analyse the effectiveness of Corbyn's leadership, Bulpitt's Statecraft model has been adapted to look at opposition leaders. This adapted leadership model is known as the Partycraft model. Partycraft looks at the following criteria: acquisition of leadership, party management, positioning, and competence. Using the aforementioned criteria, this thesis will utilise the Partycraft model, and substantial research questions, to look at the effectiveness of Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

'You really don't have to worry about Jeremy Corbyn suddenly taking over'

- Tony Blair, 1996

Jeremy Corbyn's leadership will be remembered in the history books, both by his supporters and opponents. A backbench MP, with 200-1 odds on becoming leader according to the bookmakers, was thrust into the spotlight by winning the 2015 Labour leadership election by a landslide. Throughout his time as leader, his leadership was opposed by much of the Labour's Parliamentary Party but supported by a large portion of the party's grassroots and the wider labour movement. The debates over his leadership were intense during his tenure, and discussions about Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party will continue to evoke strong and passionate disagreements for years, and even perhaps decades, into the future.

1.1 Research topic

This thesis will assess the effectiveness of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party from 2015 – 2020. This research is important because Corbyn has been subject to a significant amount of criticism both from the mainstream media and from within his own party (Cammaerts et al, 2017). The rationale for looking at Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party stems from many different factors.

Firstly, his election as leader was an unexpected outcome when he first entered the leadership contest. Given the outcome of the two leadership elections that he subsequently won there was a clear support base for Corbyn within the party including a widely pro-Corbyn membership and trade union base (Asthana, 2016a; Smith, 2019a).

Secondly, his leadership of the party coincided at a time of profound political turmoil within British politics. The issue of Brexit was an existential crisis for the party which caused enormous division not just within the Labour Party itself but also the relationship between the party and their traditional voter base. This, combined with the issue of the handling of antisemitism in the party, tested the unity of the Labour Party (Johnson, 2019).

Thirdly, his leadership challenged the political status quo within the Labour Party and wider British politics. Corbyn shifted Labour from a party which supported austerity measures to unequivocally opposing austerity, and he aimed to bring voters with him by promoting policy arguments such as making the case for nationalisation and redistribution of wealth.

Finally, his leadership was a source of contentious debate, with opponents within the party and much of the mainstream media seeing him as a flawed leader. The idea that a leader of the Labour Party will receive criticism is, of course, not a new concept. However, some who are sympathetic to Corbyn's leadership argue that the volume and intensity criticism of Corbyn has been greater than other leaders, with his children even going so far to claim that Corbyn was the 'most smeared and vilified politician in history' (Forrest, 2019). There was also a strong and vocal anti-Corbyn, or Corbynsceptic, presence within the party. Corbyn faced relentless attacks by this Corbynsceptic wing of the party, and their attacks impacted the way Corbyn was perceived by the wider public. This includes the hostile Parliamentary Labour Party PLP (78% of whom called for a vote of no confidence in him in 2016) and ~40% of Labour members who did not vote for him for leader in either 2015 or 2016 (Johnston, 2020). Corbyn also received criticism from the mainstream media which impacted on his public image, with some media outlets such as The Sun accusing him of being a terrorist sympathiser, colluding with a Czech spy and being called a communist. Some of these claims were repeated to Labour activists

knocking on doors in election campaigns (Hawken, 2019). Corbyn led the Labour Party in two general election campaigns. In 2017, Labour was setting the narrative on economic issues and appealed to a wide section of the population (Pogrund and Maguire, 2020, 5; Smith, 2017). However, the 2019 election result effectively ended the Corbyn project with a large defeat for Labour in what some call 'the Brexit election'. Corbyn did better than many political commentators expected in 2017 but, by 2019, led Labour to the fewest number of MPs since 1935.

1.2 <u>Existing literature</u>

Before exploring the research questions in the substantial chapters on acquisition of leadership, party management, positioning, and competence, it is essential to summarise academic literature on Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. This is to identify research gaps which the thesis will address, and how the findings of the thesis will contribute to the wider discussion on the history of the Labour Party, leadership of political parties, and British politics from 2015 – 2019. These sub-sections, identifying existing research and research gaps, will look at journalistic perspectives of Corbyn's leadership, and academic perspectives on party membership, policy change, media representation, political sciences biases, and campaigns in relation to Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

1.2.1 <u>Journalistic perspectives</u>

Corbyn has been fascinating for both academics and the media and is therefore written about fairly widely, although the study of Corbyn has not always been balanced or flattering. Richard Seymour, a commentator more sympathetic to Corbyn's outlook, argued that, 'a combination of factors, including the decline in the Labour Party, a strong social media campaign and how Corbyn built up a wide coalition of precarious workers, trade unionists and young people led to a socialist, for the first time in Labour's history, managing to win and define the role of

leadership within the party' (Seymour, 2016). This shows that Corbyn was able to build up a coalition of voters to sweep him into the party leadership, however Seymour also identified that Corbyn had strong opponents who wanted to capitalise on any opportunity to undermine his leadership. Seymour pointed out that Corbyn inherited a party in crisis with major opponents in his own party and in the mainstream media that would be out to consistently attack his leadership, a point which was made before the 2016 EU referendum which had some validity given the scrutiny from the party and media in the following months and years (Seymour, 2016). Just one month after this book was published, a leadership challenge against Corbyn was declared.

Owen Jones, another pro-Corbyn voice and journalist who was close to the Corbyn leadership team, discussed in his 2020 book 'This Land' the many successes during Corbyn's period as leader, including the 2017 general election result alongside the leadership elections. He also discussed the failures of his leadership including the 2019 general election and argued that the 'leader's office had started to crumble over Brexit, antisemitism, communications and strategy' (Jones, 2020). Although Brexit may have been a unique situation for Corbyn to deal with it is not a surprise that a political opposition leader must deal with some big issues, for example Michael Foot campaigning against Margaret Thatcher in the aftermath of the Falkland Islands conflict and Neil Kinnock claiming he felt 'helpless' during the Miners' Strike (Shipton, 2014).

Patrick Maguire and Gabriel Pogrund also wrote a summary of the Corbyn years from 2017-2020, writing from a non-Corbyn supporting perspective. They looked at how divisions in the party grew over the years including on Brexit, antisemitism and how the Independent Group, a breakaway group of some Labour MPs, was formed. It also looks at the polarising nature of

Corbyn as a figure who was deeply admired by supporters but loathed heavily by detractors (Maguire and Pogrund, 2020).

Investigative journalist Tom Bower wrote a very critical biography of Corbyn based on eyewitnesses who have known Corbyn throughout his life in the book 'Dangerous Hero: Corbyn's Ruthless Plot for Power'. Bower has previously written deeply critical biographies of Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Bower states that 'Corbyn has concealed or distorted the nature of his close relationship, his personal life and prejudices' so Bower's book is an attempted exposé of Corbyn's life. Bower discusses Corbyn's personal life from his holidays in Jamaica and Guyana to his relationships, claiming that Corbyn's brand of socialism is 'Marxist-Trotskyist' and arguing that Corbyn has a problem with Jewish people due to his associations with 'holocaust deniers, terrorists and outright antisemites'. Bower paints a negative image of Corbyn and questions his ability to be in power, even quoting a former friend of Corbyn who said: 'he's not fit to be leader of the Labour Party, and not fit to be Britain's Prime Minister' (Bower, 2019). Bower's book, however, received criticism from some including from conservative writer Peter Oborne who stated:

> 'We (journalists) should strive to be accurate… make strong arguments but ought not to distort the truth… Tom Bower fails catastrophically to meet these standards… his new book on Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn contains numerous falsehoods… Bower has made an astonishing number of factual errors – more than I have ever come across in a book form a mainstream publisher' (Oborne, 2019).

Whilst journalistic sources are useful for looking at the popular view of the Labour Party, it is important to take a more academically focused approach to analysis of Corbyn's leadership,

specifically in terms of leadership selection, policy change, the division between members and the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the opposition to Corbyn within the PLP, media coverage, antisemitism, biases and Corbyn's electioneering.

1.2.2 Party membership

The 2015 leadership contest utilised a new model of voting within the party, something which has been evaluated by several academics. Thomas Quinn analysed the leadership election by using Stark's leadership model which focuses on 'acceptability, electability and competence'. Quinn concluded that Stark's model failed because 'electability' was not a major factor in the 2015 leadership election (Quinn, 2016).

Tim Bale argues that he didn't see Corbyn as the person most likely to win the contest even up until the final day but that the Corbynite critique of the Labour Party over the years struck a chord with many members as 'there was an appetite for something more authentic, less nervy, boxed-in and, quite frankly, boring than the "festival of waffle" on offer from the irredeemably beige candidates who stood against Corbyn in the summer of 2015' (Bale, 2016b). Bale argues that Corbyn filled a vacuum that was left by the other candidates and was able to do so because of a dissatisfied membership (Bale, 2016c: 18-19). It could be argued that Bale overlooks Corbyn's ability to appeal to Labour members, implying that he won simply because he was different rather than because members were won over by his policy platform, his campaign and him personally.

Peter Dorey and Andrew Denham describe the 2015 leadership election as 'the longest suicide vote in history', a play on words on Gerald Kauffman's comment on the 1983 Labour Party manifesto. Dorey and Denham argue that the eligible voters in the contest from the extra-

parliamentary party, including unions and members, voted in the contest based on ideological purity over potential electability whilst MPs wanted somebody who could unite the party and was best suited to win an election (Dorey and Denham, 2016).

1.2.3 Policy change

Whilst some academics such as Hilary Wainwright and Peter Dorey have claimed that Corbyn's policy platform was radical, Rob Manwaring and Evan Smith argue that although there were changes from the manifesto prior to his leadership in 2015, when it comes to looking at historic Labour manifestos it can be argued that Corbyn's platform is essentially a continuity platform in a Labour tradition, that is to say that Corbyn's platform compliments other manifestos and builds on them rather than radically changing what Labour have historically stood for (Wainwright, 2017; Dorey, 2017). They argue that viewing Corbyn as a radical outsider, in comparison to previous party leaders, may not be entirely accurate (Manwaring and Smith, 2020. It is hard to measure what 'radicalism' is, but it could be argued that Corbyn is the first Bennite candidate to take charge of the Labour Party whilst also arguing that his platform comes from a historic Labour tradition rather than an entirely new and radical vision. Liam Byrne argues that Corbyn's policy platform helped Labour achieve their better than anticipated result in 2017 by managing to present a clear and coherent alternative to the Conservative government at the time and managed to offer a vision for the future that was achievable and could be implemented (Byrne, 2019). This vision appealed to a large portion of the wider population as Labour received 12.8 million votes in the 2017 election, the highest number of votes for the party since 2001. However, it should be noted that the Conservatives still ended up as the largest party in the 2017 election and this analysis fails to take into consideration the problems the Conservative Party faced in that election. For example, Theresa May's failures in the campaign including being criticised for not attending a TV debate and the

debate around the 'Dementia Tax' which may have impacted the result alongside the popularity of Corbyn's platform (Mortimore and Atkinson, 2018, 91).

Mark Perryman, in his book 'the Corbyn Effect', looks at how Corbyn managed to change previously held assumptions on voting behaviour. He argues that a country, such as the UK, that that had supported pro-austerity and low-tax reforms over the last period of time would not vote for left wing policies, yet Labour achieved a huge increase in their share of the vote in the 2017 election (Perryman, 2017). What is clear is that Corbyn inspired some people with his policy platform, most notably the wider Labour membership who voted for him to be leader of the party on two occasions in the 2015 (where Corbyn won with 59.5% of the vote) and 2016 (where Corbyn won with 61.8% of the vote) leadership contests.

An increased party membership can mean more resources, and activists, to help strengthen local and national campaigning. Before Corbyn became leader of the Labour Party the membership figure stood at around ~250,000 members (Audickas, Dempsey and Loft, 2019). By January 2016 this figure had rose to ~388,000 and by July 2017 reached a peak of 575,474 members (Audickas, Dempsey and Loft, 2019; Audickas, Dempsey and Keen, 2018). The long-term downward trend in Labour membership since the New Labour years (even though membership slightly increased under Ed Miliband's leadership) was reversed and membership grew enormously under Corbyn's leadership. Whiteley et al explained that the huge increase in the Labour membership was a result of many 'left behind' voters joining the Labour Party for the first time, primarily to vote for a leadership candidate who offered a new style of politics and a radical agenda. This was combined with some former members re-joining the party to support Corbyn's left wing platform and promote a more anti-capitalist agenda. The Corbynite strategy did not take the approach of moving to the centre ground to perhaps try to appeal to

voters who may have previously voted Conservative or Liberal Democrat but instead aimed to mobilise left wing people who may have supported progressive alternatives such as the Green Party and SNP (both of which oversaw an increase in membership from 2010 – 2015) or perhaps did not vote because they previously saw no party that represented their ideology (Whiteley et al, 2018).

Patrick Seyd noted that this doubling in the membership challenged the idea that membership of UK political parties is in terminal decline and that this societal trend was turned on its head because of the surge linked to Corbyn's leadership (Seyd, 2020). It is clear that there was a huge increase in membership under Corbyn's leadership and that he managed to build an electoral base within the party made up of pre-leadership election members, former members, and new members to win two leadership elections.

Corbyn not only filled a vacuum in the leadership contest by representing the left of the party, but he also seemed to inspire people to rally behind his campaign, join the party and vote for him. This membership, however, broadly held a different opinion of Corbyn to much of the PLP. Roe-Crines et al evaluated the opinion of the PLP from 2015-2017 and found that the PLP was not made up of clear factional groupings. Instead, a wide range of individuals and groups opposed Corbyn due to his views on immigration, nuclear weapons, and military intervention. Additionally, many objected to Corbyn becoming leader because he 'was too divisive, too unelectable, and his competence was too widely questioned, to make him a credible candidate to be Prime Minister' (Crines et al, 2018: 17). Additionally, they believed the membership got the decision wrong in the 2015 leadership contest. These views were held despite the fact the membership could potentially deselect MPs. The fear of deselection does not appear to have been a strong motivation to remain loyal to Corbyn (Crines et al, 2018). Whilst many members

did not agree with the decision made by the PLP (as they voted in support of Corbyn again), the members did not revolt en-masse against MPs who wanted to oust Corbyn, perhaps because Corbyn called to unite the party and his supporters wanted to listen (BBC News, 2016b).

1.2.4 Media representation

There seems to be a broad consensus amongst the academic community that the media coverage of Corbyn as an individual and his party leadership was broadly hostile, although this was an observation which has been made of many Labour leaders and perhaps, as James Thomas noted, it can be seen as conflict between a socialist (or a party sympathetic to socialism) Labour Party vs a capitalist press, for example the attacks from the media on Neil Kinnock in 1992 (Thomas, 2007).

Cammaerts et al noted 'the overall conclusion from this is that in this case UK journalism played an attackdog, rather than a watchdog, role', that is to say that the press would routinely attack Corbyn and offered a distorted view of him as a person instead of fairly holding Corbyn to account and fact-checking what he says (Cammaerts et al, 2017). One example of this, according to Andrew Panay, is an article written by the Daily Mail called 'Prime Minister Jeremy Corbyn and the 1000 days that Destroyed Britain' which was a hostile piece towards Corbyn promoting the myths of declinism and the idea that Corbyn would create an anti-utopia. Panay notes that fear is used as a way to persuade people for or against a certain political cause and that the Daily Mail used fear as a way of trying to get voters to not support Corbyn: 'The Mail Online piece operates according to this by presenting through a speculative fiction an account of a Corbyn led government descending irrevocably into a dystopian nightmare of economic and social collapse' (Panay, 2017).

Iszatt-White et al take a slightly different approach and stated that during the 2015 leadership election, Corbyn was treated as an authentic potential leader. However, the press 'framed Corbyn as inauthentic' due to the fact that leadership requires making inauthentic compromises – therefore they are entitled to scrutinise any individual's leadership capabilities and how effective he would be as a leader (Iszatt-White et al, 2018).

1.2.5 <u>Political sciences biases</u>

When it comes to biases many believe that some political commentators and political scientists have a certain bias against Corbyn. Peter Allen, for example, states that there has been a traditional Westminster Model focus on electoral politics in the United Kingdom and a demand for fast paced judgements in politics whilst, in reality, academics should take a slow and reflective approach:

> If we as academics should even be indulging in a mode of public political discussion that encourages fast-paced judgements and that simply uses us as commentators on fleeting events or controversies. Should we rather not instead aim to engage in a critical way – thinking slowly, reflectively, more academically? (Allen, 2020: 83)

The rise of Corbyn could not be understood within the usual mechanisms and, Allen argues, many felt that because he couldn't be understood then he shouldn't be understood (Allen, 2020: 83).

Bice Maiguascha and Jonathan Dean's work supports the viewpoint that Corbyn's rise to power broke conventional norms by arguing that political scientists have failed to understand Corbyn

and the movement he inspired. They argue that some political scientists try to explain Corbynism by stating it is hard left and populist by nature, yet this is not supported by the available evidence. They both scrutinise the dominance of the Westminster Model and argue that political scientists should try to better understand what Corbynism is: a complex movement that has arisen from a growing left movement combined with Labourism rather than solely based off the utterances of Corbyn as an individual (Maiguascha and Dean, 2020).

Building on this, Dean and Maiguascha's 'Corbyn's Labour and the Populism question' argues the 'depiction of Corbynism as populist… is highly superficial' (Dean and Maiguascha, 2017: 4). This is because none of the three key elements that recur in much of the populism literature – the centrality of "the people" as an organising political category, a heightened antagonism between two unified camps, and charismatic leadership – can be found in Corbyn's politics' – others have tried to equate Corbynism to populism as a way to delegitimise non-centre ground politics and that those who support the ideals of Corbynism should push back against this attack line (Dean and Maiguascha, 2017: 4).

The perspectives on academic biases are interesting to note, however they do not position Corbyn within his leadership environment where, despite strong grassroots support, he received minimal support from his Parliamentary colleagues. In regards to the political sciences biases debate, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive overview of Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party and, whilst noting aspects of the Westminster model (including how Corbyn operated in a political environment with a hostile Parliamentary party), it also notes the importance of the wider movement including the grassroots of the Labour Party who propelled Corbyn into the party leadership and reinforced his mandate in the second leadership election.

1.2.6 <u>Campaigns</u>

Corbyn fought two general election campaigns, losing both. However, he was able to demonstrate his abilities as a campaigner. His skills in fighting elections are a key part of his time as leader and therefore need evaluating. Dorey explains that the 2017 general election was an example of Corbyn defying expectations, and he stunned many of his critics. Dorey states that Corbyn's appearances on traditional and social media helped counter the negative press attention he received. The more he appeared in the eyes of the public the more the public could hear him explain his own views and the policies of the party. He also points out that the priorities of Labour voters differed from supporters of the Conservative party and that Corbyn's campaign helped gain an unprecedented level of support amongst younger people and this is backed up with polling from IPSOS Mori stating that 62% of 18-24 year olds voted Labour under Corbyn in the 2017 election (Skinner, 2017). These factors helped achieve a result that was initially unexpected and rocked the political establishment (Dorey, 2017).

Eunice Goes argued that the result 'challenged the idea that electoral campaigns and party ideologies do not matter and that most voters base their electoral choices on valence issues and on the personality of leaders' (Goes, 2018: 69). Corbyn managed to tap into the public mood regarding austerity, taxation, and the size of the state. Many voters, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey, wanted more public spending and an end to perpetual austerity (Goes, 2018).

Jonathan Mellon et al also concluded that the 2017 election was a 'Brexit election' but that Labour saw a rise in support as the party won votes from remain voters (including Liberal Democrat voters), leave voters (including the UKIP vote which almost entirely collapsed) and previously undecided voters because of the campaign. 'The trends show May's ratings

precipitously declining throughout the campaign with Corbyn's rising commensurately. By the end of the campaign the two leaders were rated almost equally (Mellon et al, 2018: 15). This impacted on voter behaviour as 'the increase in Corbyn's popularity appears to have minimized the amount of switching between 2015 and 2017 by reassuring previous Labour voters, and retaining votes won by Labour prior to the campaign' (Mellon et al, 2018).

Whilst the 2017 election was a better than expected result for Labour the election that followed certainly was not. In Goes' 2017 article she predicted that Brexit would expose Labour's divisions. Goes stated in 2019 that Brexit had heavily influenced voting behaviour in the election and voters had seen a lack of leadership from the Labour Party on the issue of Brexit which affected how the voters viewed Corbyn and the Labour Party as a whole (Goes, 2020). Corbyn was unable to bridge the gap between remain voters and leave voters and the failure for Labour to adopt a clear position on Brexit, which unified the party and had clear message discipline, ultimately damaged the party in an election where the main issue was seemingly about the issue of Britain's relationship with the European Union. Ultimately the 2017 campaign was a strong election for Corbyn, who manged to take away May's majority. However, by 2019 the issue of Brexit dominated the agenda for years and Corbyn was unable to unite his party around a clear Brexit stance and thus was unable to create a path to power, not to mention that the Conservatives maintained strong support in both 2017 and 2019 by emphasising the importance of delivering Brexit.

1.3 <u>Research design</u>

To address how political scientists should interpret Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, this thesis proposes an academic model inspired by ideas underpinning Bulpitt's Statecraft model for governing parties: the Partycraft model. Instead of analysing governing parties, Partycraft instead looks at issues relating to opposition leaders including legitimacy to lead via

the acquisition of leadership, party management, policy positioning, and political competence. This thesis will utilise the Partycraft model and look at four substantive questions via four substantive chapters; acquisition of leadership: how did Corbyn acquire the party leadership and did he have a strong mandate to lead?; party management: was Corbyn effective at managing the Labour Party?; positioning and decision making: was Corbyn able to shift the Labour Party on key political issues?; and competence: was Corbyn an asset or a liability for the Labour Party?

1.3.1 Research methods

This thesis will be an empirical study drawing from academic and journalistic sources to formulate the Partycraft model. It will also be a case study looking at Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party as the example, however future research utilising the Partycraft model could use different case studies of historic or contemporary opposition party leaders.

Robert Elgie's Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies looks at an interactionist approach, and institutional analysis, of political leadership by looking at how leaders operated in the political environment of six different case studies: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Unites States of America, Japan, and Italy. Elgie concluded that 'in all six countries the leadership process was influenced most significantly by the set of elements under the heading of institutional structures' and that the effectiveness of leadership depends 'between leaders and the leadership environment with which they are faced' (Elgie, 1995, 191). The analysis noted the leadership environment of institutional structures included constitutional powers in central government, the relationship between the different branches of government, and the relationship between political parties including party leadership and organisational structure of political parties (Elgie, 1995, 192). This shows that there is a link between the environment a leader operates in and the effectiveness of party leadership. Although the political

environments of central government and relationship between different branches of government don't apply to Corbyn's leadership, as he never held this form of political power, Elgie's discussions about political party structures links to Corbyn's position within the Labour Party as, although Corbyn had the capacity to influence as leader, he was curtailed by a hostile institutional Labour Party including the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party who opposed his election as leader alongside a hostile Labour HQ, and an initially hostile Labour National Executive Committee and General Secretary (this power, however, shifted throughout Corbyn's leadership from hostile to supportive). This lack of institutional support, despite strong support from party members, shows that Corbyn's leadership was ineffective and that, if he had a stronger mandate amongst Parliamentarians, then he would've been stronger leader.

One area of academic discussion to look at, regarding methods, is the structure-agency debate. Agency, in this case, relates to how autonomous actors act upon situations and they construct the social world around them. On the contrary, structure, in this case, looks at how the social world moulds individuals and their subsequent actions (Sibeon, 1999, 139). Stuart McAnulla looks at the importance of structure-agency in relation to analysing political science and how the debate 'concerns the issue of to what extent we as actors have the ability to shape our destiny as against the extent to which our lives are structured in ways out of our control; the degree to which our fate is determined by external forces' (Marsh and Stoker, 2002, 271). Roger Sibeon has noted that political scientists hold different opinions on the structure-agency debate, with some believing agency is 'the paramount feature of social life', others believing that structure is more important, some arguing that the structure-agency debate should be withdrawn, and some believing that they are 'two sides of the same coin' or that agency and structure melds 'into one, instead of regarding them as a dualism' (Sibeon, 1999, 139).

Corbyn was in his position as Labour leader when much of the media proactively opposed his leadership from the moment he was elected as party leader, there was a hostile Parliamentary Labour Party (with 78% of Labour MPs opposing his leadership via a non-procedural no confidence vote), and the issue of Brexit dominated British political discourse. These factors can limit how a leader can operate, so if a structure approach is to be taken then Corbyn is limited by the hostile external factors around him, whilst an agency driven approach would suggest that Corbyn has the influence to mould the environment around him, and failure to do so would suggest that he is an ineffective leader. It is also the case that, in relation to the structure-agency discussions, Corbyn was able to work certain structures well but others poorly, not to mention that structures can, for example, reconstitute themselves under leadership. For example, Corbyn was able to operate well in the leadership elections under 'one member, one vote' and made structural changes to the Labour Party e.g. the composition of the NEC and other widespread reforms introduced in 2018, however he could not deal with other internal structures such as the Parliamentary Labour Party where, in this case, there was minimal agency in which he could execute. An interactionist approach links well to the structure-agency debate as the political environment is linked to the way in which a leader operates, an effective leader may be able to operate well within institutions but can be limited by internal and external factors.

The approach to this thesis is qualitative focused alongside supplementary quantitative data. Having a standardised approach, as used in quantitative research, is helpful to reproduce data and generalise it to the wider population. This is, for example, particularly useful with opinion polling data which can be analysed objectively (including scrutiny of methodology). However, a quantitative approach can be limited as complicated political environments with many nuances, for example the period of British politics from 2015 – 2019, cannot be wholly

explained by numerical data. A qualitative approach, on the other hand, allows for topics to researched in-depth which allows complicated information to be explained beyond numerical data. Whilst there can be issues with a qualitative approach, including the risk of researcher biases impacting the research, this approach works well overall for this thesis due to the complex nature of the political environment during this time period, and that a combination of both methods of research are utilised to help construct a strong understanding of the topic.

The thesis will largely rely on academic and journalistic literature to analyse Corbyn's leadership. There has been a vast amount of information published about his leadership, with a growing number of academic papers published following the conclusion of his leadership. These sources will be utilised in each chapter to answer the aforementioned substantive questions. Hannah Snyder notes that literature reviews can 'help provide an overview of areas in which the research is disparate and interdisciplinary', this will be helpful when looking at an overview of the Corbyn leadership (Snyder, 2019). One qualitative method that will compliment literature in the research is the use of opinion poll data. Many opinion polls were conducted before and during the Corbyn leadership of the party in relation to Corbyn as a leadership candidate, voting intentions in elections, personal popularity of Corbyn and much more. Using this data will be very helpful to complement statements that will be made in the research. Opinion polls can help track the mood of the public at the time, they are easy to access, can be compared and contrasted over time and they will help add useful information to the research. The problem with opinion polling is that not all polls are accurate, for example due to insufficient sample sizes or not finding a representative sample of the population, they could use leading questions which would not be good for wider research or there could be transparency issues due to polling companies not publishing their methods.

One limitation which impacted data collection, and what was possible to achieve at the time, were the COVID-19 lockdowns in the United Kingdom. The research began before the COVID-19 lockdowns began and, although work was written after lockdowns had concluded, over half of the initial allocated time to write the thesis took place during the three national lockdowns/restrictions in the country at the time. There was uncertainty, and a changing timetable, over when the lockdowns would end, so using qualitative analysis, by being able to access online resources which was easily accessible at a time when some resources were difficult to access, was helpful throughout the research.

Whilst there are strengths to using interviews as a data collection method, including the potential to acquire unique data and finding out in-depth information, interviews have not been used in this thesis. Knott et al state that interviews are a 'particular type of conversation, guided by the researcher and used for specific ends' (Knott et al, 2022). One problem with interview data is that researchers may have their own biases and, because the researcher is guiding the conversation, this could lead to their own biases impacting the outcome of the interview, leading to answers which may be different in comparison to other interviewers. These is called 'interviewer errors' which are, according to Davis et al, 'data collected by either a specific individual interviewer or a specific set of interviewers may be different than data collected by another individual or set of interviewers administering the same questionnaire to a sample from the same population of respondents' (Davis et al, 2010). Interviews can also take a lot of time to conduct, transcribe and analyse, so utilising this method alongside the amount of time to look at academic and journalistic sources was not feasible for this thesis.

Focus groups also can help collect useful data for political scientists. Whilst it was possible to organise focus groups (although likely held virtually due to the impact of the COVID-19

lockdowns for a certain time period writing the thesis), they were not necessary for this research as there was a large amount of quantitative and qualitative data to analyse Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party e.g. opinion polling, results of elections, and discussions about his leadership from supporters and opponents. Therefore, it is difficult to see where original data could've emerged from focus groups for this specific thesis. Whilst interviews and focus groups have not been used in this research, they could be used in future research to build upon the findings in this thesis and the wider discussions about Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

1.3.2   Research questions and research argument

To first become the leader of a party an individual must acquire the position in the first place. Some leaders have acquired their position without a leadership contest and there could be a few reasons for this, including mass support for their candidacy and not enough support for a second person to lead to a leadership contest (such as Gordon Brown in 2007) or being the only person to put their name forward. However, when looking at the main British political parties, leaders usually acquire their position through a leadership contest. In that leadership contest a leader will have to appeal to the people who have the power to secure them the role so looking at the way they identify and then appeal to their target audience will be an important aspect of the study. If they can appeal to a specific target audience, then they could have the ability to adapt their campaigning to a wider audience. However, what could also be considered is that a leader has exceptional capacity to appeal to a specific audience within their party but whose characteristics do not appeal to a wider audience (which will be looked at in the electioneering chapter). Another reason why looking at the acquisition of leadership is important is because the way a leader wins a leadership contest can have consequences throughout their leadership of the party. For example, Ed Miliband won the 2010 leadership contest by a very slim margin against his brother David Miliband and in some public appearances that followed he was asked

'do you not think that your brother would've done a better job?' including in a televised debate between Ed Miliband and David Cameron in the run-up to the 2015 general election (Channel 4 News, 2015). On the other hand, a leader might win a leadership contest by a large margin due to the support of some key voters, but the leader might lack support amongst other important audiences. For example, Corbyn won the 2015 leadership contest by a large margin composed largely of members and affiliated members but receiving little support from fellow Labour MPs (who had the power to force a leadership challenge and they ensured one happened in 2016). The first chapter will analyse Corbyn's Labour leadership elections and look at the following question: how did Corbyn acquire the party leadership and did he have a strong mandate to lead? Areas in which the chapter will cover will include how Corbyn won the 2015 leadership election and   how he maintained his position as leader despite almost 80% of his own MPs demanding that he should resign by looking at the 2016 leadership election. This chapter will also cover leadership rule (including rule changes), and analysis of existing academic framework looking at party leadership contests.

The leader of a party not only has a responsibility to represent the party in and out of Parliament (if they have Parliamentary representation) but also to manage their party too. Different parties have different structures, but the leader plays an important role in each party. The Labour leader has a seat on the National Executive Committee (NEC) which provides the strategic direction of the party and deals with many affairs, although it should be noted that the role of Labour's NEC has changed over time which has impacted its influence. If the NEC's collective power contrasts with the leader then potentially problems could arise, and the leader's position could be weakened. How influential the supporters and opponents of the leader are could be another aspect to look at because if opponents of the leader hold key positions they could use that to undermine the leader. However, this could also show the ability of a leader to reach out to their

sceptics and win their conditional support perhaps by making concessions or a leader might find ways to weaken the positions of sceptics by, for example, putting supporters in their place or weakening the positions that their sceptics hold, for example demoting sceptics from the shadow cabinet and replacing them with allies. A key example of this is Corbyn building a broad shadow cabinet made up from people from all wings of the PLP, Duncan Hall even dubbed it 'the broadest-based Shadow Cabinet during my membership of the Labour Party, in political terms' (Hall, 2015). However just 9 months later the vast majority of the shadow cabinet would resign in the aftermath of the EU referendum. The next chapter will, therefore, analyse party management by looking at different factions within the Labour Party to see which different organisations actively supported and opposed Corbyn's leadership. The chapter will look at the question: was Corbyn effective at managing the Labour Party? This will require looking at discussions over the history of Labour factionalism from Bevanites vs Gaitskellites to Corbynites vs Corbynsceptics, looking at Labour MP's voting behaviour under Corbyn's leadership, and analyse the difference in opinion towards Corbyn's leadership from the Parliamentary Labour Party to the extra-Parliamentary wing of the party (i.e. party members, trade unions).

All leaders make commitments during leadership campaigns and that includes Corbyn: for example, he wanted to push certain policies such as public ownership, free education, nuclear disarmament and party democratisation in the 2015 leadership contest, and their ability to get their core beliefs adopted or promoted by the party will be looked at in depth. One aspect to look at is how influential the leader is by looking at whether they achieved their goal of winning political argument within the party, in particularly looking at domestic policy, Brexit, and the handling of antisemitism. Sometimes a leader may be highly successful in getting the party to adopt or support certain policies but might have to compromise on some issues which may be

central to the beliefs of the leader. Corbyn, for example, was able to promote public ownership and free education in the general elections he fought but was unable to take his party with him on nuclear disarmament, which was not in either the 2017 or 2019 manifestos due to the fact the Labour Party's conference voted to maintain Trident (Watt and Mason, 2015). There were also longstanding and intense debates about how the party should handle their position on Brexit following the EU referendum and the handling of antisemitism. This third chapter will look at whether Corbyn gained dominance of debate within the Labour Party by discussing how Corbyn influenced the internal debate in relation to domestic policy, Brexit, and the handling of antisemitism. The substantive question that the chapter will aim to answer will ask whether Corbyn was able to shift the Labour Party on key political issues. In 2015 the Labour Party offered a pro-austerity manifesto, however, under Corbyn, the party shifted to an unequivocally anti-austerity stance in both the 2017 and 2019 elections. Why did this happen and did Corbyn 'win the argument'. The section will also look at the internal fight with regards to Brexit by looking how the policy shifted over time. In the 2017 general election Labour offered a soft Brexit stance and this remained for a long time, however this shifted to a pro-second referendum stance (with a party split happening in the meantime via the Independent Group for Change and a very poor European election result in 2019). Despite this Corbyn still managed to win debates at conferences including defeating the pro-remain Motion 13 and winning the motion in support of the leadership (Motion 14) at the 2019 conference. Finally, the chapter will consider the handling of antisemitism in the Labour Party by looking at academic perspectives, scrutiny of Corbyn's past, and analyse various reports which looked at the handling of antisemitism in the party.

Whilst the acquisition of leadership, party management and positioning criteria will touch upon how a leader/supporters of the leader do in internal elections (such as leadership contests and

other internally election positions) this section will look at how well a leader performs in public votes such as potential local elections, European elections, by-elections, general elections, and referendums. The leader of a political party is highly influential in campaigns and their campaigning, or lack thereof, can impact the performance of a party in an election. The performance of the party should be analysed and compared to previous electoral performances, how well the party/the issue in question in a referendum does and looking at the role of the leader in campaigns , perhaps looking at how often they appeared in the media, how many times the leader was out in public (perhaps looking at the number of areas they visited alongside vote share in those areas compared to areas where the leader did not campaign), perceived perception whilst out campaigning and other factors. The fourth, and final, substantive chapter will look at competence and whether Corbyn was an asset or a liability for the Labour Party. This chapter will look at how Corbyn's Labour fared in by-elections, local elections, the 2016 EU referendum, the 2017 general election and 2019 general election. In 2017 the Labour Party received their highest share of the vote since 2001 and had the highest increase in the share of their vote since 1945, yet, just 2 years later, Labour received the fewest seats they have acquired since 1935. Why did this happen? One aspect that will be considered is the hostility Corbyn received from much of the media. Right from the start of his leadership much of the media attacked Corbyn as somebody who was unpatriotic, supportive of the IRA and too far left (to name a few), one study of interest is Loughborough University's research showing that press hostility towards Labour in 2019 was more than double what it was in 2017 (Deacon et al, 2019). This chapter will also look at opinion polling data in relation to Labour's polling and Corbyn's net satisfaction ratings in comparison to the Conservatives, Conservative leaders, and previous Labour leaders. The chapter will also look at how Labour promoted their vision to the country during Corbyn's leadership, and how Corbyn maintained core support despite declining public support.

1.3.3   Research model

There is no definitive method to measure how a leader of a party can make their leadership of a party successful. The Partycraft leadership model has been constructed to answer the research questions, and to evaluate the effectiveness of opposition party leaders, however political scientists have created several leadership models to be used in numerous different political systems around the world. This section will analyse those leadership models which were created, or can be adapted, in reference to the UK Parliamentary political system.

An influential leadership model based on the US Presidential system is Fred Greenstein's components of Presidential leadership model. Greenstein first used this model in 2000 when analysing the personal and political attributes of Presidents of the United States of America from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Bill Clinton, looking at their successes, failures, characters, and personal qualities (Greenstein, 2000). Greenstein focused on six different criteria to measure their success and suitability to lead.

The first measurement was their effectiveness as a public communicator, that is to say how well a leader can communicate their message to the wider public via public speeches, the media, and their own staff (Greenstein, 2000: 179-180). Another quality to look at is a leader's organisational capacity: how a leader could build an effective team around them and how the leader communicated with their staff. Ideally a leader would hire people who are skilled and would not be 'yes men'. A leader would also delegate responsibilities appropriately (give jobs to people who can fulfil the task rather than people who could not do it) and ensure staff would give the leader enough information to ensure decision making was effective (Greenstein, 2000: 181-182). The third criterion is a leader's political skills, specifically how a leader can pass legislation in a divided or stalemated political system (Greenstein, 2000: 182). Next, a leader

needs a policy vision that has the capacity to inspire people and ensure that their policies appear feasible to the wider public (Greenstein, 2000: 183). The fifth criterion was looking at the cognitive style of a leader, that is to say that the leadership model would look at the cognitive intelligence of the US President and how they use it (Greenstein, 2000: 183-184). Finally, Greenstein looked at the emotional intelligence of US Presidents, he concluded that a Presidential candidate who lacks emotional intelligence should be avoided as, even though they can have good moments (such as Nixon and Clinton) everything they achieve may fall apart quickly (Greenstein, 2000: 184).

Greenstein's leadership model shows that it is hypothetically possible for a US President to be a great communicator who is intelligent, can build an effective team, can use their powers as President to their advantage, build policies and be a strong political operator. However, in the real-world humans are flawed and no one individual can probably possess all these characteristics. This model is not just used for US Presidents but has also been adapted for British Politics as well. Kevin Theakston has used this model for British Prime Ministers (in work published alongside Byrne) and, specifically, on the premiership of Gordon Brown from 2007-2010 because the criteria formulated by the model can be applied not just in an American setting but also a British setting too. This shows that the model can be adapted for use within the British Parliamentary setting and to analyse the leadership of British political leaders, as Theakston did with Brown (Theakston, 2011). Whilst this model focuses on governing leaders (notably US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers), Tim Heppell utilised the Greenstein model to analyse the performance of post-war opposition leaders, replacing Greenstein's criterion of political skills with 'party management' as it was more suitable for analysis of the British political system (Heppell, 2012, 5). Whilst party management will be discussed in this thesis in relation to the Partycraft model, a weakness of the Greenstein model, and why this model

won't be used in this thesis, is that the Greenstein model, according to Thomas McMeeking, 'concerns the issue of context, a question which of itself goes to the heart of the structure-agency debate, and Greenstein's failure to explicitly acknowledge its importance' (McMeeking, 2018: 66).

Another leadership model is Mark Bennister's Leadership Capital Index (LCI). The model draws on the idea of political capital and defines that 'leadership capital' is 'the extent to which political office-holders can effectively attain and wield authority' (Bennister et al, 2014). The LCI is made up of a 10-point Matrix to examine the authority of a leader and has been used in different political contexts from Germany, the UK, the USA, to name a few. The 10 criteria are:

- Political vision

- Communicative performance

- Personal poll rating relative to rating at the most recent election

- Time in office

- Election/re-election margin for party leadership

- Party polling relative to the most recent election

- Levels of public trust in the leader

- Likelihood of a credible leadership challenge within 6 months

- Perceived ability to shape the party's policy platform

- Perceived parliamentary effectiveness

Each criterion is rated from 1-5 with 1 being a low score and 5 being a high score (e.g. for policy vision 1 = completely absent whilst 5 = very clear/consistent). Each criterion receives a

score before the total score from all 10 criteria is added up. Once the scores are aggregated then the LCI scores can be interpreted; a final score between 0-20 means the leader has depleted capital and is on the edge of removal (e.g. Julia Gillard in the months prior to her removal in 2013); 20-30 means the leader has low capital which means they are 'politically weakened but still capable of some action' (e.g. John Major from 1994-1997); 30-40 means the leader has medium capital which means they are facing obstacles/divisions but are able to operate well in the right environment (e.g. Barack Obama following his re-election in 2012); 40-50 means the leader has high capital which means a leader has good party cohesion and has momentum with them (e.g. Steven Harper following his 2011 re-election); and finally a score between 50-60 means the leader has exceptional capital which means they have personal dominance and/or have just had an electoral landslide and/or are able to navigate with 'good crises to have' (e.g. Helmut Kohl following the Berlin Wall collapse). The higher capital a leader has the more likely they are to succeed within the own party and, indeed, the wider country (Bennister et al, 2014). The LCI model is helpful when looking at governing leaders, however this model would be problematic for analysing opposition leaders as this would require a party focus rather than a governmental focus.

The final model to look at is Jim Bulpitt's Statecraft theory. Bulpitt designed the model in 1986 in reference to Thatcher's Conservative Party. Essentially, the Statecraft model looks at the art of winning elections and how competent a leader can be whilst in government (Bulpitt, 1986). The model claims that parties don't have ideologies but what really matters is gaining power and winning elections and how to achieve that.

There are five dimensions to look at to understand Statecraft properly. The first dimension looks at party management: how a leader balances the interests of backbench MPs, the internal

party structure, constituency associations and pressure groups that are broadly in support of the party. The party decides who the leader will be, and an effective leader will need to broadly win support from all sections within the party (Bulpitt, 1986: 21). Secondly, a leader needs to have an effective electoral strategy, not just coming up with a policy platform and moulding an image which will look good in the eyes of the wider electorate but also build a platform that will unite the party and mobilise the membership by showing that a leader can win an election and govern competently (Bulpitt, 1986: 21). Thirdly, Bulpitt looked at political argument hegemony or winning political arguments in a variety of locations either by making certain arguments be seen as widely acceptable or more credible than the opponents of the leader in and out of the party (Bulpitt, 1986: 21). Fourth, Bulpitt looks at governing competence. Governing isn't just about what governments adopt but what they choose not to adopt, perhaps due to ideological differences but also even if they agree with a policy they might not be able to implement it because the opposition is so strong, so governments need to find a way to implement policy and navigate their way through their problems and external forces that aim to stop them (Bulpitt, 1986: 22). Finally, a governing party needs to have another winning electoral strategy to win an election and form a government (Bulpitt, 1986: 22).

Essentially a leader needs to be good, or at least avoid being bad, in relation to the previously mentioned criteria. Whilst the starting point of Statecraft is a party in power looking to maintain it, the end point is staying in power. Statecraft has not just been used to analyse Thatcher's premiership, but the model has also been used to analyse other leaders too. Jim Buller and Toby James have utilised the Statecraft model to analyse Tony Blair's leadership of the New Labour governments, noting that Blair was 'very successful from a statecraft perspective' because he 'won three full parliamentary terms in a row' and his leadership 'significantly altered the methods by which the party fought elections, reforms that remain in place to this day' but that

'his success was achieved in a favourable context' including Blair's Labour leadership beginning with a healthy lead in the polls and a 'comparatively tranquil' global financial environment (Buller and James, 2011).This analysis also notes that Labour's 'election winning machine was much more the produce of reforms pioneered by Mandleson and Gould in the 1980s', and that some of Blair's decision-making, especially in relation to the invasion of Iraq, had 'adverse consequences for Labour's electoral position' and 'his own personal reputation' (Buller and James, 2011).

Simon Griffiths is critical of Statecraft, stating that the theory 'acts as a straightjacket to a better understanding of British Politics' due to its 'ontological, epistemological and methodological problems' (Griffiths, 2015). Griffiths argues that there are four key problems with Statecraft:

'First, Statecraft provides an ontologically narrow account of the goal to which politics is directed. Second, it makes an epistemologically problematic claim over the 'main bias' of political actors (winning elections). Third, Statecraft theory implies a questionable and limited set of means to reach that goal. Fourth, Statecraft focuses attention on an unhelpfully limited group of actors and excludes others from our understanding of politics' (Griffiths, 2015).

Richard Hayton, in defence of Statecraft, addresses these points from Griffiths. Whilst noting that there is an 'analytical bias against the role of political ideas', a limitation of Statecraft based on the 'narrow account' noted by Griffiths, Hayton notes that, Statecraft has utility if applied carefully (Hayton, 2015: 2). Hayton also responds by stating that winning elections is 'a key priority of many politicians, and certainly those who hold the leadership positions in the major parties that have traditionally competed to hold office at Westminster', that the four

broad aspects of Statecraft are helpful in academic discussions (instead of restrictive) as a plurality of factors can be discussed within each of the aspects, and that the focus on the 'limited group of actors' isn't an inherent problem with the Statecraft model itself but, instead, is 'more of a reflection of the complexity of politics in practice' and that 'a focus on the analysis of the political elite is justified, to better understand strategic and ideological thinking by those in power, and by shedding light on their actions and decisions better to hold them to account' (Hayton, 2015: 3; Hayton, 2015: 4; Hayton, 2015: 5).

Toby James notes the 'added value' in which Statecraft has for theories of institutional change, however James also notes that academic criticisms that Statecraft can't be disproved, that the concepts in the model are 'vague and ill-defined', the model is reductionist, and that social change is 'multi-casual but statecraft (sic) is an account of change which is organized (sic) by and around the interests of one actor' (James, 2016: 2; James, 2016: 3). To address these concerns, James outlined an updated version of the theory, named Neo-statecraft, which adds three contributions to academic discussions relating to institutional change:

> 'First, it offers an agent-led form of historical institutionalism which overcomes the common criticism that historical institutionalists underplay the creative role of actors. Second, the approach brings back into focus the imperatives of electoral politics as a source of institutional change which is commonly missing from historical institutionalist work. Third, it provides a macro theory of change. Neo-statecraft theory can therefore identify previously unnoticed sources of stability and change, especially in states with strong executives and top-down political cultures' (James, 2016: 2)

Nathan Critch rejects the neo-Statecraft approach on the basis that 'criticisms of statectaft are often rooted in a somewhat narrow, partial reading of Bulpitt's ideas' (Critch, 2024: 2). Critch notes key criticisms of Statecraft, namely that the theory is 'politicist and narrow', but states that these criticisms are based on a 'partial reading of Bulpitt's work' (Critch, 2024: 2). To address these concerns, Critch offers a 'broader conceptualisation' which 'engages with Bulputt's wider corpus' to reground the theory (Critch, 2024: 1). Critch believes that the Statecraft theory can be best understood by incorporating Bulpitt's wider work alongside 'engaging with critical political economy literature which has drawn on the statecraft interpretation', and that including this wider body of literature to help understand the Statecraft model, instead of a neo-Statecraft approach, provides an interpretation of Statecraft which 'has significant utility in being a framework' instead of a 'straightjacket' (Critch, 2024: 10).

Bulpitt's Statecraft theory, whilst not universally supported by political scientists, is a well-established model for looking at governing parties in the UK. However, this model cannot be applied to oppositions parties. This leaves space for a leadership model, built upon Statecraft, to look at how an opposition leader can be successful in running their party and building support within and outside of the party. Whilst the Statecraft model itself cannot be used, an adapted model broadly based on Statecraft can be designed so we can measure the effectiveness of opposition leaders: the Partycraft model. The central question the Partycraft model needs to answer is: how can we measure the effectiveness of a leader of a UK opposition party, in this case looking at Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party leadership. Partycraft utilises aspects of Statecraft, for example the discussions over party management alongside political argument hegemony in Statecraft to analyse governing leaders are similar to the discussions over party management alongside positioning and decision making for opposition leaders as these wider discussions can apply to both governing and opposition parties. However, Partycraft is also distinctive from Statecraft as some criteria in the latter cannot be applied to the former,

therefore different criteria are needed. Governing competence, for example, can not apply to opposition party leaders as they are not governing, so discussions over competence for opposition leaders, instead, focus on whether a leader is seen as an electoral asset or liability for their party. This approach also differs from Statecraft as discussions over election winning strategy are analysed within discussions in relation to competence instead of discussed as a separate criterion. Another aspect to consider, which was noted by Richard Hayton, is that 'ideological considerations are an important facet of statecraft decisions.. ideology influences how actors interpret the political context they face and also forms part of that context' in relation to the Statecraft model, and the role of ideology can also apply to Partycraft too as the way opposition leaders operate can be influenced by the ideology of the leader (Hayton, 2015).

1.4 <u>**Summary**</u>

This chapter has looked at why this research should be conducted by looking at the significance of the Corbyn years in British political history and the goal of establishing a new leadership model to analyse the effectiveness of Corbyn's leadership. This model, Partycraft, can also be potentially used by political scientists in the future to measure the effectiveness of any opposition leader, showing that this original contribution can have a lasting impact on the academic community.

There is a wide range of literature looking at the wider situation of the left, academic writing on Corbyn's Labour, biases which have been promoted by some in the academic community and how Corbyn's Labour fared in election campaigns. All contributions will be taken on board when writing this thesis so different sources from different backgrounds can be pooled together to help look at the background on the situation and answer the question on whether Corbyn was an effective leader. It has also been important to look at some of the models of leadership

that are currently available within the academic community, from the Greenstein model, Bennister's Leadership Capital Index and Bulpitt's Statecraft model, to see how they function, how well established they are within the academic community and see whether there is space for an adapted version of an established model. The Statecraft model is particularly interesting to look at given that the decades old theory is still being used to this day, however this model is only useful when looking at governing parties and cannot be applied to opposition parties. The new Partycraft model, however, is an updated and adapted version of Statecraft specifically designed to be used to assess the effectiveness of opposition leaders, including Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party.

The central research question in this thesis is: how effective was Corbyn as a leader. To answer the central question there will be four substantive questions to consider: how did Corbyn acquire the party leadership and did he have a strong mandate to lead (acquisition of leadership)?; was Corbyn effective at managing the Labour Party (party management)?; was Corbyn able to shift the Labour Party on key political issues (positioning and decision making)?; and was Corbyn an asset or a liability for the Labour Party (competence)? All of the answers to these questions will help answer the central question over Corbyn's effectiveness as leader. Each chapter will look at every research question extensively and the thesis will conclude by looking at whether Corbyn was an effective leader according to the Partycraft model.

When it comes to methodology, literature and polling data will be used throughout to thesis to answer the substantial questions presented throughout the chapter. Existing academic and journalistic perspectives will provide a helpful insight in each chapter, and polling data can

help quantify the support Corbyn and Labour received throughout his time as leader and can be helpful when comparing his support to other leaders.

This chapter serves as an introduction of the idea of Partycraft and why Corbyn's leadership should be analysed. The next chapter will look at the one of the criteria of effective leadership and an important research question: the acquisition of leadership. To be an effective leader one must, of course, gain the position of leadership in the first place – how did Corbyn, who started the 2015 leadership contest as a 200-1 outsider, manage to defy expectations and win the Labour leadership election by a landslide of 59.5%?

Chapter 2: Acquisition of leadership: how did Corbyn acquire the Labour Party leadership and did he have a strong mandate to lead?

'Corbyn's victory is an earthquake in the history of Labour.. senior party figures see the win as a catastrophe'

- Begoña Arce (el Periodico), 2015

2.1 Introduction

The acquisition of the leadership is an important criterion in the Partycraft model because the way in which a leader wins a leadership election can have consequences in the long term, therefore to answer the question regarding whether Jeremy Corbyn was an effective leader of the Labour Party it is important to note how he became leader in the first place. A large victory, for example, may ensure the security of the party leader in the role but they still may be challenged if they do not appeal to certain influential people, for example Corbyn acquiring a large mandate from the majority of the selectorate but gaining little support from other Labour MPs. A smaller victory, on the other hand, could lead to questions over their mandate, for example political commentators noting that Ed Miliband had won the 2010 Labour leadership contest due to the 'union vote', and an audience member during the 2015 election stating to Miliband directly that 'your MPs didn't want you as leader, your members didn't want you as leader, the only reason why you got there (sic) and now they're holding you to ransom (Landin, 2015; BBC Three, 2015).

Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader marked a monumental shift within the party (Bastani, 2020c: 28). The left of the party, after many decades of trying and failing, were finally able to take power at the top of the party and attempted to form a new socialist vision. What were the events that led to this moment and why did this result happen? The leadership election

result defied the assumptions of the public, many political journalists, political scientists, opinion pollsters and, indeed, many Labour MPs and activists. Corbyn started the campaign as a 200/1 outsider according to the bookmakers and managed to scrape his way onto the ballot (he required 35 nominations from Labour MPs) with just 10 seconds to spare (Nunns, 2018). To get the last two nominations John McDonnell, a long-time friend of Corbyn who would later end up as his Shadow Chancellor, got on his knees in tears and begged Labour MPs to put Corbyn on the ballot by saying 'party members want to be able to vote for a candidate of their choice… we've all got a responsibility here!' (Nunns, 2018). The situation went from a scenario where a Corbyn leadership looked unlikely, to winning the leadership contest by a comfortable majority in just a matter of months.

This chapter will offer an academic insight into how and why Corbyn's campaign was successful in 2015 and will look at whether he had a strong mandate to lead the party. Firstly, it will look at academic literature and assumptions on leadership selection within the Labour Party. This will look at the various voting systems which have been used throughout Labour's history, how and why the Labour Party changed from its electoral college to a 'one member, one vote' ballot prior to the 2015 leadership election and put the election of Corbyn as Labour leader into a wider historical context.

Next, the chapter will look at the campaigning period from May 2015 to September 2015 which will profile the leadership candidates and their ideological backgrounds, the strengths and weaknesses of each leadership candidate before and during the contest, why Corbyn was seen as an 'outsider' in the campaign whilst Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper and (to a lesser extent) Liz Kendall were seen as the 'insiders' and the implications of this, and explain why Corbyn

went from a 200/1 outsider to eventual winner by looking at what happened during the campaign and the shifting opinions of eligible voters in the contest.

The chapter will also look at the result of the Labour leadership election and break down who, from the 251,417 votes (out of 554,272 eligible voters), voted for Corbyn to be leader of the Labour Party – this includes looking at the huge increase in the number of people who joined the Labour Party during the contest (members, registered supporters and affiliates) to see their impact on the contest.

The final part of the chapter will look at how Corbyn's victory is positioned within wider academic framework by looking at models proposed by Leonard Stark (his model of acceptability, electability and competence), John D. May (his law of curvilinear disparity) and Andreas Murr (his party leadership model).

2.2 <u>Existing academic debates and assumptions on leadership selection in the Labour Party</u>

The main way academics have approached Labour Party leadership elections is by offering agency driven accounts, that is to say that they explain why the contest is held in the first place, they give a profile the candidates, explain the campaigning period (what happened and why), who and why did a candidate win the contest, who made up the base of the winning candidate and the mandate of the leadership candidate that won. The history of rule selections is also important to analyse because the rule changes throughout the party's history has diluted the influence of the Parliamentary Labour Party towards the Labour grassroots, and this was significant by the time of the 2015 Labour leadership election as the 2014 rule changes opened the opportunity for a candidate like Corbyn to perform well in a leadership contest.

Alderman and Carter, for example, do this in their analysis of the 1992 leadership election. Labour lost their 4th successive election in a row and Neil Kinnock, whose personal unpopularity was perceived as an electoral liability, resigned as soon as possible to kickstart a quick leadership contest. Some candidates emerged to replace Kinnock, one of whom being John Smith: who was the only member of the Shadow Cabinet to serve in government. Bryan Gould also decided to run for the leadership and the deputy leadership of the party, and finally Ken Livingstone ran to become leader as the Socialist Campaign Group candidate. Alderman and Carter also discussed how the 1992 rules were more significant than previous elections due to the increased threshold from 5% to 20%, how potential candidates (such as Gordon Brown) were put off from standing due to the new rules, the implications of the nomination process (Ken Livingstone was not on the ballot as the Socialist Campaign Group only mustered up the nominations of 13 MPs when they needed 55) (Alderman and Carter, 1993).

The campaign was also heavily discussed in their research from the result being seen as a foregone conclusion long before the nomination process. Smith received a lot of media coverage as he was already the shadow chancellor, and his base was the vast majority of unions (38.5% out of 40%), almost unanimous support from CLPs (29.3% out of 30%) and around ¾ of Labour MPs (23.1% out of 30%) whilst Gould's base was virtually non-existent (Alderman and Carter, 1993).

The 1992 Labour leadership election was also arguably a one sided contest with a foregone conclusion, however the 2010 leadership election was much closer than most people expected and the outside favourite, Ed Miliband, beat the frontrunner, David Miliband, by a small margin. Dorey and Denham's examination of the 2010 Labour leadership contest gives a historical background of the role of MPs in leadership contests from 1906 – 1981 followed by

a discussion of the background of the electoral college (the voting system used in the contest), this is then followed by explaining why the contest went ahead (Gordon Brown resigning after the 2010 election), the candidates who put their name forward, the campaigns, how each candidate viewed the 'New Labour' years (the government which was just elected out of power and what they thought its legacy was), each candidates' vision for the post-New Labour era, the closing of the gap between the Miliband brothers and the result (which looks at how MPs, affiliates and CLP members voted) and why the votes were cast as they were (Dorey and Denham, 2011).

These agency driven accounts also focus on how the institution of the Labour Party is run and the internal structures that establish the leadership contests. This includes the rules and debates on nominations (which will be looked at towards the end of this section), membership participation and the link between the Labour Party and the wider labour movement via the union link. Wickham-Jones, for example, looked at the party-union link in the 1994 leadership election by pointing out that the introduction of 'one member, one vote' into the electoral college may have reduced the role of trade unions. However, the leaders of the unions were still highly influential in the contest due to their power to nominate individual candidates in the 1994 leadership and deputy leadership elections (Wickham-Jones, 2013). He also stated, in a piece published alongside Jobson, that unions intervened in the 2010 leadership contest.

Unite the Union, widely considered to be a union whose leadership was to the left of the leadership, sent out messages to eligible voters in the contest to support Ed Miliband for leader, this move was considered to be game changing as the union support meant nominations were co-ordinated and resources were pooled into his campaign. This support was big enough to determine the outcome of the result due to the closeness of the campaign because the practical

support from the union helped Miliband reach out to swing voters in the contest (Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011: 6).

When looking at the structures of the Labour Party it can be useful to compare to the party structures of similar centre-left parties in countries across the world. Bennister and Heppell, for example, discuss how removing a leader in the Australian Labor Party requires a different strategy compared to the British Labour Party. They looked at the 'non-removal' of Gordon Brown and how opponents used informal pressures (e.g. the fallout of the expenses scandal and the poor result for Labour in the 2009 European elections) as a way to try to remove Brown and compared that to the removal of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard in the Australian Labor Party via the party's formal procedures which was more difficult to achieve in the British Labour Party due to the differing internal mechanisms (Bennister and Heppell, 2016).

A very important aspect, when looking at the structures of the Labour Party, is to look at how Labour have chosen their leader since 1900. For over three quarters of a century the people who would decide who would become leader of the Labour Party were its MPs and only the MPs. It can be argued that the leader of a Parliamentary party needs to have support from their Parliamentary colleagues to be successful, therefore MPs electing the leader ensures that the PLP have a leader that they select and can work with day in and day out. Although this voting system works well for the PLP it ignores the wider party from the membership to the wider trade union movement, the affiliated organisations and wider membership could not cast their ballot so had to exercise their voices by lobbying these Members of Parliament and that was the best way they could lobby for change, this was effective when the trade union influence in the Labour Party was strong or when lobbying MPs with close trade union links. For many reasons, to be discussed throughout this section, this voting system would change in 1981 and

the voting system would continue evolving throughout the decades in a process of democratisation of the party. Quinn noted there have been 8 changes to Labour's nomination rules within 117 years, 4 of them before the 2015 Labour leadership election with reforms, over time, stepping towards more democratisation of the party (Quinn, 2018).

2.2.1 Change from Parliamentary votes to the electoral college (1981)

In the 1970s left wing activists campaigned to extend the franchise in leadership elections beyond the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). The left wanted to allow the wider party, including trade unions and the membership, to have a say on who would be elected as Labour leader via an electoral college in a bid to further democratise the party and ensure MPs didn't have a monopoly on power at the top of the party. In 1980, a commission set up by the National Executive Committee (NEC) recommended adopting an electoral college, however the major trade unions dominated the commission, and the exact recommendation was rejected because of the way the votes would be divided up and wanted other proposals, which gave more powers to the unions, to be approved instead. Although this proposal was rejected the principle of the electoral college was accepted (Quinn, 2004).

In 1980 conference voted to extend the electorate beyond the PLP but, again, could not agree on how the votes would be divided up. A special conference was organised for January 1981 to settle this discussion, however during the time between the 1980 conference and the 1981 special conference James Callaghan resigned as leader and a leadership contest (won by Michael Foot) would, for the last time, be held under the Parliamentary ballot rules. The contest had split the right and the left wanted to take advantage of this at the special conference. The right of the party proposed that 50% of the vote would go to the PLP block vote, 25% for the affiliated block and 25% for a CLP block vote. However, they were defeated and the winning

formula decided was that CLPs and the PLP would get the same amount of votes (30% each) and the affiliated block (including unions) would have the greatest influence (receiving 40% of the vote).

The introduction of the block vote angered many on the centre and right of the party including Shirley Williams who proclaimed that the next Labour leader would 'be chosen in smoke-filled rooms' (Broxton, 2020). Also involved were a series of stages including an eligibility requirement (only MPs can run for leader), a nomination process (a candidate initially needed the support of 5% of MPs), a simple majority at conference would be required to trigger a contest when in government (to minimise the chance of the leader being challenged) and, at the meeting of the electoral college, there would be a formal ballot. Leadership contests would be held annually, the left wanted this to lower the costs of challenging the incumbent which would increase their influence on the leader and candidates would have to join a leadership ballot at the beginning of the contest rather than join in later (Kogan and Kogan, 1982: 96).

The rule changes, after fiery debates at conference, passed with 6.2 million votes for the reforms and 431,000 votes against. David Owen called the reforms a 'disgrace' and said the country would see it to be a totally undemocratic and illegitimate method whilst Tony Benn and other figures on the left welcomed in a new democratic era (Broxton, 2020). It seemed that the left were delighted with more democratisation and empowering the membership whilst opponents were worrying about the consequences and claimed that, instead of being more democratic, it would actually be less democratic due to the fact the wider party would be listening to members instead of elected representatives and the wider public.

The reforms significantly reduced the influence of the PLP (going from 100% of the vote to 30%) and significantly increased the influence of unions and the wider membership. Advocates of greater party democracy welcomed the reforms as they achieved the extension of voting rights that they have demanded for years (Quinn, 2018). Members and unions contributed to the party via campaigning and donations, and now they had a say on how the party is run. William Cross and André Blais note contributions from academics stating that the introduction of the trade union vote was 'a radical departure from the tradition of unions exercising restraint in internal party decision-making and instead focusing their influence on industrial policy' (Cross and Blais, 2012: 24). However, the decreased influence of the PLP meant that MPs, who work with the party leader within Parliament, might not end up with their preferred leader. This could be problematic for the leader if the MPs rebel against the result of the leadership contest, however the overall reforms also increased the job security of the incumbent leader. The reforms were a victory for the left as they were becoming more organised in CLPs and the unions, both of which were then given more power in the leadership contest (Quinn, 2012). As Quinn puts it: 'the median voter in the electoral college would be to the left of the median Labour MP' (Quinn, 2014).

Matt Beech, Raymond Plant, and Kevin Hickson note, in 'The Struggle for Labour's Soul', that reforming the election of leader to include 'the while movement created a stable secure leadership' (Beech et al, 2018: 256). This is because the reforms 'placed the leader beyond the possibility of intrigues and coups from within the Parliamentary Labour Party' and 'this change was a necessity for the survival of the Labour Party' (Beech et al, 2018).

2.2.2 <u>Increasing the threshold to 20% (1988)</u>

Following the election defeat of 1987, Tony Benn, a prominent left wing MP, challenged Neil Kinnock for leadership of the Labour Party so the left could attempt to 'wrestle back control of the party' (Quinn, 2018). The electoral college ensured more control was given to members, however it looked like Benn wanted the left to have more control in the party and the only way to do this would be to challenge the leader.

The election went ahead, and the debates were brutal over those months with harsh words being exchanged by both campaigns.

Table 1: 1988 Labour leadership election

Candidate	Votes
Neil Kinnock	Affiliates: 5,605 (99.2%) CLP: 489 (80.4%) PLP: 183 (82.8%) **Total: 88.6%**
Tony Benn	Affiliates: 48 (0.8%) CLP: 119 (19.6%) PLP: 38 (17.2%) Total: 11.4%

Source: Johnston, 2022

A clear majority in all sections of the Labour Party, from members to affiliates to the PLP, wanted Kinnock to remain as leader. In response, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) persuaded delegates at the party conference that followed to raise the nomination threshold from 5% to 20% to make future leadership challenges harder to enact (Benn received the nominations of 17.2% of MPs, meaning that, if this system was in place before, he would not have been able to force a leadership challenge).

One strength of this reform, in the eyes of the incumbent leader and their supporters, is that their position was now given increased security given that it would be harder to force a leadership challenge, previous to the reforms hypothetically 95% of the PLP could be behind the leader but it would take just 5% of MPs, a very small number, to enact a leadership election, but now if a faction has fewer than 20% of MPs then they would not be able to challenge. However, if a faction were to dominate in the membership and affiliates but not the PLP then their voice would effectively be side-lined when it comes to the issue of the leadership of the party. The leadership of the party is important due to the power and influence of the leader, supporters of the reforms essentially help cemented the position of leadership in their ideological favour whilst the left, who were against raising the threshold, saw this as an attempt to block the left from gaining power right at the top of the party.

The reforms passed and a consequence of this was that the left of the Labour Party, at the time, were weakened. One potential consequence of this reform is that the left of the party would only be weakened if they did not hold significant influence in the PLP. Hypothetically, if many MPs on the right and the centre were to stand down in a future election and there was a large uptake of left wing Labour MPs then they would, instead, hold the balance of power when it comes to nominations.

2.2.3 Further changes to the electoral college (1993)

Following the general election defeat in 1992 many within the Labour Party wanted to change the link between the unions and the party. Some people who wanted reform believed that the party-union link was a reason why voters did not trust the party – the condemnation of the unions throughout the Thatcher years cut through to many voters and many were concerned that union domination of the Labour Party and the claimed that the party were run by the

unions. John Major, Prime Minister at the time, claimed the unions were 'calling the tune' (Wintour and Harper, 1993). Both the PLP and unions accepted the need to change the relationship, so the NEC set up a review to look at the party-union link and reform the electoral college.

The NEC, after many discussions, decided to change the weight of the votes from 40%-30%-30% to giving each voting block (MPs, CLPs, and affiliates) a third of the vote each. Alongside reweighing the votes, it was decided that the block vote in the affiliates and CLPs would be replaced with postal ballots of levy payers, a form of 'one member, one vote'. Previously the unions could cast all their votes towards one candidate regardless of the results of internal consultation ballots or not even having a ballot at all – however this changed so that levy-payers within unions had to post their own ballot which would then be counted in the final ballot. This reform took the power away from the union leadership and moved It towards the wider membership of the unions and allowed members of the Labour Party and unions themselves to directly vote for the leader, this was done to increase the power and influence of ordinary union members and take power away from union leaders. The only reform to the Parliamentary voting system was that Labour Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were given the same power as MPs, their votes would be worth exactly the same and they would also be part of the nomination process too. Reform of the threshold also happened as well – although the 20% threshold remained for challengers the threshold for a contest with a leadership vacancy became 12.5%.

One benefit of the reform, in the eyes of advocates of democratisation, is that the 1993 reforms led to increased power of individual members and union members, they now had a direct vote in the Labour leadership election and could have their voice heard in the contest. This was yet

another step towards the democratiation of the party. However, although individual union members had more of a say in the wider union movement, who were large contributors to the party, the union leaders now had decreased influence with the loss of the block vote. The union leadership could no longer unilaterally decide what direction they wanted the Labour Party to move as they now needed to win over their own members – although their influence was decreased, they still had the power to nominate leadership candidates, could shortlist Parliamentary candidates and retained 70% of the vote at conference (Timmins, 1993).

The battle for 'one member, one vote' was a raging and brutal discussion in the party, this included an explosive 80 minute debate at the Labour conference which could have swung either way. Smith, who earlier in the day was worried about losing, brought in John Prescott to back in up in an attempt to win over votes at the conference. Prescott reassured the conference that Smith had no ulterior motive to weaken the unions and begged the conference not to destroy his leadership to loud applause (Wintour and Harper, 1993). Prescott's speech may have been received well at the event but the vote was still going to be too close to call, so one idea which was proposed was that the motion on 'one member, one vote' was combined with a pledge requiring half of winnable seats with no sitting candidate to choose a woman to be the Parliamentary candidate, aiming to increase the representation of women in the party with a quota system. The Manufacturing and Science Finance Union opposed 'one member, one vote' but had long advocated quotas, therefore they abstained in the final vote. Their vote, or lack thereof, was enough to impact the outcome of the motion. If they had decided to vote against the motion then 'one member, one vote' would not have passed, but because they abstained the motion passed by 3.1%, their share of the vote at the conference was 4.5% (Haddon, 2012: 162). With Prescott begging people not to turn on Smith, a backroom deal was agreed, however

this motion split a union and allegedly led to a Labour MP pinning a member up against the wall and threatening to punch them (Stuart, 2005).

The extending of the franchise over the years not only happened within the Labour Party but numerous parties across Europe. Some would argue that the logic is that giving more autonomy to party followers gives them more incentives to campaign for the party and that more competition for votes means that parties will shift policy positions which gain the support of more floating voters. Another consequence of the reforms was that the media would have a larger role in influencing the outcome of the results given that party members and union levy-payers would directly vote whilst, in the past, block votes meant that public debate was not as important. Overall, the reforms aimed to increase the autonomy of the PLP, reduce the influence of unions and publicly distance the party from the unions in the eyes of the wider electorate (Quinn, 2004).

2.2.4 Collecting nominations from MPs to challengers (2010)

The next reforms to the voting system came 17 years after the last reforms because no reforms on the selection of the leader had taken place during the New Labour administrations, this is because parties in power rarely make these internal changes whilst they are in office because their priority is to govern rather than seek internal reform and why should a party change a system that has proven to work and is arguably not a policy that will help gain support from the wider public?

When Labour were back in opposition changes were proposed which included increasing the Labour leader's security in office by changing the nomination process of challenging an incumbent. The wording changed from 'where there is no vacancy, nominations shall be sought

each year' to 'where there is no vacancy, nominations may be sought by potential challengers'. Previously this meant that backbenchers could propose a leadership challenger. However now this meant that a challenger had to actively seek nominations and do their campaign in the spotlight when, previously, they could deny responsibility by saying that backbenchers were acting on their own accord rather than theirs (Quinn, 2018).

The reform certainly benefits the incumbent leader because the possibility of a challenge is, in all likelihood, reduced because MPs who aren't completely sure whether to challenge are likely to err on the side of caution and backbenchers cannot start their own rebellion without somebody metaphorically 'sticking their neck on the line'. However, if a rebellious MP is planning on challenging the leader, then they would have to essentially go into the public eye with their intentions as soon as possible rather than having other MPs doing the work for them behind the scenes. This means a lot of negative publicity straight way which could damage the party, whereas in the past a challenge could be discussed behind the scenes until a plan, if there ends up being one, is finalised.

2.3 'Changing the rules, changed the game': The significance of the Collins Report on the New Selectorate

The previous electoral systems remained in place until Lord Collins was asked to make recommendations for party reform in July 2013 following an incident in Falkirk CLP (Constituency Labour Party) (Collins, 2014). Eric Joyce, then-MP for Falkirk, had the whip withdrawn after he punched Stuart Andrew MP and Phil Wilson (Labour assistant) on a night out (Seddon and Beckett, 2018). After announcing that he would not be seeking re-election to be Labour's candidate there was a nomination process to find and select a new candidate. There was controversy around the selection process after allegations that Unite the Union recruited

members in the constituency to help a specific candidate. This row led to Labour's NEC intervening in the candidate selection and the candidate in question was suspended from the party (Seldon and Finn, 2015: 548). This led to a series of events which would lead up to the creation of the Collins Review, written by Lord Collins, in 2014. The Collins Review would not just shake up the leadership rules but also intended to change the relationship between the Labour Party and the wider trade union movement in regard to the internal functioning of Labour, including only allowing full paying Labour Party members to vote in Parliamentary candidate selections when previously trade union affiliates who were not Labour members could vote (McHugh, 2015).

The Collins Review recommended changing the Labour leadership election voting system from the electoral college to 'one member, one vote' where members, affiliates, and registered supporters (who would pay £3 to vote in a Labour leadership contest) would all have one vote each, this would mean MPs and affiliated organisations would have less of a say in the contest (Gauja, 2016: 5). The reason why the changes were made, according to Ed Miliband, was to transfer power to members and supporters (claiming that an MP's vote is worth 1,000 times more than a party member), allow supporters of the Labour Party to have a say in leadership contests without becoming a member, and reform the link between the unions and the Labour Party (Sparrow, 2014).

The Collins Review was opposed by the left of the Labour and the union movement, such as the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, including Jon Lansman, who went on to found the pro-Corbyn Momentum group, and the Bakers' Union, as they worried it would impact the link between trade unions and the Labour Party (Lansman, 2014; Sparrow, 2014). One measure was that the way funding of the Labour Party from the unions would change, going from the

executives of the trade unions paying affiliation fees towards the Labour Party based on levy payers to trade unionists 'opting in' by giving their consent to pay fees to Labour. This 'opt in' measure could have meant that the number of trade unionists eligible to take part in the leadership election would have reduced drastically as the assumption was that an 'opt in' rather than an 'opt out' system would mean less people would participate – this, in turn, would weaken the sway of the trade union vote in a leadership contest, a discussion which has been touched upon numerous times within the Labour Party for decades (McHugh, 2015). Even though 'one member, one vote' was passed in 1993 there is a difference between the two systems. In the 2010 election, for example, 2.7 million union members, many of whom did not support Labour, were able to have a say in the leadership contest, however this time the reforms would mean this would change and potentially weaken the union link (Sparrow, 2014). Dorey and Denham noted that 'the greatly reduced voting weight ascribed to Labour MPs was matched by the corresponding reduction in the trade unions' former role in the electoral college', however they also state that the Collins Review 'considerably increased the influence and proportional strength of the extra-parliamentary party because it ensured that potentially 100,000s of affiliated or registered supporters would each cast a vote' (Dorey and Denham, 2016: 267).

Young Labour, representing 25,000 Labour members from the ages of 14-27 opposed the reforms by just one vote at their youth conference in Bradford in 2014 (Landin, 2014). The conference also voted to pressure the Labour Party to support public ownership of the railways and proposed taxing the wealthiest 10% of people by 10% of their wealth via implementation of capital controls, showing that the organisation had embraced a strong left wing ideology (Landin, 2015). However, although some figures on the left of Labour and Young Labour opposed the reforms, most members and affiliates supported the reforms because they were

seen to make the party more in touch with ordinary workers. The decision to implement was made via a special conference where 86% of delegates supported the reform (Sparrow, 2014). A large number of people were able to vote in the contest due to the rule changes; 105,973 people joined Labour after the 2015 general election loss, many were new and returning members; 112,799 paid £3 to have a say in the contest via registered supporter status (83.8%/88,449 registered supporters voted for Corbyn in the contest) and 148,182 people were able to vote in the Labour leadership contest because they were affiliated supporters due to being members of trade unions and socialist societies who are part of the Labour Party (LabourList, 2015b). Before the contest there were around a quarter of a million members, but after the contest began 553,594 people were able to vote in the contest, many of whom were supportive of Corbyn's candidacy, some of whom were former members who re-joined that party and others were new members who were won over by Corbyn's vision for the party (Garland, 2015: 87). Many advocates of 'one member, one vote' came from the right of the party as they thought the reforms would weaken the trade union link.

2.4 <u>Selecting Corbyn: nominations, candidates, campaign, and ballot</u>

It can be argued that when Corbyn stood for Labour leader he was there to *'broaden the debate'* rather than win the contest. The fact that Corbyn made it on to the ballot didn't mean that he was going to win. One survey published after the general election of 2015 showed that just 2 Labour members out of 1,180 said that Corbyn was their favourite candidate to replace Ed Miliband (Bale, 2016a). This shows that Corbyn's victory was not a coronation but one which must have happened during the campaign, which seems to show that Corbyn's campaign was effective at recruiting new people and winning over the battle of ideas within the party, something which can be assumed that the other candidates did not do effectively.

The left of the party managed to effectively organise and recruit people to the party to get votes for Corbyn. They managed to do this in several ways. Firstly, many trade unions endorsed Corbyn for Labour leader which gave his campaign a huge boost. Initially he went into the campaign as the rank outsider, but after receiving endorsements from large trade unions his campaign was given more legitimacy and credibility. Unite the Union, despite being widely expected to support Burnham, endorsed Corbyn following anger at the leadership candidates for being critical of anti-austerity policies except for Corbyn (Syal, 2015). Unison, which also endorsed Corbyn's campaign, did so because, according to General Secretary Dave Prentis his 'message has resonated with public sector workers who have suffered years of pay freezes and redundancies with too many having to work more for less' (BBC News, 2015b). Corbyn won the endorsement of 6 out of 14 of the affiliated trade unions (ASLEF, BFAWU, CWU, TSSA, UNISON and Unite), with Burnham receiving the support of 3 (UCATT, USDAW and MU), Cooper winning 2 (Community and NUM), Kendall not receiving any trade union support and 3 unions not declaring an endorsement for any candidate (BECTU, GMB and Unity) (LabourList, 2016). Corbyn also received the support of the RMT and FBU, however neither were affiliated to the Labour Party (Nunns, 2018).

Another way the left managed to recruit and mobilise was via political rallies. One example of this was pro-Corbyn activists were handing out fliers to demonstrators at a People's Assembly rally in June 2015 (witnessed by author, 2015). The rally was in protest against austerity measures and was attended by 250,000 people (Panitch, 2020). This was an ideal place to promote an anti-austerity candidate running for the leadership of the Labour Party where anybody can join to vote for him. Another reason why 'one member, one vote' helped Corbyn win was because Labour MPs (the vast majority of whom who did not support Corbyn) did not have the voting power to stop him. Corbyn would have struggled to win in an election held

using the previous voting system due to the disproportionate voting power of the MPs. The other candidates perhaps also struggled with the non-Corbyn votes being split across their campaigns, this could be problematic because three campaigns, with all their resources, are targeting one section of the selectorate and are having the votes split between all three of them, however, with ranked choice voting, anti-Corbyn votes can be reallocated to another candidate. It should also be noted that Burnham and Cooper served in the previous Labour administration and have a legacy to defend. This could have worked in their favour if they helped implement policies which were supported by the selectorate but could also work against them if they supported measures which were unpopular amongst the Labour membership, for example voting against an investigation into the Iraq war or austerity measures. Some may argue that being in government means difficult decisions must be taken, some of which may be unpopular with those who now have the power to select the leader of the Labour Party. Perhaps also there was complacency from MPs because they didn't think Corbyn winning was a possibility at the start of the campaign and, therefore, they did not treat his campaign seriously until it looked like he had a real opportunity to win the contest. However, as the campaign went on, Corbyn could bring lots of people behind his campaign and his opponents would have to split their votes, resources, and campaigning between three different candidates.

There were, however, potential disadvantages of the 'one member, one vote' electoral system for Corbyn compared to the electoral college. The electoral college meant that the trade unions and affiliates received 33% of the vote in the contest, so if most unions were to endorse one candidate then they would be given a big boost when it comes to votes. Corbyn was endorsed by many unions so would have fared very well in the trade union section. The removal of this essential block vote could have been bad for Corbyn's campaign, especially if trade union members did not mobilise in the way they did under 'one member, one vote'. Another potential

disadvantage was that anybody was able to join the Labour Party under 'one member, one vote', which meant that if opponents effectively organised then they could encourage tens of thousands of people to join to vote for them, if Corbyn's opponents were able to cut through to the wider public and urge them to join then this would've made it harder for Corbyn to win.

The potential for people to join the Labour Party to advocate a certain political worldview, however, was criticised by Tom Watson who warned about 'Trotsky entryists' joining the Labour Party to support Corbyn (Hughes, 2016). Keith Laybourn has written about the history of Marxism in Britain, noting that 'Labour governments fought against the way in which communists used trade unions towards their own political ends, largely on the grounds that this was their domain (Laybourn, 2005: 3). Whilst pro-Labour Party Marxist organisations have existed throughout the party's history, they have been unsuccessful in acquiring any meaningful control of the party. Marxists, for example, attempted to 'link up with the Bevanites in the Labour Party' however they did not succeed (Laybourn, 2005: 57). Laybourn's work was written prior to the Corbyn years however, under Corbyn's leadership, pro-Labour Party Marxist organisations showed support for his leadership with Labour Party Marxists stating that, although 'in the medium to long term, we Marxists want the abolition of the Bonapartist post of leader', they wanted to 'ensure that Corbyn is re-elected (in the 2016 Labour leadership election)' so that the party's 'right is humiliatingly defeated' and Socialist Appeal, who were affiliated with the Marxist Student Federation, mobilised 'for a Corbyn victory' to ensure 'a socialist Labour government' (Labour Party Marxists, 2016; Socialist Appeal, 2019). There is no publicly available information on the membership numbers of the Labour Party Marxists, however John Kelly noted that, in 2018, there were around 300 members of Socialist Appeal (Kelly, 2018). This shows that, although the Marxist tendency within the Labour Party were

broadly supportive of the overall goals of Corbyn's leadership, they made up a very small number of the overall membership.

Whilst some left wing organisations, from Labour Assembly Against Austerity and the Labour Representation Committee called for people to join the Labour Party pre-Corbyn, many other left wing organisations not affiliated to the Labour Party, whilst praising Corbyn's candidacy, did not encourage people to join Labour to vote for him to shift Labour to the left. For example, the Socialist Party (formerly the Militant Tendency) did not believe that Corbyn would 'succeed in reclaiming Labour as a political weapon for the workers movement' and therefore did not encourage left wing activists to join (Labour Assembly Against Austerity, 2014; Taaffe, 2015). Therefore, at the start of Corbyn's campaign it was uncertain, despite many left wing voices encouraging people to join to vote, that a wider left presence would be able to mobilise a lot of people to join Labour to vote for Corbyn. However, many did join and Corbyn did end up winning, no doubt propped up with many votes from left wing activists who joined via the campaign. So, did Corbyn win over the incumbent membership or mobilise a new membership? It seems like he did both throughout the campaign.

Corbyn regularly attracted huge crowds of people who were eligible to vote in the contest, including one event where so many people attended that he had to do a speech outside on a fire truck (ITV News, 2015). As well as this, Corbyn's leadership campaign used social media effectively to promote the campaign and the policy positions, reaching out to members via Facebook, Twitter and emails encouraging people to attend rallies, vote for Corbyn and promote catchy hashtags such as #JezWeCan (Seymour, 2016: 22).

Compare this to the other candidates. None of the Burnham, Cooper or Kendall social media accounts on Facebook or Twitter managed to reach out like the Corbyn campaign, Corbyn's campaign received more social media mentions than all their campaigns combined (Nunns, 2018). Burnham's campaign co-ordinator for the South West, Darren Jones (now-MP for Bristol North West), said 'so you're not going to win a campaign just by using Twitter because all of the people who have votes you need to engage with don't have Twitter' (Aylett, 2020). It seems Burnham's campaign was relying more on conventional campaigning and did not seem too concerned about the Corbyn campaign on social media despite the heavy online presence, however whether Jones' view was shared by other organisers is unclear.

Social media has not played a significant role in previous leadership elections, however it seems, in 2015, that it had more of an impact. One reason why may be the growth of social media over the years. In 2010, during the 2010 leadership election, there were around 40 million people who used Twitter, compare this to the time period during the 2015 leadership election where this figured had, over time, increased 7 fold to 302 million (Statista, 2019). With more people using social media, including political activists, a political campaign can reach out to potentially millions of people, including eligible voters, with a few words on a keyboard, a graphic and a single click. The bigger the platform, the higher the potential to reach out to potential voters. As well as doing well to win the arguments within the party, Corbyn's campaign, by encouraging people who have never voted Labour/previously voted Labour, mobilised many people to join the party which changed the makeup of the membership in favour of his platform which could have implications in the long-term if many of these members stayed in the post-Corbyn era, increasing his influence not just on the party in 2015 but the future direction of the party as well.

It can be argued it wasn't just Corbyn's strong campaign that helped swing the contest in his favour, but arguably the failures of the other candidates to appeal to the voters also helped as well. This is the opinion shared by Roe-Crines, as he argued the other candidates in the Labour leadership contest were seen unfavourably by the wider membership of the party compared to Corbyn. Burnham, who was voted the most popular frontbencher under Miliband's leadership (however the poll did not explain why he was the most popular candidate, just who members thought was the best minister), was the Secretary of State for Health under the previous administration (LabourList, 2015c). He was quick to announce his intention to run for leader and was the candidate who secured the most support from Parliamentary colleague, picking up 68 PLP endorsements and support from former leader Neil Kinnock. Burnham was initially the favourite to win the Labour leadership contest, but support for Burnham seemed to decrease over time as noted by YouGov opinion polling as the campaign went on (Kellner, 2015). His problems arguably began at the start of the Labour leadership campaign because Burnham was not clear on whether he would re-nationalise the railways, this was seen during the South West leadership hustings in Swindon where he refused to give an answer to the question (witnessed by author, 2015).

Many unions that supported Corbyn came out in favour of public ownership of the railways including the TSSA and ASLEF. They showed this by supporting a motion calling for the policy at the 2015 Labour conference because they wanted the Labour Party to adopt the policy and ensure it would be carried out if elected to government (Syal and Landin, 2015). Pollsters pre-2015 had not directly polled Labour members on the issue of public ownership of the railways so it is unclear how popular that policy was amongst party members. However, LabourList, a Labour supporting website which is followed by thousands of Labour members, asked their readers whether they supported plans to bring the railways back under public ownership, 932

people voted in the survey with 90% responding 'yes' whilst 6% said 'no' (Ferguson, 2014). It should be noted that LabourList readers are not representative of the wider Labour membership, and this data was unweighted. The policy may have been popular amongst Corbyn supporting unions and some Labour members but was it popular amongst the wider electorate? The TSSA union commissioned a poll asking voters in the North and the South to rank the policy out of 10: voters in the North gave the policy an average score of 6.6 whilst voters in the South gave it 6.8 out of 10 (Cortes, 2015).

In 2015, YouGov asked 1,707 adults in Britain about their views on policies from the left and right of the political spectrum including public ownership of railways. Although the policies were not ranked by people in which policies should be prioritised by government, the polling showed that 58% supported re-nationalisation of the railways (as well as water companies and other utilities) whilst 17% opposed the measure (Dahlgreen, 2015). Another poll by Survation of 1,046 GB adults in 2015 showed that 40% support bringing the entire rail network under public ownership, 23% want some franchises under public ownership and 17% wanted to maintain privatised railways (LabourList, 2015).

Once Corbyn was gaining in the opinion polls, it appears Burnham shifted towards a more left wing platform and eventually adopted the position to renationalise the railways alongside other left wing policies (BBC News, 2015e). This was important because rather than adopting a platform of 'continuity Miliband' he, instead, listened to Corbyn's platform and adopted many of the policies Corbyn was proposing including public ownership and a national living wage (Andy4Leader, 2015). Burnham may have backed the policy to re-nationalise the railways to appeal to the Labour selectorate or the wider electorate but his decision to do so after initially failing to get on board with the idea could arguably be seen as indecisive and Burnham's

indecisiveness seemed to damage him in the campaign. This indecisiveness was mentioned by Roe-Crines when he said that Burnham's campaign was 'tainted by a chameleon-style approach' as he seemed to oppose certain policies one day and then change his mind on another day (Crines, 2015). Alongside this, Burnham said he would refuse to take money from trade unions in the leadership campaign as he wanted to 'stress his independence… (and) the unions would either have to support him or remain neutral' as there was no candidate to the left of him (Kogan, 2019: 228). Anneliese Midgeley said this hesitance to work with unions made Burnham look bad and made it easier for Unite to endorse Corbyn because he was highly supportive of trade unions: 'so you had on the one hand Jeremy's team saying Unite was very important… and you had Burnham on the other hand saying the unions can go fuck themselves but I still want your support' (Kogan, 2019: 234). Burnham went on to win 19.5% of the vote in the contest.

Cooper was also in the running to be Labour leader. Cooper served as the shadow Home Secretary under Ed Miliband and previously held cabinet roles under the Blair and Brown administrations. Ideologically she was considered to be a Brownite: a supporter of the policies of Labour leader Gordon Brown (Nunns, 2018), who stood on a platform of bringing in a living wage for social care workers and building 300,000 homes. Whilst these policies weren't controversial amongst the membership, she spent a lot of time attacking Corbyn's platform rather than promoting her own policy vision and claiming, during a Sky News leadership debate, that Corbyn was offering 'false hope' and that Corbyn's policy platform was not affordable (Sky News, 2015a). This negative campaigning did not seem to cut through to the wider membership and this was seen during the Sky TV debate where the audience would loudly applaud Corbyn's responses to Cooper's comments. The TV audience was made up of

Labour councillors, members, and supporters (Sky News, 2015b). The total debate lasted 1 hour and 22 minutes.

Table 2: Cooper vs Corbyn debate

Candidate	Total time spotlight was on the individual to speak/being questioned	Total time attacking other candidates
Yvette Cooper	17.5 minutes (1050 seconds)	4.7 minutes (284 seconds)
Jeremy Corbyn	16.25 minutes (975 seconds)	0 minutes (0 seconds)

Source: Sky News, 2015b

Cooper has a legacy to defend whilst Corbyn did not. Cooper was a government minister under the Brown administration who managed to implement policies in government that she could defend whilst Corbyn was a backbencher with no ministerial experience. Cooper had much more to defend than Corbyn which could work in her favour or against her depending on how the wider selectorate view the policies and legacy in question. Roe-Crines said Cooper's campaign only started to convince people in the last few weeks, however this was too late as Corbyn had captured the imagination of members long beforehand. Cooper won 19% of the vote.

Just 3 days after the general election loss Kendall, widely regarded as the Blairite candidate, announced that she would be standing to be Labour leader. She entered Parliament in 2010 and served as the shadow Junior Health Minister and shadow Minister for Care and Older people under the Miliband years. Whilst some claimed Kendall was 'the candidate the Tories feared most' because of her determination to make a difference (Williams, 2015), Roe-Crines indicates that Kendall's approach was not convincing at all because she represented a political

outlook which was rejected by the wider membership. This view seems to have been reflected in the Labour leadership election results as she received 4.5% of the vote (Crines, 2015).

One factor that worked in Corbyn's favour is that he was seen as the 'outsider' in the Labour leadership contest, whilst the other candidates were arguably 'insiders' whose intentions were to rise to the top of the party from within rising from the backbenchers to ministerial roles to leadership. Burnham, Cooper, and Kendall all held frontbench roles under the Miliband years and were whipped to support policies which would've been unpopular amongst the membership, such as support for austerity measures. Meanwhile, Corbyn was not bound by collective cabinet responsibility and was able to vote however he liked on key issues, so he was able to oppose austerity and controversial bills like the welfare bill whilst the other MPs could not do so without breaking the whip and losing their jobs. These MPs, then, had on their voting record policies such as supporting the Iraq War, opposing an investigation into the Iraq war, support for PFI and tuition fees, all of which are controversial positions to hold within the Labour Party. In fact, Corbyn consistently voted against the Labour Party when they were in government, a total of 428 times on many different issues including the Iraq war, tuition fees and private finance initiatives, positions which were, broadly, supported by the Socialist Campaign Group (Lee, 2018a; Syzygysue, 2012).

Corbyn's voting record contrasts to the voting record of his opponents. His opponents followed the whip most of the time whilst Corbyn consistently rebelled, showing that he was different to the other candidates. This mattered to people who were looking for a clear alternative to the status quo as there was a candidate who looked different and offered a different platform compared to the other candidates. It seemed like some members liked this and supported him

whilst others thought if Corbyn was not loyal to previous leaders then why should people in the party be loyal to Corbyn (Red Roar, 2019)?

Another factor which perhaps worked in Corbyn's favour was that the field was left wide open after expected candidates failed to put their name into the race. Ed Balls, the shadow chancellor, could have been a successor to Ed Miliband, but he lost his Morley and Outwood seat to the Conservatives in 2015 which meant he was unable to run. Chuka Umunna, the highest profile member of the 2010 Labour MP intake, was also widely tipped to become the next Labour leader. However just a few days after announcing his candidacy he surprisingly stood aside from the contest citing personal reasons (Bush, 2015b). Mary Creagh, then shadow International Development secretary, also pulled out of the race after a short bid for leadership. Tristram Hunt also stood down after a brief bid and David Miliband, the 2010 leadership contender who lost against Ed Miliband, was unable to run (he was no longer an MP – instead working for International Rescue in the United States) despite some grassroots support. Other names, such as Dan Jarvis and Alan Johnson, also refused to stand to be Labour leader for personal reasons despite being encouraged by many people.

The wide open field meant that many members were disappointed by the candidates who did put their name forward as they felt other candidates would have been better than Burnham, Cooper, and Kendall. There was even a campaign called #Keir4Leader to encourage newly elected MP for Holborn and St Pancras, Sir Keir Starmer, to stand for the leadership. This social media campaign was supported by hundreds of members (Weaver, 2015). There was a vacuum which was ready to be filled by a new candidate and it appeared that Corbyn filled that vacuum with a promise of a 'new kind of politics' and unequivocal opposition to austerity. The crowded field in the election perhaps worked in Corbyn's advantage because it seemed the left of the

party were able to unite behind one candidate whilst other wings of the party had their loyalties split between many, both Burnham and Cooper could be endorsed by Brownites meaning the resources were split between candidates. If wings of the party had united behind one candidate, instead of splitting their loyalties, then perhaps this could have made it harder for Corbyn to cut through to eligible voters.

The Labour governments from 1997-2010 managed to implement many progressive reforms such as the minimum wage, record investment in education, Sure Start, banning cluster bombs, civil partnerships, the abolition of section 28, the Good Friday Agreement and expansion of the welfare state (Brown, 2011). However, many decisions made by the governments received huge backlash within the Labour Party from the left and the wider Labour membership (Schulman, 2015). The Iraq war received huge backlash from members and some members left the party (Hassan and Shaw, 2012: 233). The trade unions threatened to 'humiliate ministers' and called for a moratorium on Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) whilst the government pushed ahead with them, and support for nuclear weapons was opposed by some influential left wing figures such as Tony Benn (Russell, 2002; Benn and Winstone, 2010). These policy positions, particularly the decision to declare war on Iraq, have arguably defined the Blair years and many Labour members do not hold a positive opinion of Tony Blair. In January 2020 YouGov published a poll asking 1,005 Labour members how they viewed each leader of the Labour Party: Tony Blair had the lowest net approval rating at -25% (27% favourable and 62% unfavourable) (Smith, 2020). The Socialist Campaign Group (including Corbyn), many trade unions and some affiliated groups actively opposed some controversial New Labour policies via Parliamentary votes and demonstrating on the streets of Britain, most notably the Iraq war protests which had the greatest number of people ever turn up to protest in British political history (BBC, 2003).

Labour membership went from ~400,000 in 1997 to below 200,000 by 2010 (when the Labour Party were no longer in government). This shows that many members left the party during the time period, likely because they no longer agreed with the direction the party was taking (Audickas et al, 2019). However, it is not an uncommon trend to see party membership decline whilst a party is in government. Conservative Party membership fell under Heath and Major's premierships and membership fell within the Labour Party after the Wilson and Callaghan governments. Membership of the Conservative Party slightly rose at the start of the Thatcher years but declined after 1985 (Audickas et al, 2019).

In the 2010 general election Alistair Darling said that Labour would 'cut deeper than Margaret Thatcher' to cut the budget deficit and, following the 2010 election defeat, the Labour Party stuck to the narrative that austerity was necessary and supported carrying on austerity measures if elected to government due to being unable to shift the narrative on austerity (Elliott, 2010). This move was opposed by the left and the wider membership but defended by the leader, the shadow cabinet and figures who served under the New Labour governments as it seemed Labour figures did not want to radically change the way things were and could, instead, 'do more with less' (Goes, 2016; Whitaker, 2014). However, Labour lost in 2015. Corbyn ran to be leader of the Labour Party as somebody who stood by their record of breaking the party whip on issues such as the Iraq war, PFI, nuclear weapons and austerity measures. A large number of people seemed to join the Labour Party to support Corbyn in order to support a large shift away from the politics of New Labour and create a 'new politics' and transform the Labour Party.

All these factors largely contributed to the 2015 Labour leadership result. Whilst it would've been unimaginable for Corbyn to win the Labour leadership contest when it began, it was clear

that he was able to gain huge support throughout the campaign and when the result came in on 12th September 2015 it was unlikely to be anything other than a Corbyn landslide. A 'perfect storm' of factors helped contribute to this result from changes to 'one member, one vote' from the electoral college, the huge increase in membership linked to his candidacy, the policy platform he championed, the failure of other candidates to inspire the membership and his historic voting record all helped shift the balance towards Corbyn's favour.

2.5 Academic perspectives on the selection of Corbyn: Stark, May and Murr

It is important to contextualise the election of Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party within a wider academic framework and see how his election as leader fits into current available academic models. Three well established models include; Leonard's Starks' model on acceptability, electability and competence; John D. May's special law of curvilinear disparity; and Andreas Murr's party leadership model.

2.5.1 Stark and acceptability, electability, and competence

One important piece of work regarding choosing party leaders comes from Leonard Starks' 1996 book 'Choosing a Leader'. Stark argued that there was a hierarchy of selection criteria which effectively explains the outcomes of party leadership contests: acceptability, electability, and competence (Quinn, 2012, 12). Stark's model has been utilised to explain why certain candidates win leadership elections, for example Tim Heppell concludes that Stark's model has been applied to 24 leadership contests from 1963 – 2020 and that the model has helped 'aid our explanations in all but the selections of Corbyn and Thatcher' (Heppell, 2021b: 381). However, Stark's leadership model has been critiqued by Maiguascha and Dean as Corbyn's leadership election victory cannot be explained by the model, they state that 'his election as

party leader points towards a different normative model of leadership, one that cannot be made sense of in the literature as it stands' (Maiguashca and Dean, 2020: 11).

If a candidate in a party leadership election could excel in these three areas then they are best placed to do well in a leadership contest in the eyes of the people who have the final say in the contest, in this case the eligible voters in the Labour leadership election from the wider membership to the Members of Parliament. When it comes to acceptability, Corbyn was not accepted by the wider Parliamentary Labour Party as he received little support from MPs during the leadership contest. Labour MPs may not have supported Corbyn's bid to become Labour leader, but the vast majority of those eligible to vote in the leadership contest did, as he won 59.5% of the vote: 121,751 votes from the members, 88,449 votes from the registered supporters and 41,217 votes from affiliated supporters (BBC News, 2015c).

Dorey, Denham and Roe-Crines, commenting on Stark's model, wrote that nominating a leadership candidate 'runs the serious risk that (the membership) will vote for a leadership candidate who is neither supported by the Party's MPs, nor popular among voters in general, thus rendering the party virtually unelectable: ideologically pure, but politically impotent' (Dorey and Denham, 2016: 4). Corbyn was acceptable to the wider Labour membership and trade unions but not the Parliamentary Labour Party and, according to Dorey, Denham and Roe-Crines, a sizable portion of social democrats (Denham et al, 2020). However, they did not explain why Corbyn alienated social democrats, and this does not seem to be backed up by empirical evidence at the time given the result of the leadership contest where Corbyn's nearest opponent received just 19.5% of the vote compared to Corbyn's 59.5%. If social democrats in a social democratic party were so opposed to Corbyn then, one would assume, that the nearest opponent would've received a higher share of the vote. On the other hand, it can be argued that

the assumption that 'Corbyn alienated social democrats' is wrong because social democrats are not a homogenous group and some, even if they were critical of Corbyn himself, were open to social democratic aspects of his policy platform.

When it comes to electability Stark's model, in hindsight, was proven right. Corbyn failed to win two elections, in 2017 the Labour Party won a similar number of seats to the 2010 election loss and in 2019 won the fewest number of seats for the Labour Party since 1935. However, the 2017 election result was much closer than many predicted with the Labour Party winning 12.8 million votes (which was the most votes for Labour since the landslide election win in 2001) and Corbyn, according to an analysis of marginal seats in the election, was 2,227 votes away from becoming Prime Minister with the opportunity to form a coalition government with other parties. This figure is the total sum of the smallest majorities of 7 Conservative-held seats where Labour came second place and if Labour won these seats then the Parliamentary arithmetic, hypothetically, could've allowed the Labour Party to form a 'progressive alliance' with other centrist to centre-left parties in Parliament to form a government with a working majority (Agerholm, 2017).

On the flip side, if we use the same logic, the Conservative Party only needed 50 votes to receive a majority government which could suggest this approach is rather fanciful (Masters, 2020). However, those eligible to vote in the 2015 contest were unaware of what was to come over the next few years. YouGov conducted a poll of 1,411 people who were eligible to vote in the 2015 leadership contest, from members to registered supporters to affiliated voters, and asked them 'how likely do you think it is that Labour would win the 2020 General Election with each of the following leaders' with participants answering with 'likely' or 'unlikely' (the assumption at the time was that the following general election would happen in 2020 in accordance with the Fixed Term Parliament Act). The poll found that eligible voters found that

Burnham was most likely to beat the Conservatives (net +14%: likely = 52%, unlikely = 38%), followed by Cooper (net 0%: likely = 45%, unlikely = 45%), then Corbyn (net -5%: likely = 42%, unlikely = 47%) and then Kendall (net -52%: likely = 19%, unlikely = 71%) (Dahlgreen, 2015). If Stark's model was accurate then Burnham arguably would've done significantly well in the 2015 leadership contest. However, he finished 40 points behind Corbyn. Although more eligible voters thought Corbyn was unlikely to win compared to likely, the gap was not substantial and it seemed, according to Denham, Dorey and Roe-Crines, that Corbyn's ability to appeal to voters beyond a socialist base was open to question rather than firmly answering whether Corbyn was electable or not (Denham et al, 2020).

We should also compare the polling of Labour members to Labour voters and the wider British public; Opinium asked 474 people who 'are likely to vote Labour in the next election' about how they would vote if they were eligible to vote in the leadership contest: Corbyn polled at 39%, Burnham at 27%, Cooper at 22% and Kendall at 12%; Opinium also asked 1,711 'people who are likely to vote in the next general election, excluding residents unlikely to vote': 32% said they were undecided/other, Corbyn placed the highest amongst all the leadership candidates in the running with 26%, Burnham followed with 18%, Cooper with 13% and Kendall with 11% (Opinium, 2015). This shows that, actually, Corbyn had a wider appeal to likely Labour voters the wider British public compared to the other candidates, however it should also be noted that the number of people participating in the survey was 474 and 1711 people, with the former being comparatively small which could provide questionable results in comparison to larger representative samples (Opinium, 2015).

Finally, the issue of competence was also open for question because he was a backbencher who, previously, never held a ministerial role. Corbyn had the most experience out of all the

candidates as a backbench MP (32 years) but the least experience as a frontbencher. No Labour leader called on Corbyn to hold ministerial office which could suggest he was not competent/his political views (and willingness to stick to his principles, hence the hundreds of rebellions) were not compatible enough to perform a ministerial role. However, because he had never held a frontbench position it would arguably be wrong to assume he would do a poor job or a good job. Perhaps, one could argue, competence isn't about experience when it comes to judging a Labour Party leader. Tony Blair, for example, never served in government before becoming Prime Minister but ended up having a premiership which lasted for 10 years and won 3 general elections. Blair did, however, hold key shadow ministerial roles such as shadow Home Secretary and was a Member of Parliament for 11 years prior to becoming leader (Hinman, 2009: 51).

The model, according to Tom Quinn, shows an example of the model failing to work: 'Corbyn emerged victorious despite not being the strongest candidate on any of the three criteria of acceptability, electability or competence' (Quinn, 2014, 18). Corbyn was elected as Labour leader despite the model showing that it would be unlikely to happen. Two reasons why the model might have failed was because the significance of the Parliamentary Labour Party was reduced (the PLP had the power to decide whether he made it to the ballot but did not have the power to block him in the popular vote) and Corbyn managed to mobilise his base. As Denham, Dorey and Roe-Crines put it: '[Corbyn] energised the 'hard left' and his appeal attributed, his opposition to austerity and presentation being different to his opponents and a clearly different platform than the Conservatives' (Denham et al, 2020).

2.5.2 May's curvilinear disparity

John D. May first promoted his theory of 'curvilinear disparity' in a 1973 article called 'Opinion Structure of Political Parties'. May's theory aims to show that rank and file members of a political party are more ideological than the party leadership and the wider electorate. May classifies the party and supporters in three different levels: (1) the party elite (in this case the Labour leadership who run the party), (2) the middle elite (in this case the wider Labour membership who contribute towards the party) and (3) non-elite (in this case the wider electorate). Each section has a different reason for being politically active and have differing political incentives to promote ideological positions.

When it comes to the Labour membership and the leadership at the time it can be argued that there is a difference when it comes to ideology. Whilst both the membership and the leadership can be considered on the wider left in the political spectrum, there is still a difference between the two. Ed Miliband's platform committed to implement austerity in all areas except three departments, however the Labour membership viewed austerity in a different light with 92% of Labour members who were members in May 2015, in a survey conducted by Monica Poletti, Tim Bale and Paul Webb, believed that 'spending cuts (had) gone too far' (Poletti et al, 2016).

Members who joined that Labour Party after May 2015, according to Tim Bale, are 'left, liberal' who are anti-austerity, more socially liberal than Labour members who joined before 2015 and 17% of whom voted for the Green Party in 2017 (this rises to 20% when talking about registered supporters). A large number of people who joined Labour, almost one fifth, agreed with the Green Party more than the Labour Party in May 2015 but were eligible to vote in the leadership contest (Bale, 2016a). This seems to be more in line with the goals of the Labour left rather than the wider left wing because the 2015 Green Party manifesto contained many

elements of a platform which could be endorsed by the Labour left: nationalising key public services, abolishing tuition fees, liberal social policies, anti-Trident, and anti-war planform (Green Party, 2015). This shows that these eligible voters are further to the left than the Labour Party representatives but were more ideologically in line with Corbyn the wider movement that supported this 'left, liberal' platform.

Whilst the membership might have been slightly ideologically different to the Miliband leadership, they were much more ideologically in line with Corbyn's platform, and many people were driven to join Labour because of him. An article by Paul Whiteley, Monica Poletti, Paul Webb, and Tim Bale argues that many people re-joined Labour because they were attracted to Corbyn's left wing platform and were driven to join because of ideology:

> 'Many people who re-joined the Labour Party after the 2015 election were returning members who… were disillusioned by the 'centre ground' politics typified by New Labour. They re-joined Labour because they were attracted by radical left-wing policies proposed by Corbyn… although some of the first-time joiners might have been attracted by those policies as well, ideology was more likely to be a driver for returning members, given their well-established radical positions' (Whiteley et al, 2018).

This shows that May's theory of curvilinear disparity works when talking about the wider membership and Miliband because it can arguably be concluded that the Labour membership in 2015 were more left wing than Ed Miliband's general election platform but the theory breaks down when talking about the membership and Corbyn's leadership as many who joined

because of Corbyn were ideologically in line with his platform, showing that the membership is not more Ideological than the party leadership.

When it comes to leadership and the voters, many policy positions which were promoted by Corbyn had support amongst the wider electorate. The public, according to YouGov, supported rail renationalisation (net +40%: 60% support, 20% oppose), higher taxes on the rich (net +25%: 56% support, 31% oppose), an international convention to ban nuclear weapons (net +43%: 64% support, 21% oppose, 15% don't know), rent controls (net +52.2%: 59% support, 6.8% oppose), a mandatory living wage (net +29%: 60% support, 31% oppose) and cutting tuition fees (net +18%: 49% support, 31% oppose, 20% don't know). The public also opposed the Iraq war (43% opposed, 37% supported) and opposed bombing Syria in 2015 (60% opposed, 24% supported) (Dathan and Stone, 2015). All of these policies were promoted by Corbyn during the leadership contest and his voting record showed support for these issues. Corbyn aligned with the voters on many domestic issues according to YouGov and, perhaps, some registered supporters joined the leadership contest to vote for this domestic platform. However, despite this, some people were still not willing to vote for Corbyn to become Labour leader for many reasons, Rentoul shared and expanded on an argument of '13 reasons not to vote for Corbyn' by 'Labour Pains' in *The Independent* which showed that eligible voters should not vote for Corbyn for reasons including 'his economic policies don't make sense', he 'can't persuade Tory voters to vote Labour', his opposition to NATO, the need for a woman leader of the party and his minimal support from fellow MPs (Rentoul, 2015).

This leadership contest should also be compared to the leadership contest of 1994. the first leadership election held under the newly reformed electoral college. There was virtual agreement between the membership (100,313 votes – 58.2% of the vote), affiliates (407,637

votes – 52.3% of the vote) and the Parliamentary Labour Party (198 votes – 60.5% of the vote) when deciding who should be leader of the Labour Party: Tony Blair (overall winning 57% of the vote in the contest). The membership and MPs were closely aligned in 1994 but just 21 years later, in 2015, the views of the membership and the views of the PLP were in stark contrast with Corbyn winning the support from members but had little support from his Parliamentary colleagues.

Due to the decreased influence of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the leadership election (changing to 'one member, one vote' decreased their voting power) it can be argued that the conditions were ripe for a rebellion at the grassroots. The wider membership were more ideological than the Miliband leadership and, finally, the wider membership had the power to put a more ideological leader in a position of power – Corbyn was the person offering that platform and the membership put him in power.

2.5.3 <u>Murr and the party leadership model on parliamentary mandates</u>

When it comes to the 2015 Labour leadership contest it should be noted that Corbyn received the least support from the Parliamentary Labour Party compared to the other candidates. In 2015 there were 232 Labour MPs: Andy Burnham was nominated by 68 MPs, Cooper by 59, Kendall by 41 and Corbyn was nominated by 36. However more than half of those who nominated Corbyn for leader did not even vote for him in the contest (Prince, 2016). That means fewer than 8% of Labour MPs supported Corbyn's candidacy for Labour leader.

Table 3: Parliamentary Labour Party support for 2015 leadership candidates

Leadership candidate	MPs supporting the leadership bid	Percentage of support
Andy Burnham	68	29%
Yvette Cooper	59	25.4%
Jeremy Corbyn	~18	~8%
Liz Kendall	41	17.7%
	(46 remaining, either nominated a leadership candidate that dropped out of the race or did not nominate at all)	N/A (19.8%)

Source: Kirk, 2015; Prince, 2016

The lack of support shows that Corbyn was not best placed to win a general election according to this model, however the wider membership of the party voted him in despite the lack of support from the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The lack of Parliamentary support is a problem for Corbyn according to Andreas Murr's party leadership model on Parliamentary mandates. This model was created in the run up to the 2015 general election and, at the time, predicted David Cameron's majority (whilst many others predicted a hung Parliament). The model has predicted 12 out of the last 15 election winners, including the 2017 and 2019 election results when Corbyn was Labour leader (Murr and Fisher, 2019). Murr's model hypothesises that a party leader that wins a leadership contest by the largest margin amongst MPs is the most likely to win a general election.

Table 4: Leadership Mandates as. Predictor of Future General Election Success

General election	Incumbent	% point lead among MPs in party leadership election Conservative	% point lead among MPs in party leadership contest Labour	General election winner	Was the model correct?
1966	Labour	5.7	16.6	Labour	Yes
1970	Labour	5.7	16.6	Conservative	No
1974 (February)	Conservative	5.7	16.6	Labour	Yes
1974 (October)	Labour	5.7	16.6	Labour	Yes
1979	Labour	24.3	12.4	Conservative	Yes
1983	Conservative	24.3	3.8	Conservative	Yes
1987	Conservative	24.3	23.2	Conservative	Yes
1992	Conservative	14.5	65.6	Conservative	No
1997	Conservative	39.2	40.6	Labour	Yes
2001	Labour	13.6	40.6	Labour	Yes
2005	Labour	-	40.6	Labour	Yes
2010	Labour	16.7	80.0	Conservative	No
2015	Conservative	16.7	- 6.8	Conservative	Yes
2017	Conservative	35.0	- 13.8	Conservative	Yes
2019	Conservative	26.5	- 13.8	Conservative	Yes

Source: Murr and Fisher, 2019

A Bayesian analysis shows that there is a 95% probability that a leader's chances of winning a general election increase if they have a larger winning margin in a leadership contest (Murr, 2015). MPs have the means (they know the leadership candidates better than others, e.g.

members because they are MPs themselves and work with them weekly), the motive (their careers depend on an electable leader) and the opportunity (the contest itself, sometimes which can be forced by them e.g. the 2016 leadership contest) to put their trust in a leader. The three academic models provided their own strengths and weaknesses which was valuable for the wider debate. Stark's model could not explain why Corbyn won the 2015 leadership contest because he won the leadership election despite, arguably not being the best leadership candidate on 'acceptability, electability and competence'. May's curvilinear disparity showed that an ideological membership put an ideological leader in charge and Murr's model showed that Corbyn wasn't best placed to lead the party into a general election due to lack of support from MPs but was still elected as leader despite hostility from Parliamentary colleagues.

2.6 <u>Summary</u>

Corbyn's leadership election victories, in relation to the Partycraft model, show he was highly successful in acquiring the leadership of the Labour Party by managing to appeal to the vast majority of people who cast their vote in the leadership contest, winning 59.5% of the vote in 2015 and 61.8% of the vote in 2016. Corbyn was successful in acquiring the leadership of the Labour Party and holding onto his position due to leadership contest rules which put more power in the hands of the party's grassroots in comparison to previous leadership elections, and the fact Corbyn acquired, and maintained, strong grassroot support.

Many academics have taken an agency driven approach when analysing leadership contests within the larger UK political parties, focusing on why leadership contests were called, who the candidates were, what happened in campaigns, who voted in contests, the bases of the people who won the leadership and the internal structures of the Labour Party compared to other countries and how the institution has changed throughout the years. The numerous

reforms in the Labour Party, from Parliamentary ballots to the electoral college to the Collins Review, have been part of an ongoing process of democratisation within the Labour Party since its creation. Powers have been taken away from MPs (from having full control over leadership selection to now only having the power to nominate a leadership candidate) and have since been redistributed across the party, particularly towards the wider membership. The unions had a huge amount of influence due to their block vote and the power to nominate leadership candidates and, even though formally some powers have been taken away, unions still remain influential as they heavily influenced the 2010 leadership election and a huge number of union affiliated members were eligible to vote in the 2015 leadership contest – many of whom supported Corbyn's candidacy alongside the union bodies.

If the 2015 contest had been held under the old rules (the electorate college) then Corbyn might have struggled to win due to the disproportionate vote share of the PLP – the vast majority of whom opposed him. However, the Collins Review, which brought in 'one member, one vote', gave every member and affiliated member an equal voice in the contest alongside the introduction of registered supporters. This reform gave the power to the mass membership and the membership, pre-2015 and the huge increase in members, registered supporters and affiliates, helped Corbyn win big despite him starting off as a 200/1 outsider. Whilst initially it looked unlikely that Corbyn would win the contest, a perfect storm of events helped him beat the odds and led him to victory – he gained the support of key unions, he mobilised a large left wing supporter base that was active in many constituencies, the policy platform was supported by the vast majority of members (and he had a track record of fighting for these causes which made him seem principle). The other candidates failed to inspire eligible voters and the aforementioned Collins Review all led to the result which many failed to predict at the start of the campaign.

It was also interesting to note Corbyn's election victory within existing academic models. Stark's model failed because it could not explain Corbyn's victory. May's model was strong because it showed the important role of the membership in the leadership election and that an ideological membership, with the new rules in place, could elect a leader who championed their politics. However, Murr's model shows that leaders who win party leadership contests by the biggest majority of MPs are more likely to win elections, therefore Murr's model shows that Corbyn was predicated to lose. In this case the outcome of the 2017 and 2019 elections shows that Murr's model was correct.

The 2015 leadership election marked the start of Corbyn's tenure as Labour leader – the campaign result defied expectations, energised many activists and, with a huge win over his opponents, ensured that Corbyn had a mandate from the selectorate to mould the party into a vision that he championed. Even though Corbyn won mass support amongst the selectorate, he had a mountain to climb when it came to winning the support of Parliamentary colleagues, the vast majority of whom did not want to see him as leader in the first place. He could hope they would co-operate in the spirit of respecting the landslide outcome, but just 9 months later there would be a direct challenge against him in the form of a leadership contest initiated by the vast majority of Labour MPs. This success of winning the election by appealing to many groups of people but failing to win the support of MPs had an impact on Corbyn's leadership. The next chapter will look at the next criterion of Partycraft which is party management, this section will not only look at that leadership challenge and how but also how Corbyn managed his party from the Parliamentary Labour Party to the extra-Parliamentary Labour Party in the aftermath of that challenge.

Chapter 3: Party Management: Was Corbyn effective at managing the Labour Party?

'It was inevitable and understandable that the election of Jeremy Corbyn would be a massive culture shock for some sections of the party, especially some members of the Parliamentary Labour Party'

- John McDonnell, 2015

3.1 Introduction

Whether or not a leader can manage their party is an important aspect of the Partycraft model and general political life. It is arguably crucial as any party leader that cannot control their party will struggle to get elected to power. The leader of the opposition is not only responsible for managing Parliamentary colleagues but also the internal management of the party. Effective party management would suggest the ability for a leader to successfully manage the levers of power and shape the political debate inside and outside of the party. However, failing to effectively manage the party could mean being unable to change the party in a way the leader wants to, dividing the party which could impact their perception with voters negatively which shows lack of strength and political hegemony of ideas and could make the position of the leader untenable, potentially leading to internal challenges to destabilise – or even remove – the leader (Greene, 2014). This chapter will look at existing academic debates on party management which will include looking at the history of the Labour Party and the internal divides that have been present within Labour to show that factionalism isn't a modern phenomenon which arose during the Corbyn years but, instead, has a long history within the party – this will also show where the Corbyn years fit within the wider history of Labour factionalism. Alongside this it is important to look at Corbyn's relationship with the wider Labour Party including Labour MPs and those beyond the PLP including Labour members and

trade unions to see how Corbyn managed the party on a Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary level.

Throughout Labour's history there have been competing factions aiming to not only secure the policy direction within the party but also aiming to win power over opponents too – to some people, for example Luke Akehurst (considered on the Labour right), gaining dominance within the party internally is a necessary prerequisite to be in a position to defeat political opponents externally (Akehurst, 2017). These battles happened between, for example, Bevanites vs Gaitskellites, Bennites vs Healeyites and, during Corbyn's premiership, Corbynites vs Corbynsceptics – it's quite interesting to note that the historic Labour divisions have been between those in support of certain competing politicians, however Corbyn is so polarising that sceptics don't even need somebody else to rally behind i.e. there were no Smithites (i.e. ideologically supportive of Owen Smith and defined themselves by his campaign to oust Corbyn).

3.2 <u>The Labour Party and Party Management: A Party of Factions?</u>

Party management can be defined as the overall organisational aspect of political parties (Schlager and Christ, 2003). To manage a party is to have constructive relationships with those within the institution – on a Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary level – and to be able to navigate through potential hurdles such as opponents inside and outside of the party. This chapter will draw on literature looking at the relationship between the leader of the party and the Parliamentary Labour Party as this can be helpful as a useful tool to compare Corbyn's leadership with historic Labour leaders. Although Corbyn's leadership can be measured within the aforementioned framework it is important to note that the PLP lost a lot of direct influence when it came to electing the leader of the Labour Party following the implementation of 'one

member, one vote' via the Collins Review. Not only will the chapter look at the relationship between Corbyn and the PLP but also the extra-parliamentary wing of the Labour Party including the trade unions, affiliated organisations, the NEC and the wider Labour membership. This is because the unions, affiliates, NEC and membership play an important role within the Labour Party regarding decision making i.e. at conference and internal affairs as well as campaigning on a local/national level. It is important to look at the Labour Party as a whole rather than to focus on one single entity within Labour as all these organs within the party contribute towards the direction of the party which the leader will arguably want to mould in their image.

Bulpitt, in his Statecraft model, indicates that the primary purpose of political parties is to win elections and then maintain power (Bulpitt, 1986). It seems, however, that this isn't always applicable to the Labour Party with Richard Rose noting that in practice the Labour Party rejects 'electoral success as an irrelevant standard by which to determine party actions' (Rose, 1964). The goal within Labour, for some, seems to be to gain power within the party instead. Rose identifies three important elements within political parties: factions, tendencies, and non-aligned partisans. Factions are 'a group of individuals based on representatives in Parliament who seek to further a broad range of policies through consciously organised political activity… (and that) identification with a faction usually increases an individual's commitment to a programme, as well as creating the expectation that the politician will consistently take the same side in quarrels within an electoral party' (Rose, 1964). Tendencies, on the other hand, symbolise a 'body of attitudes expressed in Parliament about a broad range of problem; the attitudes are held together by a more or less coherent ideology… (adherents) do not expect, nor are they expected, to continue to operate as a group supporting the same tendency through a period of time' (Rose, 1964). Finally, the non-aligned partisans are interested in 'positions

supported by the whole of the electoral party, rather than with factions of tendencies' (Rose, 1964).

Essentially, Rose states that factions are a group of individuals who have ideologies they want to advance and will continue to proactively work together and side with each other in the party, tendencies will come into existence to promote certain policies but will dissolve once the issue has passed and the non-aligned partisans will promote the core values of the party and keep out of internal fights where possible. Rose emphasises the importance of Parliamentarianism in his theory, however the Labour Party is an institution which extends beyond the PLP including the wider membership and the affiliated organisations – but the fundamentals arguments of the theory can also be applied to the Labour Party because the membership, affiliates and PLP can align with a faction, tendency or participate as a non-aligned partisan. It is also interesting to note the differences within the approach to internal party politics between Labour and the Conservatives. Whilst Labour can arguably be seen as a party of factions, the Conservatives are more of a party of tendencies e.g. on issues such as European Union. This means that their approach to winning power within the party is different. The Conservative approach to gaining internal power appears to be more private and Machiavellian whilst Labour's conflicts seem to be much more public and potentially less effective, for example shadow ministers who had lost confidence in Corbyn's leadership ended up co-ordinating their resignations against Corbyn by briefing to the media in advance and having rolling resignations 'on the hour, every hour' in order to keep the news headlines focussed on their opposition to Corbyn – their aim was to ensure Corbyn's resignation but this did not happen (Nunns, 2017).

Corbyn is not the only leader in recent British political history to have their authority challenged very publicly; in December 2018 Conservative MPs held a motion of no confidence

in Theresa May as leader in an attempt to force her out of office – after pledging to stand down before the next election Conservative MPs voted 200 to 117 in favour of her continuing as leader of the party although she would stand down months later following her failure to pass a Brexit deal; in September 2006, dubbed the 'September Coup' by Gerard Gilbert, 7 junior ministers, including the to-be-future deputy leader Tom Watson, resigned in an attempt to ensure Prime Minister Tony Blair would set a date for his departure (Lyons et al, 2020; BBC News, 2018c; BBC News, 2006). They ultimately succeeded and Blair announced his intention to resign in the following year; and Cranley Onslow, Chair of the 1922 committee during Margaret Thatcher's premiership, advised Thatcher to stand down following an attempt by Conservative MPs to challenge her leadership (Brazier, 1991). Whilst the aforementioned moves against party leaders seemed well co-ordinated the 2016 leadership challenge against Corbyn appeared spontaneous but disorganised, which could be perhaps the reason why it was ultimately unsuccessful.

In order to discuss the Corbyn era it is important to put his position within a wider context of factionalism within the Labour Party and to understand the discussion over the left-right divide within Labour internal factionalism. It is instrumental to look at the literature that has already been published on the topic not only to look at the moving dividing lines throughout Labour history but also to define who is on the Labour left and who is on the Labour right alongside the challenges that arise when clarifying a coherent definition for each group. In 'The Struggle for Labour's Soul', Matt Beech, Kevin Hickson and Raymond Plant identified numerous different political 'positions' within the party which included; the old left; the new left; the centre; the old right; and the progressives. Steven Meredith wrote about dividing lines between the PLP in the 1960s and 1970s and argued that there are parallels and continuities about these dividing lines throughout Labour history:

'Firstly, Labour's has always been a complex political culture of systematic and recurrent intra-party struggle and competition between different traditions, strands, tendencies and groups over assorted understandings, interpretations and applications of party principles and policy. Secondly, one consequence of the failure to acknowledge the ideological and programmatic complexity of 'old' Labour's centre-right 'dominant coalition' and 'governing elite' has been an inability to perceive important parallels and continuities between so-called 'old' and New Labour' (Meredith, 2003, 166).

He also argues that Labour is always receptive to change and that 'the idea of a homogenous Labour is something of a myth and, like most myths, a product of ignorance' (Meredith, 2003: 165). This is an important statement to make because the internal battles in the Corbyn era shouldn't be viewed as a unique phenomenon but, rather, should be viewed within the wider history of factionalism in the Labour Party. Building on this Robert Crowcroft wrote about the post-war left-right historical dividing lines of the Labour Party from 1950-1955 and noted that the power struggle within the party is not just seen through the lens of an ideological struggle between socialists who want to promote 'traditional policies of socialism and public ownership' and revisionists who want to gain middle class votes with 'reconciliation with capitalism' but rather he emphasises the importance of individuals over ideology: a 'prolonged power struggle between key politicians, and the allies that surrounded them, over the question of the future leadership of the party' (Crowcroft, 2008). Therefore, when considering Corbyn's leadership it is important to look not only at the policy platform involved but also Corbyn himself as an individual because opposition to his leadership may not come from ideological differences but, perhaps, it could be personal. If the consensus is that the Labour Party has historically been a deeply factional party then it is unsurprising that this factionalism will continue in the Corbyn years too, therefore it is important not to view factionalism as a concept which began when

Corbyn rose to the leadership in 2015 but something that pre-existed the Corbyn leadership and must be seen as a potential obstacle for Corbyn to navigate in the Partycraft model.

Crowcroft noted that the two distinct factions that emerged in the post-war consensus were the Bevanite and Gaitskellite factions. Bevanites were supporters of Aneurin Bevan, somebody who promoted a socialist outlook, who were an 'organised group... they shared a desire to see Bevan become the next leader and attempted to seize control of the levers of power within Labour in order to facilitate this' (Crowcroft, 2008). This differs from the social democratic right linked to Hugh Gaitskell which had a more revisionist outlook. The divisions between the two weren't just political, they were also personal as both individuals wanted to defeat the other. There were differences on the issue of the economy, for example Bevanites were in favour of significant public ownership including mass nationalisation meanwhile the Gaitskellite approach to nationalisation was less far-reaching compared to Bevan and was seen simply 'as one means to a fairer society' compared to a fundamentalist commitment to Clause IV which committed the party to nationalisation (Garnett and Weight, 2003, 364; Brooke, 1989). Gaitskell was also a vocal opponent against unilateral nuclear disarmament claiming he would 'fight and fight and fight again' to reverse the decision made at Labour conference in favour of disarmament and, whilst initially in favour of unilateralism, Bevan would, in 1959, argue against the policy noting that adopting it would '[send a future Labour Foreign Secretary] naked into the conference chamber' (Iconic, 2010; Wheeler, 2016).

Finally, another dividing line between the Bevanites and Gaitskellites was on the issue of Britain's relationship with America with Gaitskell taking an Atlanticist approach whilst Bevan was strongly opposed to Atlanticism, not just because of his views on socialism but also, allegedly, Bevan became more 'anti-American' the more he disliked his Gaitskell: 'Gaitskell was very pro-American that made Nye anti-American' which perhaps shows political attitudes

can change not from an ideological perspective but to be used as a factional tool within the party to undermine opponents (Crowcroft, 2008). This shows that differences weren't just political, although that was an important distinction between them, but also personal too, showing that personalities are important when looking at discussions over leadership and factional control within the Labour Party.

The left-right divide evolved over time and one issue that arguably exasperated this division was the issue of the UK's relationship with Europe. The issue of Europe is slightly different to others and, consequently, creates different groupings and tenancies. It is more of an umbrella issue; The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 was heavily dividing the Conservative Party (who were governing at the time) but not Labour despite some opposition within the party and, on the flipside, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty divided Labour (who were in government) but not the Conservatives (Baker et al, 1994). Anthony Forster noted that 'opposition to the Common Market was more widespread, although in many ways fragmented' (Forster, 2003: 35). Meredith wrote extensively about this fragmentation of the social democratic right on this issue in 'Labour's Old and New'. In 1961 Harold Macmillan sought membership of the European Economic Community which was broadly opposed by the Labour left as, according to one frontbencher, it was 'not the basis of (a) socialist programme' (Panitch et al, 2001: 147). This point of view is particularly interesting due to the divisions in the party in the 1960s over the adoption of socialism within Labour with some of the most fervent in the party turning away from traditional forms of socialism (i.e. the debate over Clause IV), although the 1964 manifesto did commit to 'socialist planning' (Labour Party, 1964). However, there were a wide range of responses from the Labour right which splintered the faction. Roy Jenkins, a prominent figure on the Labour right, showed outright support for joining as he said 'if we could have an economic plan working as effectively as the French, that would be a very great

step towards social and economic progress in this country' (Hansard, 2021). Other prominent supporters for the common market included Shirley Williams and Sir Alan Birch (The Guardian, 2015). Meanwhile the opposite side of the argument included Hugh Gaitskell himself, even though some Gaitskellites were supportive of the common market. Gaitskell delivered a 14 page long speech at the 1962 Labour conference strongly rejecting the negotiated terms of entry to the common market saying:

'For we are just not a part of Europe.. we have a different history… if this is the idea, the end of Britain as an independent nation state, I make no apology for repeating it: the end of 1000 years of history… you may say alright let it end but my goodness it's a decision that needs a little care and thought' (CVCE, 2017)

Gaitskell wasn't the only opponent to the idea as Douglas Jay and Patrick Gordon Walker were other prominent figures to reject the common market (Council of Europe, 2013: 46). Whilst it is important to note the stronger supporters and sceptics there were some who were ambivalent to the idea including Anthony Crosland who said he did 'not feel enthusiastic' at the idea but still supported the common market policy, Adrian Williamson notes that 'this group may have been small, but most of the party's leadership, such as Harold Wilson, Jim Callaghan and Denis Healey, belonged to it' (Williamson, 2015). This policy issue arguably drove a wedge between the social democrats and the revisionists, splintering the Labour right on Europe. Meredith concluded that 'a wider range of policy issues and underlying political philosophy, beyond the single issue of British membership of the Common Market, divided the parliamentary Labour right and Labour Party revisionism' (Meredith, 2013). The issue of Europe, however, can be considered to be an umbrella policy which arguably caused many unexpected splits within not

only the Labour Party but the Conservative Party too, it was not a policy which ran down the specific left/right divide i.e. the left were not the only Eurosceptics.

Factions within Labour were labelled in 'The Struggle for Labour's Soul'. The Old Left has been identified as a faction which existed from 1945 – 1964 which ideologically exists between the Labour right and the Marxist left who believe that the Labour Party is not an adequate vehicle for socialist transformation within Britain. They emphasised the importance of economic reform and pushed for socialist economic policies including public ownership. The New Left, on the other hand, is the 'second wave' and 'third wave' of the left that emerged in 1970 and 2015 which not only focused on economic issues but also social equality as well, including civil rights, gender politics (i.e. feminism) and LGBT+ rights. The centre have, according to Garnett, been overlooked because there 'is a definite tendency for media commentators and academic researchers to focus on the flanks of successful democratic parties at the expense of the centre' but they are arguably successful as they have an 'enduring ability to keep the show on the road' (Beech et al, 2018). It should, however, be noted that the centre of the Labour Party is not static and has changed over time, for example a Labour centrist in 2015 (pro-Europeanism, socially liberal and generally opposed to mass nationalisation) is not ideologically similar to a Labour centrist in the 1940s (perhaps more sceptical of Europe, socially conservative and likely to have a more favourable opinion of nationalisation).

There is also a difference between Labourism and Labour centrism, whilst the former's ideology is essentially 'party first' the latter does have a unique place within the party with stances on issues throughout Labour history which may differ from the Labour left or right. It should also be noted, however, that the positioning of the different wings within the Labour Party is not static and is impacted by the wider political landscape, for example the Labour right in the post-war consensus is vastly different to the Labour right post-

Thatcherism as Thatcher's premiership shifted the political centre (also known as the 'Overton Window') towards the right and the Labour Party adjusted accordingly (Lowe, 2017).

Whilst the Old Left came from a Bevanite tradition, the Old Right was from the Gaitskellite ideology of close links with unions, were Atlantacist, pro-investment in public services including defence (pro-NATO and pro-having nuclear weapons), pro-growth and pro-globalisation. Finally, there are the progressives who are essentially defined as those who supported New Labour alongside the Blairites and Brownites who succeeded the New Labour governments. They are supporters of public investment and were much more socially liberal compared to the Old Right. Although this definition is helpful when looking through the lens of the New Labour government it isn't necessarily helpful when looking at the New Right post-New Labour because political circumstances have changed since the global financial crisis and Brexit. Progressive Britain – known as Progress from 1996-2021 – aim to represent this faction within the party and describe their aims as seeking to 'discuss, develop and advance the means to create a more free, equal and democratic Britain, which plays an active role in Europe and the wider world. Diverse and inclusive, we work to improve the level and quality of debate both within the Labour party, and between the party and the wider progressive community' (Blears et al, 2012, 1).

Table 5: Defining Labour's factions

Policy issue \ Faction	Old Left	New Left	Centrist	Old Right	Progressives
Unilateralism	🟩	🟩	🟥	🟥	🟥
Nationalisation	🟩	🟩	🟨	🟨	🟥
Social liberalism	🟨	🟩	🟨	🟥	🟩
Pro-Europeanism	🟥	🟨	🟨	🟨	🟩
Atlanticism	🟥	🟥	🟨	🟩	🟩
NATO	🟩	🟨	🟩	🟩	🟩
Globalisation	🟥	🟥	🟨	🟩	🟩

Broadly supportive
Mixed/ambiguous
Broadly oppose

Source: Beech et al, 2018

These different factions aimed to control aspects of the Labour Party and its internal culture over debates such as to whether there should be a party of the working class, on gender politics, on whether Labour should be a party of socialism or revisionism, how the party should manage the state, the issue of the relationship with Europe (via the European Economic Community

and then the European Union) and finally on how a Labour government would manage defence policy in the UK including the debate over whether or not to maintain nuclear weapons/unilateralism vs multilateralism although it should be noted that the ever changing political landscape in Britain has changed throughout time and that some policy positions adopted by certain factions are not static.

Whilst the discussion about the Labour right splits have been touched upon it is also important to note the next phase: the fragmentation of the social democratic right between the Labour loyalists and those who would support creating a new party: the defectors. Following the 1979 election defeat the PLP elected Michael Foot as Labour leader, considered to be on the left of the party. Foot offered a platform which much of the Labour right disagreed with, from unilateral nuclear disarmament, mass nationalisation and opposition to the European Economic Community but was still able to gain support from much of the PLP due to his experience in government and was considered a better option to unite the party compared to Healey due to his personal popularity as an MP (BBC News, 1980). On the issue of Europe Meredith argues that 'the true story of the formation of the SDP begins here in early 1971 as the European Community became another issue for instant opposition to the Conservative government' (Meredith, 2013). As mentioned earlier in the chapter the division on the social democratic right over the European question drove a wedge within the faction as some were supportive of joining the common market and others were more hostile, although much of the Labour right were less hostile to the idea in the 1980s compared to the 1960s and that there was opposition from the Labour right to Foot's policy on Europe.

Over time the accumulation of differences by some on the social democratic right led to some on that wing of the party to consider leaving Labour altogether. This split between loyalists and defectors did not arise just from one single issue:

'Rather, the roots of the SDP involved a gradual process of alienation from both the wider party (left) and traditional ('hard' or 'trade union') 'labourist' colleagues of the 'Labour right' itself. Seemingly irrevocable differences over a range of policy themes and developments revealed the emergence of fundamental conceptual and philosophical as well as political disparities of Labour revisionism and the complex and composite 'Labour right'' (Meredith, 2019).

Whilst some wanted to stay and fight for their values within the party this position was untenable for others, Mark Stewart's autobiography noted that John Smith was Labour to the core and that the party was part of his identity, many within the party will think the party is theirs (Stuart, 2005). Following a controversial conference at Wembley, four senior Labour politicians – known as the 'gang of four' – issued a statement known as the Limehouse Declaration which stated that they would be leaving the Labour Party and would form a new party: the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The 'gang of four' weren't the only problem for Labour as 24 more MPs, councillors and members left too which was a big blow to the party (Atkins and Gaffney, 2017: 27; Burns et al, 1994: 58). Roe-Crines noted that Michael Foot had aimed to keep the party together, but some social democrats took the step to leave Labour regardless. This split impacted the public perception of the Labour Party and from every IPSOS Mori poll from November 1981 – February 1982 Labour were behind the SDP/Liberal Alliance, with one poll (27th November – 1st December 1981) showing Labour third behind the Alliance and the Conservatives – prior to late 1981 Labour led in every poll published from January 1981 – October 1981, with one poll putting the party on 45% - 10% ahead of the Conservatives and 28% ahead of the SDP (IPSOS Mori, 1987). Ultimately this split, combined with increased support for the Conservative Party following the Falklands War, put the Labour

Party in a weak position for the next general election and Foot would end up losing seats and his control of the party. Whilst Foot was unable to keep the PLP united, Roe-Crines notes that Foot's leadership on the matter of party management could not simply be defined as a disaster: 'Foot's role as leader was to keep the Party together; to prevent a considerably greater splintering of social democrats towards the SDP, and to prevent an outside left incursion into the Parliamentary leadership… Foot did not preside over a mass desertion of Labour's social democrats, nor did his election herald an era of unmanageable outside left infiltration into the mainstream of the Party' (Crines, 2011). It should be noted, however, that the loyalty from some MPs wasn't necessarily to Michael Foot as leader but, rather, the Labour Party as an institution (Hattersley, 1981).

Meredith wrote about the era of Tony Blair where he stated that 'the Blair led Labour Party is a direct successor of the Labour party of the past'. Meredith then goes on to say that Labour has a complex political culture and backs this up with quotes from two scholars: 'Labour's complex political culture has always been (and is) a combination of mutually dependent, continuously competing 'ways of life', each in search of dominance or even hegemony' and '[the] Labour party as an 'organisation sheltering a mixture' of cultures and traditions (or 'segments' and 'strategies' in his terms) 'whose divergent interests and aspirations frequently brought them into conflict' and were often incompatible' (Bale, 1999; Warde, 1982). This idea that divisions within Labour are intergenerational, rather than isolated, points towards a party that will constantly hold differences on fundamental issues regardless of who is in charge of the party. One reason this could be is that under the First Past the Post the largest parties are broad coalitions of people who, may agree on some issues, but have fundamental differences on others – under a different voting system where more parties are likely to succeed would it be likely to see Jeremy Corbyn and Tony Blair within the same political party? Probably not

due to their clear differences on issues such as foreign policy and domestic affairs. Labour suffers with these issues more frequently arguably due to the nature of being a party of factions compared to the Conservatives who are arguably a party of tendencies. His work goes on to argue that New Labour is not a break from the past but a manifestation of the dominance of a Labour faction/way of life, in this case the right of the party, including much of the PLP, winning control of the party and beating their adversaries. Although it is noted that the Labour right have taken control of the party in this period of time, Meredith states that the Labour right changed throughout the decades. The control of the party over the decades, as previously noted, included the effective marginalisation of the left which was championed by Blair. Panitch and Leys note that 'since the 1980s, the Labour left had been effectively marginalised within the structures of the party' and Scott Lavery stated these decisions included removing the left's core policy commitments and by concentrating policymaking powers to the leadership of the party which was run by the right (Lavery, 2018, 193). Blair's priority was the modernisation of the Labour Party and that included marginalising the left, he was ultimately successful in doing so as he and his supporters maintained control of the party throughout his premiership.

3.2.1 Difficulties of left-right distinction

There are certain difficulties when looking at the idea of a linear left-right distinction when looking at the Labour Party because attitudes and the wider political context change over time. Not only does policy salience evolve over time but there is also zig-zagging over political issues and perhaps some ideological deviance, for example the Labour right did not have a unified position on the common market so some who would be identified as the Labour right would be aligned with the Labour left on this issue and, on the flip side, there may be figures on the Labour left who would align with the Labour right on certain issues including a more sceptical approach to unilateralism. This shows that left-right definitions, on paper at least, are

simplistic and can be helpful to define key broader differences between the two however due to the zigzagging of issues by some politicians it would be wrong to say 'everybody on the Labour right/left agree on X issue'. One example of a Labour zigzagger was Ian Mikardo who was a member of the left-wing Tribune group and often agreed with the Labour left on issues such as unilateralism but sided with others in the party on the issue of Europe. He demanded a closer relationship with Europe as chairman of the 'Keep Left' organisation which promoted the idea of the 'Third Force' – the concept that Britain, with Europe, should be mediating between the capitalist USA and communist Soviet Union (Schneer, 1984: 206).

The discussion outlined in the chapter regarding the left-right debate within the Labour Party has created an assumption that the PLP has arguably promoted a more revisionist and social democratic outlook whilst the extra-parliamentary party has championed a more left wing and socialist leaning approach towards their vision of the country. This assumption can be linked to May's 'curvilinear disparity' theory which, if applied to the membership as outlined earlier on in the thesis, states that the Labour membership has been more ideological than the leadership of the party (perhaps with the exception of Corbyn). With an ideological membership who want to see Labour promote a more socialist vision perhaps this can explain the demand by the left for democratising the party to not only empower the more left leaning membership and trade unions but also to reduce the power of the broadly social democratic and revisionist PLP. The caveat to this point is that although the membership may have been to the left of the leadership throughout much of Labour's history it does not mean that they were not broadly supportive – or critically supportive – of the leadership, for example Blair's polling was substantially large following his election as leader, at one point the Labour Party reached 62% support in two separate Gallup/Telegraph polls (which would've included support from socialists and trade unionists), however this decreased over time (UK Polling Report, 2021).

Although the left were successful in achieving reforms, including getting the Labour Party to adopt the electoral college which took power away from the PLP, the Labour right also managed to reassert their authority. Following an attempt by the left to topple Kinnock as Labour leader reforms were made to make it harder for the arguably marginalised left within the PLP to force a leadership challenge by raising the nomination threshold but also Tony Blair was successful in changing Clause IV, a move which Gaitskell himself failed to achieve.

When looking at the distinctiveness of Corbyn the issue of ideological positioning within the party at certain periods of time should be considered. The left of the party has changed and evolved over time, as indeed has the right of the party. Michael Foot, for example, is a left-winger who could be considered within the same school of thought as the Bevanites (who were on the ideological left during the post-war years), however he was not a Bennite and, during his leadership of the party, Bennites were positioned on the left of the party. That is to say that although he may have agreed with figures like Tony Benn on many issues, the left of the party (i.e. the Bennites) were not in charge nor did they represent all wing left wingers/MPs. Whilst Benn, and indeed Bevan, were key figures representing the ideological left of the party, they did not manage to become Labour leader. Corbyn, on the other hand, who was on the left of the party, did become leader.

Finally, when discussing Corbyn's leadership of the party it can be argued that his case study is an exceptional one due to rule changes for leader. Whilst historically every Labour leader has required support from the PLP, from the direct PLP ballot to the electoral college where the PLP had significant influence, Corbyn is pretty much an exception to this rule because he was elected as Labour leader via OMOV, without a mandate from the PLP. Due to how little support he had in the campaign from Labour MPs this arguably intensified the difficulties that PLP party management would create for any Labour leader. However, having support from MPs

does not necessarily ensure success because although Foot was elected by the PLP he did not have their loyalty for long as soon as they saw him as a liability.

3.3 <u>The Labour Party under Corbyn: Party Management and the Parliamentary Labour Party</u>

The leader of the Labour Party is not only the leader of the party but also the leader of the party in Parliament and, indeed, Labour's candidate for Prime Minister. This section will look at the hostility towards Corbyn, followed by attempts to remove him as leader. When Corbyn was elected as leader he was elected despite little support from Parliamentary colleagues and the relationship between him and the PLP was fragile from the very beginning. Jeremy Gilbert explained that one of the biggest challenges Corbyn faced as Labour leader was the opposition from his own MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Gilbert states that the most plausible explanation for the PLP's hostility towards Corbyn was because he represented a faction most Labour MPs did not align with and therefore they did not want him in power – that is to say that the majority of PLP did not want to support Corbyn's ideology or want a Labour government under his leadership: 'They were ideologically opposed to Corbyn's political and programmatic aims, believing that any attempt to carry out such a programme could only end in disaster' (Gilbert, 2021a: 206).

If this assumption is true, then it is important to look at the evidence so this section will look at the relationship between Corbyn and the PLP by glancing upon the hostility towards Corbyn by Labour MPs and the attempts by much of the PLP to remove Corbyn as Labour leader. The issue of personality over policy could also be looked at – it should also be mentioned that prior to becoming Labour leader Corbyn was a backbench MP for 32 years yet seemingly he made

very few allies within Parliament even though fellow MPs such as Margaret Beckett, who nominated Corbyn for Labour leader but regretted her decision to do so, called him 'nice' (BBC News, 2015d). This could have been perhaps due to unwillingness to work with colleagues during the New Labour governments or that Corbyn was detached from the PLP by being more attached to the extra-Parliamentary wing of the Labour Party.

3.3.1 Hostility towards Corbyn

Out of 232 MPs, just 36 nominated Corbyn for leader with only half actually being supportive of his candidacy in the contest. Six months after the leadership contest concluded a document was leaked from Corbyn allies to the media which showed a list of Labour MPs and how loyal they were to Corbyn's leadership. The document contained a table ranking MPs in the following criteria:

- Core group

- Core group plus

- Neutral but not hostile

- Core group negative

- Hostile group

The 'core group' were the MPs that were vocally supportive of the leadership and in total there were 19 MPs (including Corbyn himself and the list also mentioned the deceased Michael Meacher). There were 56 MPs who were part of 'core group plus' which were broadly supportive of his leadership whilst 73 were 'neutral but not hostile'. The final two groups were 'core group negative' and 'hostile' which were made up of 49 and 36 MPs respectively – they were identified as the MPs who were critical of his leadership. It seems the leaked document

was written up by a member of staff for the Leader of the Opposition's office, while Corbyn's personal office and Corbyn himself denied involvement (Pine, 2016). The document was even mocked by then Prime Minister David Cameron at Prime Ministers Questions (BBC News, 2016d). Andrew Roe-Crines, David Jeffrey and Timothy Heppell looked at patterns of opinion within the PLP, including votes within Parliament, and compared their findings with the aforementioned leaked list:

Table 6: Patterns of opinion within the Parliamentary Labour Party

Loyalty list position	Number =	Immigration – open door controls			Syria intervention			Trident renewal			Confidence	
		Support	Neutral	Opposed	Opposed	Neutral	Support	Oppose	Neutral	Support	Yes	No
Loyal (core group and core group plus)	74	65	6	3	68	0	6	24	0	50	30	44
Neutral	68	48	15	5	57	0	11	14	0	54	7	61
Hostile (core group negative and hostile)	79	48	22	9	32	1	46	8	0	71	1	78
Not placed	9	8	0	1	6	0	3	2	0	7	2	7
N=	**230**	**169**	**43**	**18**	**163**	**1**	**66**	**48**	**0**	**182**	**40**	**170**

In support of Corbyn's official position
Neutral
Opposed to Corbyn's official position

Source: Roe-Crines et al, 2018

Commenting on the relationship between those on the leaked list and their own findings the authors said:

> The variance of opinion across the three ideological variables did not show clear evidence of clearly defined factions, rather it shows a myriad of opinions within the PLP. When we put together the findings… linking ideological disposition across the three variables of immigration, Syrian intervention and Trident renewal, it does show a willingness for those disagreeing with Corbyn to vote against him. However, it also shows that over half of those who were supposedly in the loyal grouping voted against him (Roe-Crines et al, 2018, 16)

This shows that even MPs who were assumed to be broadly supportive towards Corbyn's leadership by those close to Corbyn and broadly voted in favour of Corbyn's official position ended up opposing his leadership. Given this revelation this perhaps indicates that personality played a role in the hostility to Corbyn because the table shows that there isn't necessarily hostility towards policy. A good leader is one who needs good management skills, given that most Labour MPs still ended up opposing his leadership despite minimal resistance to the policy direction this perhaps shows Corbyn was unable to manage the PLP.

Crines et al's work is very helpful when looking at the PLP's support for key policies advocated by Corbyn however this data is also limited due to the fact this table only references MPs who sat in the 2015 – 2017 Parliament. To build on Crines et al's work is it useful to compare the voting records of the MPs referenced in the table to the newly elected MPs in the 2017 general election who sat in the 2017-2019 Parliament to see whether the new intake of MPs were more supportive of Corbyn's platform compared to the Labour MPs in the 2015 – 2017 Parliament.

A comparison is not perfect due to the fact the specific bills MPs voted on in 2015 – 2017 and 2017 – 2019 are different however because the broad issues are similar the comparison can still be valid. In the 2017 general election 47 new Labour MPs took up seats in the House of Commons, 30 were from Labour gaining seats and 17 were new MPs replacing incumbents who decided not to stand again e.g. due to retirement (LabourList, 2017).

Crines et al's work looked at how MPs voted on policies such as immigration reform, Trident and military intervention in Syria so to make a fair comparison this work will look at votes on pieces of legislation related to these areas. When looking at immigration reform the voting record of the Immigration and Social Security Co-Ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill – Second Reading – UK Immigration Controls for EU Citizens bill will be analysed – the bill looked at making European Union, European Economic Area and Swiss nationals subject to new UK immigration controls which did not explicitly allow the right to enter and remain in the UK in comparison to Irish citizens. Corbyn whipped Labour MPs to vote against the motion. 297 MPs voted for the motion, 234 voted against (TheyWorkForYou, 2018a).

On Trident there was only one vote on the issue during the 2017 – 2019 Parliament which was the Trident Nuclear Missile Programme – Continuous At-Sea Deterrent motion. Corbyn whipped Labour MPs to abstain on the motion despite his historic opposition to nuclear weapons. 241 MPs voted for, 33 against (The Public Whip, 2019). Whilst no votes were taken on specific military action in Syria there was motion which demanded a requirement for the government to seek MPs' approval before being allowed to launch military operations abroad, much of this debate referenced military intervention in Syria in particular the UK government's missile strikes in Douma, Syria (Walker, 2018). Jeremy Corbyn whipped Labour MPs to vote

no as the motion was tabled by the government. 317 MPs voted for the motion, 256 voted against (TheyWorkForYou, 2018b). The table below looks at how the 2017 intake of Labour MPs voted with Corbyn's whip on the aforementioned votes:

Table 7: Patterns of opinion within the Parliamentary Labour Party (2017 MP intake)

Loyalty list position	Number =	Immigration – open door controls			Syria intervention*			Trident renewal		
		Support	Neutral	Opposed	Opposed	Neutral	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Support
2017 intake	47	40	7* (6 Labour MPs plus Jared O'Mara – he had the whip removed at the time of this vote)	0	44	3* (2 Labour MPs plus Jared O'Mara – he had the whip removed at the time of this vote)	0	40	0	7

In support of Corbyn's official position
Neutral
Opposed to Corbyn's official position

Source: Crines et al, 2018

Crines et al's work shows that support for Corbyn's policy positions were not as hostile as initially expected given the PLP's hostility to Corbyn's leadership, the same idea is extended

to the MPs elected in the 2017 – 2019 Parliament. The table shows little opposition to the policy positions advocated by Corbyn on these issues with the only rebellion being 7 out of the 47 MPs opposing Corbyn's stance to stay neutral on supporting Trident renewal. The data seems to suggest that those in charge of selections – in some cases the members in CLPs selected candidates and in other cases the NEC directly selected candidates, were selecting candidates who were more left leaning (i.e. sympathetic/supportive of the politics of Corbyn) compared to previous elections. This suggests, perhaps, a generational shift within the party. Many of these MPs may remain as MPs for a long time and could continue to push the politics of the left which has a long term impact not just within the terms of the debate within the Labour Party but also these MPs are likely to continue to make contributions in favour of the left in public life either within Parliament or in public discussions i.e. within the media.

When it comes to voting behaviours and rebellious MPs it should be noted that, according to Philip Cowley, that the most rebellious MP during the New Labour years was Jeremy Corbyn who rebelled at a rate of around 20% (Morris, 2010). Perhaps it could be hard to argue that MPs should be loyal to Corbyn's whip considering how often he was willing to break the whip under former Labour leaders. One MP articulated this view in 2015: Mike Gapes, who would later leave the party and join the Independent Group, said: 'Jeremy Corbyn can't expect me to be any more loyal to the Labour Party under his leadership than he was to the leadership of Neil Kinnock, John Smith, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Margaret Beckett, Harriet Harman or Ed Miliband' (Phelps, 2015). There was also a demand from Julian Baggini for Corbyn to scrap the whip because it would make him look like a 'hypocrite if he were to try to crack the whip that he himself so gleefully defied' but ultimately this did not happen as there seemed little meaningful demand from other political actors to call for this to be implemented. There was also tension between the leader and the deputy leader and, although Watson did not rebel often,

he was publicly critical of Corbyn on a few occasions and was accused of using Brexit to drive a wedge between Corbyn and Labour activists (Mohdin, 2019). In response Jon Lansman, a Corbyn ally on the NEC, proposed abolishing the deputy leadership post. The move received huge backlash from much of the PLP so, perhaps to build bridges, Corbyn intervened and proposed reviewing the position via a democratic manner at conference instead and said he enjoyed working with Watson (Mohdin, 2019).

There are more allegations that there was tension between the deputy leader of the Labour Party, Tom Watson, and Corbyn. In 2015 the deputy leadership contest was held at the same time as the leadership race and Tom Watson won with his own mandate to hold the position of deputy leader. Although Watson claimed he 'never had cross words' with Corbyn (Standard, 2020), there were political differences between the two and actions promoted by the deputy which caused a clash at the top of the party. One early sign of tension between the two was following Corbyn's decision to sack Michael Dugher from the shadow cabinet in January 2016. This received backlash from Watson who said 'Labour's loss in the shadow cabinet will be compensated by Michael's free thought on the backbenches' (Morris, 2016a). However, one of the biggest clashes between the two leaders was to emerge later that year, following the mass resignation of MPs in 2016 Watson had tried to convince Corbyn to stand down as leader and then went on to publicly say 'my party is in peril, we are facing an existential crisis. I'd like to apologise to the country for the mess they are seeing in Westminster right now' (Cupurro, 2018; Bulman, 2017).

Alongside this Corbyn allegedly told Watson he was peddling 'dangerous conspiracy theories' and 'nonsense' following Watson's allegation that 'Trotsky entryists' were 'explicitly targeting Young Labour and Labour student clubs with the aim of recruiting new members' in that same

leadership contest (Sky News, 2016a). Tension seemed to subside following the 2017 election result however in early 2019 Watson set up his own grouping within the Parliamentary Labour Party called the 'Future Britain Group' which aimed to represent the social democrats in the PLP and to offer policies in an attempt to widen the appeal of the party (Schofield, 2019). Tensions were maintained and escalated that year following the attempt for Corbyn allies to add an additional deputy leader to the party with the aim of gender balance, this would've weakened Watson's position within the party and this was seen by Watson as the 'end of the road' (Mudie and Nelson, 2019).

Watson even held secret talks with Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson to stand as their candidate in the Lewes constituency, however Watson instead resigned as deputy leader in the run-up to the 2019 election and publicly showed his support for the Labour Party (Pogrund and Maguire, 2020). This shows that Corbyn received hostility from fellow MPs including the deputy leader himself, with such opposition at such a high level this seems to validate Gilbert's argument. It shows that even MPs who agreed with Corbyn on key policy issues ended up opposing his leadership and that Corbyn's rebellious past could mean that he would struggle to gain authority amongst those who are ideologically opposed to him.

3.3.2 Attempts to remove Corbyn from the leadership

A leader may experience problems when managing a political party, however to maintain the position they will potentially need to deal with direct challenges to their authority. If they are unable to do so this could weaken their position and, indeed, lead to their downfall. Around one month after Corbyn became leader the then-MP for Oldham West, Michael Meacher, passed away after a short illness which ultimately led to a by-election in the constituency. Some political commentators were speculating that UKIP could gain the seat from Labour (Wilson,

2015). Twenty three polls published between Corbyn's leadership victory and the Oldham West by-election, all polls showed Labour far behind the Tories (ranging from 4-13%) whilst support for UKIP was around the 14-15% region (UK Polling Report, 2021). No constituency polling was published for the by-election but the relatively high UKIP polling, alongside strong performances in previous by-elections, was alarming on the Labour side. With the election in December 2015 some MPs who were unhappy with the result of the leadership election just two months prior saw this as an opportunity to oust Corbyn from the leadership with talks of a leadership challenge circulating around already.

Whilst a challenge in 2015 did not go ahead there was one in 2016. Around 9 months into Corbyn's leadership, following the EU referendum (Labour campaigned for remain and remain lost), Labour MPs began to take proactive measures to remove Corbyn as Labour leader. Not only did a large number of MPs participate in rolling resignations but the PLP organised a non-procedural no confidence vote in Corbyn's leadership where 178 MPs declared no confidence whilst just 40 were confident in his leadership (Hindmoor, 2019: 274). The Corbynsceptics dominated the PLP to the extent that if there was not an important rule change made before the 2016 leadership election (which meant that the incumbent leader would automatically be on the ballot paper without needing nominations) then the Corbynite MPs would not have been able to nominate Corbyn for leader. The large number of resignations from the frontbench meant that Corbyn's initially appointed shadow cabinet, dubbed 'the broadest-based Shadow Cabinet during my membership of the Labour Party, in political terms' by Duncan Hall, had collapsed (Hall, 2015). As Corbyn could no longer form a shadow cabinet from different wings of the party he was able to attempt to build a shadow cabinet which was more aligned to his leadership and this included putting allies in positions including Clive Lewis as shadow defence secretary, Rebecca Long-Bailey as shadow chief secretary to the treasury and Richard

Burgon as shadow justice secretary. The exodus of MPs from the shadow cabinet and lack of support for his leadership, however, also meant that there were not enough MPs to fill shadow cabinet roles which led to some MPs holding more than one job at a time; Emily Thornberry held the positions of shadow foreign secretary and shadow Brexit secretary; Paul Flynn was shadow leader of the house and shadow Welsh secretary; Dave Anderson was shadow Scottish secretary and shadow Northern Ireland secretary; Angela Rayner was the shadow minister for women/equalities and shadow education secretary; Grahame Morris was shadow communities secretary and shadow minister for constitutional convention; and Jon Trickett held three roles: he was shadow business secretary, shadow Lord President of the Council and party campaign/elections chair (Datoo, 2016). With a lack of key supporters in the PLP it was going to be a challenge for Corbyn to manage the wider PLP, he even jokingly was asked 'who is easier to keep control of, 10 year olds or the Parliamentary Labour Party' and he immediately responded '10 year olds' (Telegraph, 2017).

Given all of this information it is interesting to note that Corbynsceptics took proactive measures to remove Corbyn as leader beyond the formal mechanisms within the Labour Party; they resigned en-masse which made it difficult to form a shadow cabinet; they organised a non-procedural confidence vote; and attempted, via the NEC, to prevent Corbyn from standing from the leadership unless he received nominations from the PLP (perhaps knowing that he wasn't going to be able to get the numbers). Instead of organising for a direct and procedural leadership challenge they took these measures instead. Why was this the case? One reason why was because perhaps they did not think they could win a leadership challenge against Corbyn and the outcome of the 2016 leadership election, where Corbyn increased his majority, could verify this assumption. These attempts to remove Corbyn via these mechanisms show that most of

the PLP were disloyal to his leadership, willing to defy democratic norms and were ultimately incompetent in this area as they were unable to achieve their desired goals.

The attempts to destabilise Corbyn's leadership then set the groundwork for a formal leadership challenge from Corbyn's sceptics. Both Owen Smith and Angela Eagle launched leadership bids with Eagle withdrawing her candidacy as Smith received more support from Parliamentary colleagues (Perkins, 2016). The party then went into the nomination stage to see which sections of the party wanted each candidate, between Corbyn and Smith, was supported by whom.

Table 8: Nominations for the 2016 Labour Party leadership election

	Trade unions	CLPs	MPs
Jeremy Corbyn	8	285	-
Owen Smith	2	53	162 (ITV News, 2016)
Angela Eagle*	0	0* *Withdrew before CLP nominations	44* *Some MPs that endorsed Eagle then went on to support Smith
Undeclared	2	308	52

Source: BBC News, 2016c; McSmith, 2016; Smith and Bloom, 2016

Following the nomination stage was the campaign period where both candidates aimed to reach out to the selectorate to win, campaigning with rallies, phone banks and 8 hustings between the two candidates to appeal to voters. The only poll to be published in the campaign was by YouGov which predicted that Corbyn would win the contest with 62% of the vote (57% of members, 74% of registered supporters and 62% of affiliates) whilst Smith was polling at 38% (43% of members, 26% of registered supporters and 38% of affiliates) (YouGov, 2016). The percentage of the vote predicted in the poll reflected the outcome of the result with Corbyn

winning 61.8% (59% of members, 69.9% of registered supporters and 60.2% of affiliates) with Smith on 38.2% (41% of members, 30.1% of registered supporters and 39.8% of affiliates).

Corbyn was able to form a coalition of voters in the party to win a second (and increased) mandate within the party. Challenging less than a year after a leadership contest which Corbyn also won by a landslide was arguably not the best move for Corbynsceptics and Jon Ashworth, the shadow health secretary under Corbyn, would later go on to say in a leaked audio clip to his friend just days before the 2019 election: 'we fucked it up in 2016 when we went too early (for a leadership challenge)' (Mason, 2019a). Although Corbyn received substantial support from the wider membership and the trade unions it was clear that not having the vast majority of the PLP on board could lead to some difficulties and, indeed, many MPs did directly try to remove Corbyn from his position via mass resignations, a no-confidence vote and the vast majority of PLP support going to Owen Smith. This showed how little support Corbyn had from the PLP which seemingly validates Gilbert's argument that the PLP did not want Corbyn as leader.

Gilbert's key explanation for the PLP's hostility towards Corbyn was due to the fact he represented a faction that they did not want to see in power. Looking at the evidence it is clear the hostility from Parliamentary colleagues was widespread with attempts to remove him – this showed that Corbyn was not able to build an effective relationship with the PLP or, indeed, his deputy throughout him time as leader. It should be mentioned that some MPs supported Corbyn in the voting lobbies in Parliament numerous times on key issues that Corbyn supported personally but still wanted Corbyn to leave, showing that it is not necessarily true for all MPs that they wanted Corbyn gone because they disagree with him on certain policy areas, however some MPs were not only opposed to Corbyn's leadership but some key policy areas too and

were rallying around an arguably hostile deputy leader and his Future Britain Group. Given the large amount of evidence showing hostility towards Corbyn personally and his platform Gilbert's argument certainly has its merits, and his assumption can be backed up.

3.4 The Labour Party under Corbyn: Party Management and the Extra-Parliamentary Party

Jeremy Corbyn received hostility from the Parliamentary Labour Party, however the structure of the Labour Party goes beyond the PLP as the party is also made up of an extra-Parliamentary wing made up of the Labour members, trade unions and organisations that are affiliated to the party: the extra-Parliamentary party (ePLP). Prior to becoming Labour leader Corbyn was heavily involved in campaigns which were supported by much of the ePLP, examples include his opposition to the Iraq war. In 2006, 49% of Labour members stated that they believed military action should not have been taken against Iraq, and his support for the Miner's Strike which was supported by numerous (but not all) unions (Channel 4 News, 2006; Trade Union Congress Library Collections, 2014). Whilst it is important to note that the ePLP is not homogenous it seems that much of the ePLP is more left wing than the PLP and have had campaigns overlap with Corbyn's own personal ideology which is consistent with the discussion on May's Curvilinear Disparity outlined earlier in the thesis. Whilst Corbyn was unable to gain adequate support from fellow MPs the opposite can be argued in regard to his relationship with the ePLP following his election as leader of the party on two occasions. This section will look at Corbyn's historic relationship with the ePLP, the support Corbyn gathered in the leadership elections and how he managed to maintain support from members, unions, and affiliates.

3.4.1 <u>The relationship between Corbyn and the Labour Party membership</u>

Due to the nature of the 'one member, one vote' electoral system, in the two leadership elections Corbyn participated in, the power to elect a Labour leader laid in the hands of the ePLP (following PLP nominations with the exception of an incumbent remaining on the ballot in a leadership challenge) whilst under the former voting system, the electoral college, the PLP had disproportionate influence in the outcome of the leadership election. This essentially meant that the 2015 and 2016 Corbyn was able to gain a mandate to become leader and he managed to get it from the ePLP. Although Constituency Labour Parties did not have the power to ensure candidates could get on the ballot paper, they did have the power to nominate their preferred choice of leader in the 2015 and 2016 leadership elections which arguably gave a helpful indication of the mood of the membership of the party and their feelings towards Corbyn as a candidate for Labour leader.

Table 9: Nominations from CLPs for the 2015 and 2016 Labour leadership contests

Leadership election	Nominations from CLPs (%)	Votes from members (%)
2015	23.53% 152 CLPs	49.6% 121,751 votes
2016	44.12% 285 CLPs	59% 168,216 votes

Source: Belfast Telegraph, 2016; Asthana, 2016a

It should be noted in the 2015 leadership election there were four candidates who made it onto the final ballot whilst in 2016 there was just two, hence why there is a large percentage difference between the two contests for nominations. Corbyn's nearest opponent in terms of CLP nominations in 2015 was Andy Burnham who received the nominations of 111 CLPs

(17.18%), followed by Yvette Cooper with 109 nominations (16.87%) and Liz Kendall with 18 nominations (2.37%). 256 CLPs, making up 39.63%, were undeclared (LabourList, 2015a). In 2016 Corbyn received 285 nominations whilst challenger Owen Smith received 53 (8.2%) with 308 CLPs (47.68%) not declaring any nomination (Elgot, 2016b).

In both leadership elections Corbyn won overwhelming support from the members, winning almost a majority of the votes from members in the first round in the 2015 leadership election (26.9% ahead of his nearest opponent, Burnham) and winning with 59% amongst the membership in 2016. It is clear to see that Corbyn received a mandate from the membership to lead the Labour Party not just on one occasion, but twice by an overwhelming majority.

The support for Corbyn from Labour members remained throughout the entirety of his leadership where approval ratings were never more negative than positive. At the height of Corbyn's popularity as leader, summarised by a YouGov poll published in March 2018, 81% of Labour members though he was doing 'well' with just 19% saying he was doing 'badly', although this decreased over a year later his approval ratings fell with 56% rating his leadership as doing 'well' with 43% saying he was doing 'badly' (Smith, 2019a). The table below shows the support for Corbyn from Labour members with reference to the two leadership elections and the aforementioned YouGov polls.

Table 10: Support for Jeremy Corbyn amongst Labour Party members
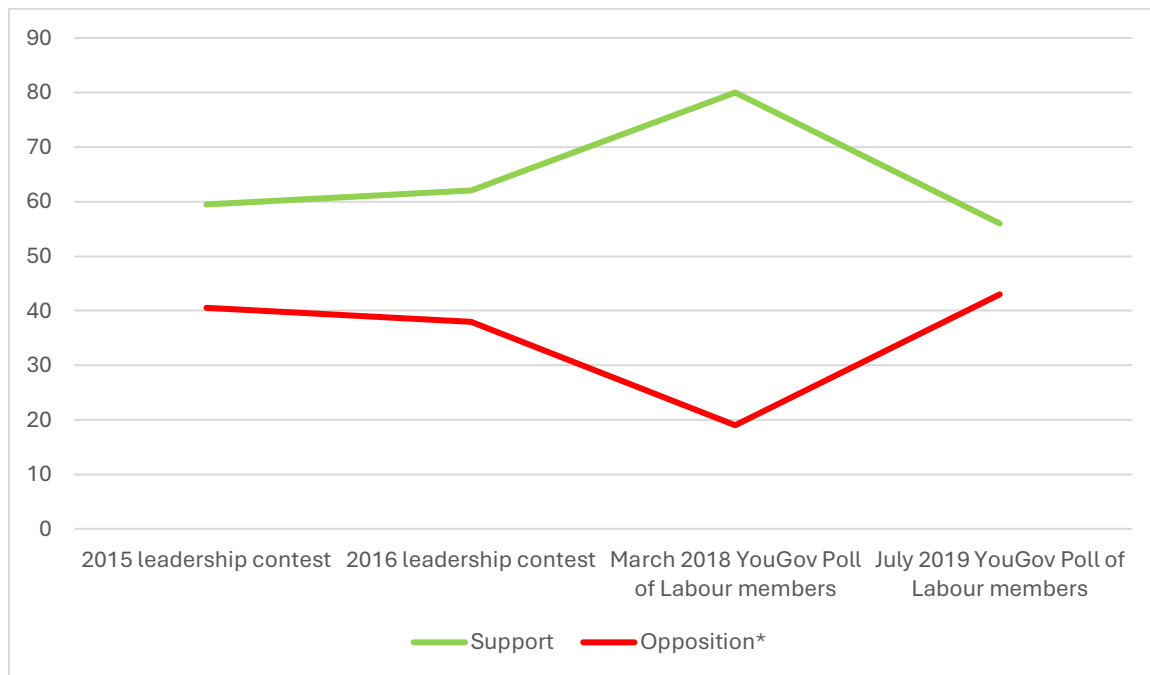
Source: Smith, 2019a

The Brexit division seemed to have impacted Corbyn's popularity with 56% of Labour members saying Corbyn handled the issue of Brexit poorly between the time period of the YouGov polls (Smith, 2019a). A YouGov poll published in September 2018 found that 86% of Labour members wanted a 'People's Vote' on any Brexit deal with 8% opposing the idea, this was at a time where the Labour leadership under Corbyn were hesitant to support another referendum on the EU, instead opting for negotiating a deal on Labour's terms and passing it in Parliament (Sparrow, 2018). Despite the overwhelming support for a policy position that Corbyn was relucent to adopt it seemed that Labour members were still supportive of Corbyn's leadership. One of the most well-known tendencies within the party that supported his leadership but wanted to pressure the party to change direction on a policy was Another Europe Is Possible, who promoted merchandise such as 'Love Corbyn, Hate Brexit' t-shirts heavily at Labour's 2019 conference (Kogan, 2019, 389). It took until January 29th 2019 for Corbyn to whip MPs in support of the option of a public vote (Mason, 2019), he also whipped in favour of another referendum on the EU on 27th March 2019 and on 1st April 2019 (TheyWorkForYou,

2019; Mance et al, 2019). Despite this the mood from the ePLP had shifted away from Corbyn despite still receiving majority support from the members.

3.4.2 The relationship between Corbyn and the trade unions, affiliated organisations, and registered supporters

Whilst the membership are a large section of the ePLP they are not the only actors. Trade unions, affiliated organisations and registered supporters also had a say in both leadership elections. Unions and affiliated organisations, like CLPs, had the power to nominate their preferred choice for leader although they did not have the power to ensure a candidate could get onto the final ballot. Here is how unions and affiliated organisations nominated in both leadership contests.

Table 11: Nominations from trade unions and affiliates in the 2015 and 2016 Labour leadership elections

Leadership election	Nominations from unions (%)	Nominations from affiliates which ended up submitting nominations (%)
2015	70.05%	50%
2016	71.57%	25%

Source: LabourList, 2016

Corbyn received an overwhelming majority of nominations from unions in both leadership contests, however the picture is more mixed amongst affiliated organisations. In the 2015 leadership election just 4 affiliated organisations out of 22 decided to nominate with 2 nominating Corbyn, whilst in 2016 just 1 affiliated organisation nominated Corbyn, 3 nominated Smith and 19 did not nominate at all (Singleton, 2016). Given the fact there were many affiliated organisations which did not nominate it is hard to gauge the opinion of the affiliated organisations at this stage.

Table 12: Votes from trade unions and affiliates in the 2015 and 2016 Labour leadership elections

Leadership election	Votes from unions/affiliated members (%)	Votes from registered supporters (%)
2015	57.6%	83.8%
2016	60.2%	69.9%

Source: Asthana, 2016a

In both the 2015 and 2016 leadership elections Corbyn received the most nominations from unions, the most nominations from CLPs, the most votes from members, the most votes from union members/members of affiliated organisations (despite the decrease in nominated support from affiliated organisations) and the most votes from registered supporters (Zodgekar and Durrant, 2020).

Whilst it is important to look at unions within the party it is important to note the discussions about unions outside of Labour shifting their stance towards the Labour Party. Following Corbyn's election as leader in 2015 the Fire Brigades Union, who decided to disaffiliate from the party in 2004 following a 'dispute in pay and conditions under the Blair government', decided via a special conference to reaffiliate to the Labour Party after delegates felt 'reinvigorated after the election as Jeremy Corbyn as leader' (Fire Brigades Union, 2015). The Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT), whilst not affiliated to the party, also released a statement in support of Corbyn in the run-up to the 2016 leadership election and, in 2018, stated they wanted to align the union towards Labour, encourage members to be active in the party and to support Corbyn's leadership but ultimately fell short of formally affiliating as it seemed 'branches and regions (were) finely balanced' on the issue (RMT, 2016; RMT, 2018).

Corbyn was very vocal in his support for trade unions and said, at Durham Miners' Gala in 2018, 'I'm proud to lead a party founded by trade unions, supported by trade unions and am proud to be a trade unionist myself' (Corbyn, 2018b). Corbyn also proactively promoted policies to empower trade unions noting that, if he were elected into power that, that 'one of the Labour government's first acts will be to repeal 'vicious' trade union legislation and he also wanted to teach children about the history of trade unionism in schools (Cowburn, 2017; ITV News, 2018). It was clear that Corbyn was very supportive of the unions and, in return, the unions were supportive in return of Corbyn's leadership of the party.

3.4.3 The relationship between Corbyn and the National Executive Committee

Corbyn was elected as leader of the Labour Party in early September 2015 with Labour conference taking place just weeks later. Labour conference is the key decision-making body within the party and, just weeks into starting his leadership, big decisions were going to be made at this conference including a seat on the NEC. The NEC help set the strategic direction of the party and make important decisions regarding the internal mechanisms of the party so a leader will need to have enough support on the NEC to ensure they have control over the internal functions of their own party. At conference a vote was held to decide the seat on the NEC to be held by the unions and Community, a Corbynsceptic union, were replaced by the left supporting Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union. This, alongside the replacement of Hilary Benn, a Corbynsceptic, with Rebecca Long-Bailey, who was on the left, the NEC, at the time, was narrowly tipped in favour of Corbyn's supporters (Bush, 2015a).

This narrow majority proved to be extremely important when the PLP eventually decided to launch a leadership challenge against Corbyn as the NEC decided the rules for the leadership contest. Although Corbyn's team were beaten on a discussion about how much registered supporters should pay to have a vote in the leadership contest, increasing from £3 to £25,

Corbyn did achieve an important victory in regard to nominations as the NEC decided the incumbent leader did not require MP nominations, which Corbyn would likely not have received, to get onto the leadership ballot (Stewart et al, 2016). A few months later, however, Corbyn supporters would lose their majority on the NEC following the introduction of Scottish and Welsh NEC representatives, both position at the time were occupied by Corbynsceptics (Elgot, 2016a). It should be noted, however, that in 2017 Kezia Dugdale stood down as Scottish Labour leader and in 2018 Carwyn Jones resigned as Welsh Labour leader for different reasons. The respective memberships in both Scotland and Wales elected candidates endorsed by the left for leader, tipping the balance back towards the left (Carrell, 2017; Morris, 2018). The left also won every seat in the 2016 and 2018 NEC elections (Pope, 2016b; Rodgers, 2018b).

Tom Quinn noted that a key reform that the left could pursue would be to lower the threshold for MP nominations for a leadership election to ensure a left winger will be able to get onto the ballot (Quinn, 2015). The left controlled NEC attempted to push through such a reform in 2015 aiming to reduce the threshold from 15% to 5%. After numerous discussions a compromise position, agreed to 'foster party unity', was reached and it was agreed the threshold would be 10% (Quinn, 2017). This threshold was revalued in 2018 where the threshold was changed from 10% of PLP nominations to 10% of PLP nominations alongside 5% of CLPs or at least 3 affiliated organisations (at least 2 unions) which represent 5% of the membership of unions and affiliated organisations (Johnston, 2020). At the same meeting of the NEC in 2018 also pushed through reforms which made it easier to allow for the deselection of sitting MPs which would require a 'third of local party branches or affiliated trade union branches to demand a full selection process' instead of the 50% threshold – this reform fell short of Momentum's demand for open Parliamentary selections but still gave more powers to grassroots members, who were more supportive of Corbyn's leadership, over candidate selection (Rodgers, 2018a). Another

key reform which was supported by the left included the addition of three additional seats to the NEC to be elected by the members, the seats would be won by Corbyn supporters (Cowburn, 2018b).

3.5 <u>Summary</u>

By looking at Corbyn's leadership within the wider context of Labour history and comparing to other leaders it can be easier to identify whether Corbyn was an effective party manager in regard to the PLP. It would be wrong to suggest that the dividing lines under the Corbyn years are solely isolated between 2015 – 2020 as the argument that the battles within Labour are intergenerational is a strong argument to make as factionalism began long before Corbyn's tenure as leader.

By looking at historical dividing lines, particularly between the left and right of the party, it can be easy to identify parallels between periods within Labour history and modern day Labour, for example the division between the left and the right of Labour has changed throughout time from Bevanites vs Gaitskellites, to Corbynites vs Corbynsceptics. Although the changing power from the PLP to the grassroots throughout the last few decades should also be taken into context, for example when Foot stood to be Labour leader he needed to win the support of the PLP and could not rely on the outside left, meanwhile Corbyn was able to build a coalition of voters in the Labour selectorate by embracing the outside left and encourage them to join the Labour Party to vote under OMOV.

The overarching question looked at whether Corbyn was effective at managing the Labour Party. Although many differences much of the PLP, for example on the issue of Trident, a second referendum and democratisation of the party, Corbyn made concessions on some issues perhaps as an attempt to unify the party for example respecting the Labour Party conference

decisions to maintaining Trident and supporting a second referendum alongside initially building a broad shadow cabinet made up of different wings of the party. However, the PLP challenged him for leader in 2016 and lost but some still continued to brief against him and publicly attack him in the mainstream media. Although there was a period of calm and a spirit of unity following the 2017 election, this unity did not last long the longer Brexit progressed. Corbyn aimed to unify the party, however it can be argued that he was ineffective at achieving this on the level of the PLP, however Corbyn's ability to annex and maintain the leadership was helped through his support from the extra-Parliamentary party.

Not only did Corbyn manage to maintain strong support from the grassroots from the wider membership to the trade union movement but the arrival of new members and the shifting of policy within the party helped grow the extra-Parliamentary wing of the party, further cementing his position as leader – even after a decline in popularity in 2019 due to the handling of Brexit he still maintained majority support from the people who had the power to elect the leader of the Labour Party. Whilst Corbyn was able to effectively manage the ePLP the key limitation to his style of leadership was the unprecedented lack of support from fellow Parliamentary colleagues, not necessarily due to substantial differing attitudes on some policy areas but due to him being personally unpopular amongst the PLP and that he represented a faction that Labour MPs didn't want in power. Whilst this chapter discussed Corbyn's party management, the next chapter will look at positioning and how Corbyn shifted the domestic agenda within the Labour Party, alongside his handling of the issues of Brexit and antisemitism.

Chapter 4: Positioning and decision making: Was Corbyn able to shift the Labour Party on key political issues?

'Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide' – Napoleon Bonaparte

4.1 Introduction

The next criterion of the Partycraft model concerns positioning and decision making, noting that an effective leader will be able to shift and mould their party, and their party's policy agenda, in their own image. The key substantive question in this chapter is: 'was Corbyn able to shift the Labour Party on key political issues?', and this chapter will look at whether or not he was able to shift the party towards the vision that he had promoted in both the 2015 and 2016 leadership contests, internal opposition to his policies, and how Corbyn handled decision making in regards to two major crises that facing the Labour Party during his leadership: the handling of Brexit, and the handling of antisemitism in the party. The assumption is, given what has been discussed about the policy platform in the 2017 and 2019 elections throughout this thesis, was that Corbyn was good at shifting the party on domestic issues but, given the outcome of the 2019 election result, an election that heavily focused on Brexit and increased scrutiny of Corbyn's record, that there were issues in the handling of Brexit and antisemitism in the party.

This chapter will look at how Corbyn managed to shift the domestic agenda within the Labour Party towards his policy agenda he had been promoting as a backbencher and leadership candidate, the shifting Brexit position alongside the responses to the party's changing stance from after the referendum to the 2019 general election, and the handling of antisemitism within

the party, including discussions over Corbyn's personal past and reports looking at the handling of the issue by the party leadership.

4.2 <u>Shifting the domestic agenda within the Labour Party</u>

4.2.1 <u>Academic discussions about positioning and manifestos</u>

Robert Manwaring and Evan Smith question the assumption, by much of the media and academic literature, that Corbyn's policy platform was much more radical and left wing in comparison to contemporary Labour manifestos. They used quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to analyse the 2017 manifesto under Corbyn and made 'qualitative comparisons with Labour's 1974, 1983, 1997, and 2015 manifestos' (Manwaring and Smith, 2020). They chose the two manifestos in 1974 because they were 'arguably the most boldly socialist manifestos produced by Labour since 1945', 1983 because it captures 'Labour before the Kinnock-Smith-Blair.. policy 'modernisation' process', the 1997 manifesto as it gives 'a strong flavour of New Labour's policy salience agenda', and 2015 as Miliband declared 'the period of New Labour over' and, therefore, see what Labour's policy platform was after the Blair and Brown administrations (Manwaring and Smith, 2020). They noted that much of the media framed Corbyn's manifesto as 'socialist', 'hard left', 'radical', and 'moving to the left', however by using data from the Manifesto Project Database (MARPOR) they found that, although Corbyn's manifesto was the most left wing manifesto since 1992, the manifesto was, according to the left/right (RILE) score, similar to the second 1974 manifesto and 1979 manifesto and much less left wing than the first 1974 manifesto.

Table 13: Labour Manifestos 1945-2015: Left/Right Score (RILE) from Manwaring and Smith
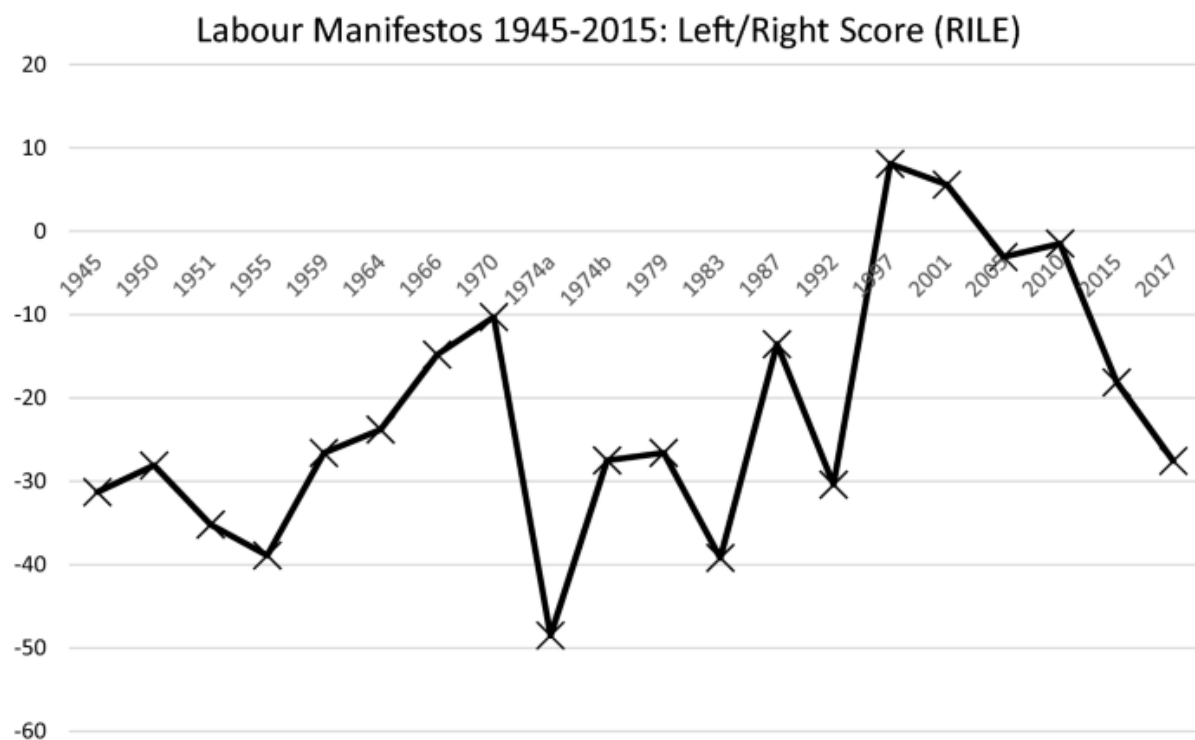
Source: Manwaring and Smith, 2020: 32

Whilst the data shows Corbyn's 2017 manifesto was more left wing than manifestos since 1992, the article notes that 'saying that Corbyn's agenda was as left wing as the 1970s efforts is far too simplistic' (Manwaring and Smith, 2020: 32). The authors challenge this 'simplistic' assumption and states that Corbyn's 2017 manifesto 'looks considerably like many of the previous manifestos', but that Corbyn was a 'distinctly different kind of leader to his immediate predecessors', that Corbyn's manifesto was a 'circuit breaker' away from New Labour, and the political context throughout the decades changed e.g. the terms 'left', 'socialist', and 'social democratic' have changed meaning, and the impact of Brexit impacted the party's stance on foreign policy which makes it difficult to directly compare with other manifestos and their positions on the European Union (Manwaring and Smith, 2020: 34, 45). Nicholas Allen and

Judith Bara's analysis of the 2017 manifesto also concludes that the 2017 manifesto was the most left wing manifesto since 1992 whilst also noting that the ideological left-right gap between Labour and the Conservatives 'opened up' in 2017.

Table 14: Left-Right score of Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat manifestos from Allen and Bara
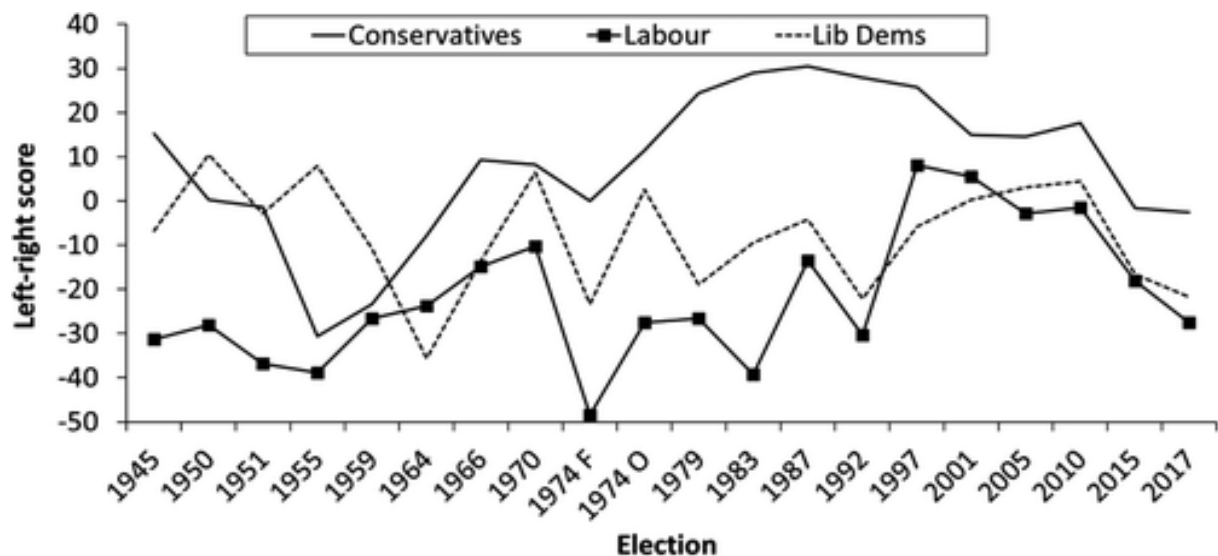
Source: Allen and Bara, 2019: 130

Allen and Bara note that 'Britain's party system undoubtably moved leftwards between 2015 and 2017. Labour arguably marched in that direction; the Conservatives shuffled', that is to say that Corbyn's Labour Party had proposed left wing policies which shifted the public mood and, therefore, the Conservative Party shifted their policy platform too, producing their most 'left wing (manifesto) since 1964' (Allen and Bara, 2019: 129). Finally, they state that the 'unexpected performance in 2017 may well embolden the party to produce an even more left-wing programme for the next election' and that reaction against austerity by the public, which pulled the 'wider public mood to the left', offers Conservatives electoral incentives to 'track Labour's movement' to the left (Allen and Bara, 2019: 132). A discussion later in the chapter will look at the policy differences between the 2019 manifesto and the 2017 manifesto.

Clare Woodford looks at the argument that left wing strategists should choose to either build a 'radical left wing movement of the grassroots against the PLP, or a centre-left party that re-establishes the PLP's authority', the former of which was the approach that Corbyn took as leader (Woodford, 2022) Woodford notes that some academics claimed that 'Corbynism' was anti-democratic, authoritarian and populist, however, Laclau and Mouffe's theory of populism indicates that 'if a left party or coalition is to win an election in the UK it would benefit from a greater focus on policies, so as to link left-wing demands with those of the wider electorate' (Woodford, 2022). This is what Corbyn sought to achieve with the 2017 manifesto and, with Labour gaining the highest increase in the share of the vote since 1945 in that election, shows that the former strategy has merits. However, the result of the 2019 election 'could be said to vindicate earlier predictions' that Labour 'would either return to the centre and appeal to the median voter or somehow overturn these central tenets of majoritarian electoral theory' (Woodford, 2022). Woodford concludes that 'Corbynism's defeat in 2019 was not because it was too left-wing or not left-wing enough; nor because it was too authoritarian or too democratic; but, because Corbynism was - in Laclau and Mouffe's sense - just not populist enough' (Woodford, 2022). Therefore, future left wing politicians in a position of power similar to Corbyn could pursue a populist agenda and incorporate this into their manifesto to attempt to build a broad coalition of voters to achieve electoral victory.

The academic discussions look at how Corbyn positioned himself in relation to contemporary Labour manifestos, and looked at how his vision for the country compared to other Labour leaders. It is interesting to note that Corbyn's ideological shift was much smaller than many academics and journalists perceived his shift to be based on rhetoric, however context has changed over the last few decades and the issue of Brexit makes the comparison, in relation to EU/foreign policy, more difficult to compare with previous manifestos due to the scale of the

issue during Corbyn's time in office. It is also clear that, although the ideological shift was smaller than portrayed, the shift was noticeable and Corbyn was able to pursue a policy agenda that he, and party members, were comfortable pursuing, instead of making a lot of concessions to a hostile Parliamentary Labour Party. The next sub-section will look at the specific policies that were introduced under Corbyn's leadership, and how Corbyn attempted to mould the party into his ideological image.

4.2.2 Shifting Labour's policy platform

Corbyn was elected as Labour leader with a mandate to change the Labour Party, with him stating in his first conference speech that he wanted to 'change our party, change our country, change our politics and change the way we do things' (Labour Policy Forum 2015). He set out his goals in the leadership contest, and this section will look at the change in policy from the 2015 election to the end of Corbyn's leadership of the party, and will look at whether he was successful in shifting Labour's policy platform and public perception of policies he advocated during his leadership.

The 2015 Labour manifesto was the last manifesto before Corbyn became Labour leader. Prior to the publication of the manifesto, 15 Labour MPs (out of the 258 elected in the 2010 UK general election), including Corbyn, signed a statement following the election of Syriza, who stood on an anti-austerity and pro-nationalisation platform, in the January 2015 Greek elections, stating that they wanted an 'alternative to the continuation of austerity', 'returning rail franchises when expired to public ownership rather than subjecting them to competition', and 'the need for the restoration of collective bargaining and employment rights as a check against excessive corporate power' (Meacher et al, 2015). In April 2015, the Labour manifesto was published which committed to policies including; a promise to cut the deficit every year

including cuts to all government departments except for three: health, education, and international development (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2015); raising the minimum wage to £8 by October 2019; ending exploitative zero hour contracts; reducing university tuition fees to £6,000 (from £9,000) a year; abolishing the bedroom tax; 'ensuring that migrants will not be able to claim benefits until they have lived in the UK for at least two years'; and replacing the House of Lords with a Senate of the Regions and Nations (Mason, 2015). When it came to agreements, Corbyn stated 'Ed Miliband did well on zero hours contacts, very well on rights at work' (BBC Newsnight, 2015). Corbyn also supported abolition of the House of Lords, saying in a 2007 Parliamentary debate: 'why cannot we simply move to a fully democratically elected second Chamber, if that is what we are to have, instead of the dog's breakfast of appointments, bishops and election on a party list system?' (Hansard, 2007).

However, there were disagreements between Corbyn and Miliband on certain aspects of the manifesto. Corbyn stated that 'the problem was that.. the party was offering austerity-lite for the next 5 years.. local government was still going to be cut' and, a week after the publication of the 2015 manifesto, both Corbyn and McDonnell stated that they supported 'The Left Platform', a policy document pressuring Labour in the run-up to the election which committed to a £10 minimum wage instead of £8, an end to austerity, the introduction of wealth taxes, and nationalisation of public services (BBC Newsnight, 2015; Segalov, 2015). McDonnell stated that a bloc of '30 to 40 MPs' would be influential if the outcome of the election resulted in a small Labour majority, noting that they might vote against policies which they ideologically do not agree with: 'it's not a threat, it's a statement of fact (in reference to a comment by Segalov stating that these MPs could bring down the leader if they pursue austerity)' (Segalov, 2015). It was clear Corbyn wanted a change in the direction of the party prior to his leadership of the party, and he outlined policies which he wanted to pursue in the 2015 leadership contest

including abolition of tuition fees instead of £6,000 fees, nationalisation of essential services, and an end to austerity (Cosslett, 2015). Corbyn stated he wanted to see these policies implemented, but also many of these policies were supported by the wider electorate too. As mentioned in the acquisition of leadership chapter:

'When it comes to leadership and the voters, many policy positions which were promoted by Corbyn had support amongst the wider electorate. The public, according to YouGov, supported rail renationalisation (net +40%: 60% support, 20% oppose), higher taxes on the rich (net +25%: 56% support, 31% oppose), an international convention to ban nuclear weapons (net +43%: 64% support, 21% oppose, 15% don't know), rent controls (net +52.2%: 59% support, 6.8% oppose), a mandatory living wage (net +29%: 60% support, 31% oppose) and cutting tuition fees (net +18%: 49% support, 31% oppose, 20% don't know). The public also opposed the Iraq war (43% opposed, 37% supported) and opposed bombing Syria in 2015 (60% opposed, 24% supported) (Dathan and Stone, 2015)'.

Corbyn received a mandate to change the policy platform of the Labour Party but received challenges within the party via a leadership challenge, would he be able to convince the wider party to adopt the policies or would he have to make concessions to help with unity from a hostile Parliamentary Labour Party?

Corbyn's opportunity to promote his vision for the country, and what a Labour government would deliver under his leadership, came following the announcement by Theresa May that a snap election were to be held on June 8th 2017. In the period from his election to this announcement, Corbyn had increased his support on the NEC following internal elections, but

the General Secretary, deputy leader, and Labour HQ were hostile to his leadership, some of whom held representation at a party summit known as a 'Clause V meeting', where the party manifesto would be discussed and agreed upon (Elgot, 2017). Prior to this meeting, a draft version of the manifesto was leaked by an anonymous source, the contents of which led the front pages of the Telegraph, Guardian, Daily Mail, and the Mirror, the day afterwards (BBC News, 2017a). A few days later, around 80 people, including the shadow cabinet and NEC representatives, attended this meeting to agree the contents of the manifesto. The 124 page document included the following policies; a vision for Brexit including to respect the EU referendum result and allow a 'meaningful role' for Parliament in negotiations, guarantee rights of EU citizens living in the UK, and reject a no deal Brexit; education policies including scrapping tuition fees, restoring maintenance grants, a National Education Service (free lifelong learning, inspired by the principles of the National Health Service), free school means for all primary school children (paid for by removing VAT exemption on private school fees), and 30 hours free childcare; economic policies including nationalisation of water, rail, Royal Mail, and energy, increasing corporation tax, a national investment bank, and a maximum pay ratio of 20:1 to be rolled out in the public sector (a maximum wage); workers' rights policies including four extra bank holidays, banning unpaid internships, guaranteeing the rights for trade unions to access workplaces, and abolishing employment tribunal fees; healthcare policies including ending NHS car parking charges, ending the NHS pay cap, and £30 billion extra funding; pension policies including keeping the so-called triple lock (for pensions to rise by the rate of inflation or 2.5%, whichever is higher), keeping the winter fuel allowance, and maintaining free bus passes; and other policies including reinstate housing benefit for under 21s, scrapping the bedroom tax, ensuring 60% of UK's energy is zero carbon/renewable resources by 2030, building one million homes, 4,000 homes available for rough sleepers to end homelessness, insulating homes of disabled veterans for free, renewing the Trident nuclear

defence system, and replacing the House of Lords with a Senate of the Regions and Nations (BBC News, 2017b).

Despite unanimous support in the Clause V meeting, Welsh Labour (led by Corbynsceptic Carwyn Jones) seemingly distanced themselves from the manifesto stating that 'it is not Welsh Labour's manifesto and contains many England-only proposals.. Welsh Labour will be publishing its own distinct manifesto' and Labour MP Frank Field published his own 10 personal pledges in contrast to the manifesto (BBC News, 2017c; McCann, 2017). However, ComRes published polling data following the leak of the manifesto which showed public support for many of the policies outlined in the 2017 manifesto, with around half of respondents supporting public ownership of rail, energy, and the Royal Mail (52%, 49%, and 50% respectively), 71% of respondents saying they supported banning zero hour contracts, 65% supporting increasing taxes on the highest 5% of earners, and there was split opinion over the Brexit plans with 36% supporting, and 35% opposing, Labour's stance of allowing Parliament to have a say during the Brexit negotiations (Batchelor, 2017). Not every policy that was in the manifesto were policies that Corbyn agreed with historically, the manifesto committed to maintain defence spending at 2% of GDP but Corbyn, in October 2010, had called for 'a few more cuts taking place' in the Armed Forces (Sculthorpe, 2017). He also personally strongly opposed renewing Trident as recently as the 2015 leadership election and voting against renewing Trident in 2016 (Perraudin, 2015; Chadwick, 2016). Whilst some manifesto policies were carried on from the 2015 manifesto, including more NHS investment (Corbyn committed to more spending, however), scrapping the bedroom tax, and replacing the House of Lords with a Senate of the Regions and Nations, many policies were newly adopted by Labour and were the policies that Corbyn had promoted in the 2015 leadership contest. Despite some internal opposition, Corbyn was able to successfully change the policy programme of the Labour Party

in many areas for the 2017 general election and, according to a post-election YouGov survey, the main reason why people voted for the party in 2017 (28%) was because of the manifesto (Smith, 2017).

The period between the 2017 and 2019 elections saw Corbyn and his allies solidify his position within the party, with further control of the NEC, the resignation of a Corbynsceptic general secretary (replaced with the Corbyn supporting Jenny Formby) and election of supportive leaders in Scottish Labour and Welsh Labour (Kao et al, 2019b; Watson, 2018). The announcement of a general election in October 2019 led to another 'Clause V' meeting and the publication of the 2019 manifesto. When looking at policies it is noteworthy that the 2019 manifesto not only maintained many of the domestic policies from the 2017 manifesto, but they also build on them with policies including; a commitment to net zero in the 2030s instead of 2017 commitment to 60% by 2030, 90% of electricity by renewable/low-carbon sources by 2030; free bus passes for everyone under the age of 25; free broadband for people and businesses; free dental care; expanding voting rights to all UK residents; not only a national investment bank, but also £400 billion national transformation fund and £250 billion green transformation fund; moving the treasury to the North of England in an attempt to address the so-called 'North-South divide'; 3% of GDP spending on research and development; one million well-paid, unionised green jobs; reinstating 3,000 bus routes that were cut; year-on-year above-inflation pay rises for public sector workers; establishing a state owned pharmaceutical company, and require pharmaceutical companies that receive funding from the state to make their medicines affordable for all; making the ICC Cricket World Cup free-to-air on TV; piloting Universal Basic Income; scrapping universal credit; cutting working week to 32 hours within 10 years (4 day week); and recompensate the losses for WASPI women (LabourList, 2019a; Rodgers, 2019a; Woodcock, 2019).

Many of these policies fit within the progressive and redistributive ideology that Corbyn has promoted not only as a backbencher, but as a leadership candidate, and as leader. Polling by YouGov in 2019 showed strong support for increasing the top rate of tax for earning over £123,000 from 45% to 50% (64% support), nationalisation of the railways (56% support), wealth taxes on people earning over a certain amount (53% support), nationalising water companies (50% support), and nationalising gas and electricity companies (45% support) (Chappell, 2019).

Corbyn was able to promote a vision more aligned to his ideology in 2017 and arguably even more so in 2019. He had shifted the domestic agenda within the party and his successor, Keir Starmer, used Corbyn's policy as an election tool in the 2020 leadership contest, and ran his successful leadership campaign promising to 'build on' Corbyn's legacy, stating that the 2017 manifesto a 'foundational document.. the radicalism and hope that inspired the country was real', and offering 10 pledges including commitments to support policies similar to policies offered under the Corbyn years including common ownership of rail, Royal Mail, energy, and water, promoting a Green New Deal, abolishing tuition fees, and 'working shoulder to shoulder with trade unions to stand up for working people' (Di Santolo, 2020; Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, 2020).

4.3 <u>The handling of Brexit</u>

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union was a prominent issue throughout British political discourse from the 2015 general election until the end of Corbyn's leadership. The issue was prevalent right from the start of Corbyn's candidacy to become Labour leader in 2015 to the 2019 general election and his historic comments, alongside his leadership on the issue, was heavily scrutinised within and outside the party, including from

his own supporters. The EU referendum and its consequences divided a nation and each political party had to materialise a vision of a post-EU referendum Britain and choose between either accepting the result and negotiating a Brexit deal, rejecting the result either by winning a mandate via a new referendum or withdrawing Article 50 unilaterally (Allegretti, 2019b). There was no easy option for the Labour Party to pick, but they needed to choose a position and this stance changed numerous times due to many different factors. Was it the case that Corbyn constrained by compromise, a challenge which would have been difficult, if not insurmountable, for any leader to overcome or was it a personal failure which, if managed effectively, could have been overcome? This section will look at Corbyn's position on the European project over the last few decades, the changing position on Brexit throughout the Corbyn leadership, whether the claim that Corbyn was 'indecisive' on the issue was a reasonable criticism and the different audiences the Labour Party had to appeal to to build a broad coalition of support.

As noted in the acquisition of leadership chapter, Corbyn had longstanding criticisms of the EU and its predecessor organisations. Despite the criticisms, Corbyn was a key figure in the Labour In For Europe campaign in the 2016 EU referendum. Richard Hayton looked at the extent to which both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party changed in response to the vote for Brexit, with the Conservatives moulding themselves into a party 'collectively focused on delivering Brexit' whilst the Labour Party struggled to respond to the changing circumstances and how they should respond to the issue of Britain's relationship with the European Union following the 2016 referendum (Hayton, 2022). Following the EU referendum campaign, Labour MPs launched a motion of no confidence in Corbyn and Owen Smith announced his intention to stand against Corbyn. The stances on the European Union were completely different between the two candidates, with Smith committing to re-join the

European Union, alongside refusing to rule out adopting the Euro as currency and participation in the Schengen area, whilst Corbyn wanted to 'respect' the result of the referendum and wanted to secure access to European markets (Hardman, 2016; MacLellan, 2016). The aftermath of the EU referendum, including the subsequent leadership challenge, solidified Corbyn's position in the party and relieved 'him of opponents in his shadow ministerial team', this consolidation of power helped with the wider Corbyn project which was 'an attempt to radically change the Labour Party through factional takeover by the far left, which had been marginalised since the 1980s' (Hayton, 2022).

In January 2017, Corbyn whipped Labour MPs to support the bill which would invoke Article 50 and trigger the process of the UK's exit from the EU. Around a fifth of Labour MPs, a total of 47, rebelled against the vote (Mason and Stewart, 2017). Now that the process had been triggered, Labour under Corbyn's leadership had to pick a stance and they had to appeal to different electorates to build a coalition of voters. Whilst Corbyn was able to solidify his position as leader, a key problem for his leadership was holding together a coalition of 'uneasy voters': Hayton notes that a majority of Labour voters voted to remain, including 90% of Labour members, however 7 out of 10 Labour MPs represented areas which voted to leave' (Hayton, 2022). To win an election, Labour need to maintain their electoral base and build on it. If Labour only maintained their base but alienated voters who may have been open to voting for them then it will be difficult to build this coalition of voters, on the other hand if Labour successfully appeal to voters beyond their core support but fracture their base of support then that have problematic consequences in relation to votes, funding and campaign mobilisation. This is a problem that all political leaders must deal with and have to consider numerous factors, however the divisions over Brexit were dominant by the time of the 2019 general election which presented a unique challenge for the political parties, including Labour. Public

opinion too is not static and can change, there was seemingly more acceptance from remain voters to respect the referendum result in the aftermath of the EU referendum but, as time went on, there is evidence to suggest that 2016 remain voters had aligned themselves more with a second referendum stance (What UK Thinks EU, 2023).

In the 2016 EU referendum, according to polling from Lord Ashcroft, 63% of Labour voters supported remaining in the EU (Ashcroft, 2016). A similar poll, conducted by YouGov, stated that 65% of Labour voters voted to remain with 35% voting to leave the EU (Moore, 2016). Polling, however, also showed that a majority of voters in 421 constituencies across the UK, including around two thirds of Labour constituencies, voted to leave the EU compared to 229 seats which endorsed a vote for remain (Applegate and Phillips, 2016). At this point in time, the data shows that although a supermajority of Labour voters voted to remain in the EU, a supermajority of constituencies with a Labour MP voted to leave. Due to the nature of the first past the post electoral system elections are swung based on how many constituencies a party can win however parties need to maintain their electoral base as well. All parties, including Labour, need to navigate this potential hurdle or risk losing votes/seats to other competitors. Prior to the 2017 general election 4.15 million people signed a petition demanding a 2nd EU referendum with calls in support of the policy coming from Alastair Campbell, then-Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt and billionaire Richard Branson (UK Government and Parliament Petitions, 2016; Greenslade. 2016; BBC News, 2016e; Good Morning Britain, 2016). In March 2017, however, prior to Theresa May calling the election, YouGov published polling showing that 21% of the public were 'hard remainers' (people who did not support leaving the EU and want the government to ignore/overturn the referendum result) with 44% being 'hard leavers' (people who support leaving the EU) and 23% being 're-leavers' (people who did not support leaving the EU but respect the referendum result) (Wells, 2017). This shows that 67% of voters

wanted to deliver the referendum result with around a fifth of voters believing the result should be overturned by any means necessary. There was also polling showing that, after the referendum, no side (remain vs leave) had more support than the other within the margin of error when those who were polled were asked 'should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union, or leave the European Union' which indicates there had not been a large shift towards remaining in the EU (What UK Thinks: EU, 2021).

In the 2015 general election the Conservative Party under the leadership of David Cameron offered a referendum on European Union membership to 'improve his chances at the ballot box and to reconcile factions within his party' (Glencross, 2016: 2). The vote to leave the EU via the referendum a year later would go on to have far reaching consequences including impacting the British economy, the global economy and the subsequent elections in 2017 and 2019 (Portes and Forte, 2017; Hassan et al, 2021). Jeremy Corbyn, as leader of the opposition during the referendum, played a leading role in the Labour In for Britain campaign and advocated a vote for remain. Whilst Corbyn stated 'I did all I could' to win the referendum for remain he was also accused of not doing enough in the campaign to win over supporters (Stewart, 2016). The chair of Labour In for Britain, Phil Wilson, claimed Corbyn tried to 'weaken and sabotage' Labour's remain campaign whilst Chris Bryant, MP for Rhondda, even accused Corbyn of voting to leave the EU (Asthana, 2016b; Riley-Smith, 2016). This section will look at the results of the referendum, how those who aligned themselves with Labour voted in the 2016 referendum, Corbyn's role in the campaign and whether the aforementioned accusations are fair-minded comments. Labour agreed to hold their own campaign separate from cross-party pro-remain organisations before Corbyn was elected as Labour leader with Harriet Harman, then acting leader, appointing Alan Johnson to lead the campaign (Wintour, 2015a). Five days after Corbyn was elected as leader, on September 17th 2015, he announced that Labour would

campaign to remain in the EU with the formal launch of Labour In for Britain occurring on December 1st 2015, 205 days before the EU referendum (Wintour, 2015b; BBC News, 2015a). The official Twitter account for the campaign was launched on May 15th 2016 and 1,250 tweets were published between 15th May and 23rd June, the equivalent of 32 tweets a day (Labour In For Britain, 2016).

Given the outcome of the result and the accusations made by Corbyn's critics over his campaigning it is important to debate the effectiveness of Corbyn's campaign in the EU referendum and discuss whether a different strategy could have led to a different outcome. Corbyn himself criticised the media coverage during the campaign saying 'much of the media are slightly obsessed with the blue on blue war that's going on' when asked about whether Labour were doing enough in the campaign to appeal to voters (Channel 4, 2016). Prior to that interview polling was leaked to the Guardian by Britain Stronger in Europe (the official designated cross-party remain campaign) stating that 'only about half of Labour voters.. realised their party is in favour of staying in the EU, with the rest thinking it is split or believing it is a party of Brexit' with just three weeks to go before the EU referendum polling day (Mason, 2016b). This suggests that the Labour campaign for remain was not cutting through to a large number of voters. More criticisms against Corbyn during the campaign included him taking a 'long weekend' during the campaign, refusing to share a platform with the then-Prime Minister David Cameron and he was criticised by Isabelle Hertner for his party being 'almost invisible' during the campaign alongside also seemingly mocking Corbyn's comments about rating the European Union 'seven, or seven and a half' out of 10, which perhaps implies that Corbyn wasn't enthusiastic enough about his support for the European Union (Smith, 2016; The Scotsman, 2016; Hertner, 2016).

Corbyn, however, held numerous rallies in favour of remaining in the EU, appeared in a TV debate on Sky News where he outlined his position of staying in the EU and debated members of the public over his stance for an extended period of time and, as noted, he made up a large proportion of Labour's overall media item appearances throughout the campaign (BBC News, 2016b; ITV News, 2016; Ruptly, 2016; Sky News, 2016b). Whilst the claim by Bryant that Corbyn voted to leave the European Union is not backed up with any evidence, in fact there is innumerable evidence to the contrary, the view that Corbyn could have done more to rally support for remain votes is subjective. It is clear Corbyn was campaigning in the EU referendum via rallies and TV appearances in favour of remain but the argument from his critics over the issue of whether or not he campaigned more can't simply be dismissed as necessarily unfair although it is unknown whether or not more appearances in media items (in the face of a 'blue on blue' narrative during the referendum) or campaigning on the same platform as David Cameron would have meaningfully swung the outcome of the result towards remain.

4.3.1 The European Union referendum of 2016

On June 23rd 2016 the EU referendum was held with the British public voting to leave the European Union with 17,410,742 votes (51.89%) for leave and 16,141,241 votes (48.11%) for remain (The Electoral Commission, 2016). According to Lord Ashcroft 63% of 2015 Labour voters voted to remain the European Union with 37% voting to leave, the main motivation for Labour remain voters was 'the risks of voting to leave the EU looked too great when it came to things like the economy, jobs and prices' whilst the main motivation for Labour leavers was 'the principle that decisions about the UK should be taken in the UK' (Ashcroft, 2016). Whist most Labour voters voted to leave the European Union it is also interesting to note how constituencies with Labour MPs voted. Analysis by Chris Applegate and Tom Phillips noted that out of the 232 constituencies that voted for a Labour MP in the 2015 general election 150

seats (65%) voted in favour of leaving the European Union with 82 (35%) voting to remain (Applegate and Phillips, 2016). This data seems to indicate that a large number of Labour voters live in larger cities, many of which voted by an overwhelming majority to remain in the EU, and that many Labour MPs were representing leave voting areas, some of which were now targets for the Conservative Party who, under the leadership of Theresa May, wanted to deliver Brexit (Cowburn, 2016).

Table 15: Voting intentions in the European Union referendum of 2016 (Labour voters vs Labour constituencies)
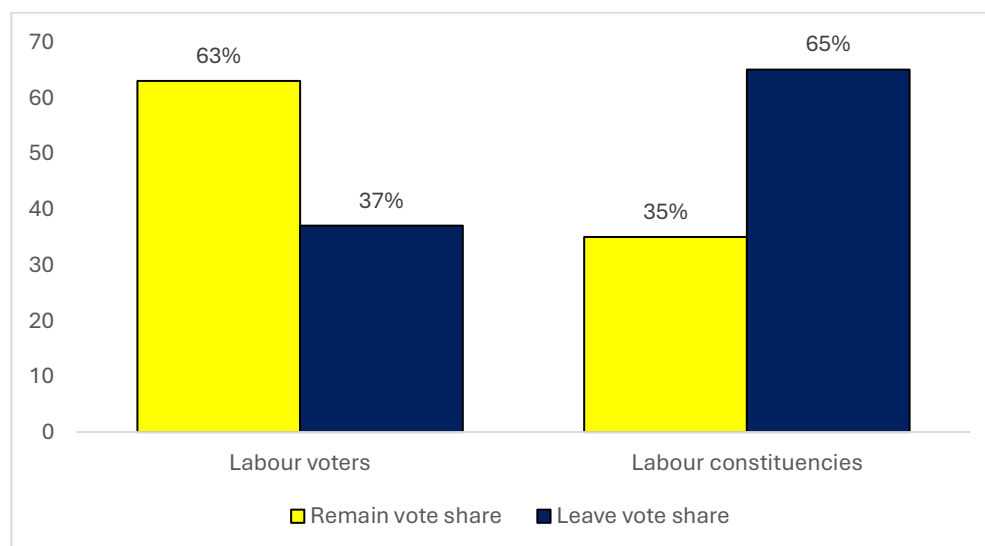
Source: Ashcroft, 2016; Applegate and Phillips, 2016

Following the outcome of the referendum Loughborough University published an article which looked at media coverage of EU referendum which covered the issues in which the media prioritised during the campaign, gender balance in the media, the volume of pro-remain/pro-leave media items promoted by certain newspapers and the top thirty media appearances made by politicians during the campaign (Loughborough University, 2016a). The data on media appearances could be helpful when looking at the allegation on whether Corbyn could've been

more vocal during the campaign. How often did Corbyn appear in the media, how did he compare to other Labour figures and how did he compare to wider political figures from other parties?

Table 16: Media appearances by politicians in the 2016 EU referendum

Position	Name	Party and EU voting intention	Number of appearances	Percentage of (media) items in which they appeared
1	David Cameron	Conservative, Remain	499	24.9%
2	Boris Johnson	Conservative, Leave	379	18.9%
3	George Osborne	Conservative, Remain	230	11.5%
4	Nigel Farage	UKIP, Leave	182	9.1%
5	Michael Gove	Conservative, Leave	161	8.0%
6	Iain Duncan Smith	Conservative, Leave	124	6.2%
7	Jeremy Corbyn	Labour, Remain	123	6.1%
8	Priti Patel	Conservative, Leave	65	3.2%
9	Gordon Brown	Labour, Remain	52	2.6%
10	John Major	Conservative, Remain	47	2.3%
~				
22	Alan Johnson	Labour, Remain	19	0.9%

Source: Loughborough University, 2016a

The data by Loughborough University shows that Corbyn appeared in 123 items which is more than any other Labour figure in favour of remain - all other Labour MPs made up a total of 181 items which adds up to a total of 304. This shows that Corbyn represented 40.46% of all of Labour's items, therefore it can be claimed that Corbyn made up a substantial part of Labour's campaign to remain in the EU. This was arguably expected given that Corbyn was leader of the party however Corbyn appeared 104 more times than the person leading the Labour In for Britain campaign: Alan Johnson. The data also shows, however, that Corbyn, despite being

leader of the opposition and arguably the only other viable candidate for Prime Minister, made fewer item appearances than six other political figures which may be seen as quite low on the list given his status at the time. Earlier analysis by Loughborough University just prior to the referendum result, backed up by the post-referendum data, showed the campaign was largely a 'blue on blue' campaign (i.e. Conservative figures from remain and leave dominating headlines) with Graeme Demianyk saying that Corbyn was 'marginalised in largely a Tory story' (Demianyk, 2016).

4.3.2 Corbyn's Brexit stance in the 2017 election: 'jobs first Brexit'

When the 2017 election was called, Corbyn had to decide what Labour's stance would be. As promised in the 2016 leadership election, Corbyn promised to respect the referendum result by delivering a 'jobs first Brexit' (Dickson, 2017). This policy would 'protect Britain industry and human rights' and that his domestic policies would 'improve the economy when Britain leaves the European Union'. In the major speech, given in May 2017, Corbyn stated 'this election isn't about Brexit itself.. that issue has been settled.. the question now is.. what sort of country do we want Britain to be after Brexit?' (Dickson, 2017). Whilst noting that the referendum result would be respected, the speech focused on challenging the 'broken' Westminster system and 'rigged' economy which 'both are run in the interests of the few' (Dickson, 2017). Corbyn's approach, in this speech, was to use political capital to focus on domestic issues and outline what the post-Brexit country under his leadership would look like instead of focusing on the specifics of the deal. Labour's manifesto committed to deliver a Brexit deal that would retain the benefits of the customs union and single market whilst being outside the institutions (Lee, 2018c). Given the polling on the question on Britain's relationship with the EU this approach made electoral sense.

An approach to overturn the referendum result would have meant perhaps winning the majority of 'hard remainers' and the 4.15 million people who signed the petition in favour of a second referendum, however it would mean Labour would struggle to 'squeeze' support for the 67% of people who believed in delivering the referendum result. There may be a case that some of the 23% of 're-leavers' may have been won over via potential shifting of opinion via election campaigning however this would have required diverting political capital away from domestic policies, which Corbyn wanted to focus on, and Labour would have alienated the 44% of 'hard leavers' which would have made it easier for the Conservatives to consolidate a leave voting electorate in favour of their vision of Brexit. 10 polls were conducted between the EU referendum and the 2017 general election with the question 'if there was another referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, how would you vote'? although a poll on June 30th 2016 shows that 45% would vote remain and 37% would vote leave, and another with a tie between remain and leave on 44% on October 12th 2016, all other polls show leave receiving more support than remain (What UK Thinks: EU, 2021). In May 2017, YouGov published a poll showing that the 'pro-Brexit electorate' was 68% of the public with 45% being 'hard leavers', 23% being 're-leavers' and 22% being 'hard remainers', showing minimal movement since the poll published pre-election (Curtis and Roberts, 2017).

Marcus Roberts and Chris Curtis, who conducted the poll on behalf of YouGov, stated 'this suggests that people's voting intentions aren't being driven merely by the binary choice they faced in last year's referendum. Instead, the choice is being informed by how they now feel the country should proceed with leaving' (Curtis and Roberts, 2017). This shows that during the election campaign, like the period of time prior to the election, there was little appetite to reverse the referendum result. In regards to Corbyn's Brexit position, 36% of voters supporting Labour's manifesto pledge for Parliament to have a say at the end of the Brexit negotiating

period with 35% opposing the plan which shows a broadly split public opinion on the issue, however Corbyn was mainly focusing on domestic issues in the campaign and polling showed broad support for many policies with Business Insider noting 'Labour policies of nationalising industries, taxing the wealthy and building council homes are popular with the public' (Batchelor, 2017; Bienkov, 2017).

According to a YouGov poll published shortly after the election result, the main reason why voters chose the Conservative Party was due to 'Brexit' with 21% of people indicating that issue as the main reason for voting for the party. When asking people why they voted for Labour, 'Brexit' was not even mentioned as a key reason to vote for the party. The emphasis was on domestic issues, anti-Conservative sentiment and 'the Corbyn effect' i.e. personal support for Corbyn as an individual (Smith, 2017). Lord Ashcroft published polling the day after the election result which showed that 51% of remain supporters voted for Labour with 25% of leave voters backing the party, with 25% and 60% respectively voting for the Conservatives. This shows that whilst Brexit was not a vote winner for Labour, and that the Conservatives consolidated leave voting supporters, Labour were able to build a broad coalition of support amongst half of remain voters, and a quarter of leave voters, to back their post-Brexit vision for the country (Curtis, 2017).

4.3.3 From soft Brexit to the option of a public vote

With the Conservatives still in power, albeit without a majority, Corbyn was going to be scrutinised from his opponents inside and outside of his party regarding his alternative plan to the government. Whilst the Brexit position in 2017 did not alienate core support, calls were slowly growing for a second referendum on EU membership including support from his own party. Labour Party members, alongside trade unions, were moving towards a second

referendum stance and, if Corbyn stuck to a position continuing to advocate Brexit against the wishes of the aforementioned members, then he could have ended up with a legitimacy problem because not only were the Parliamentary Labour Party opposed to his leadership, but he also could've alienated the grassroots who gave him that political power, not to mention that he was elected on a platform to respect the wishes of party members. This section will look at Labour's changing Brexit stance from 2017 to the 2019 election.

In August 2017, Keir Starmer, then-Labour's shadow Brexit secretary, stated that Labour would seek a 'transitional deal' in which the UK would remain in a customs union and the single market. This 'transitional period' would be 'as short as possible but as long as necessary'. In February 2018, Corbyn made a speech stating that a post-Brexit settlement would include 'a new comprehensive UK-EU customs union' which would 'ensure that there are no tariffs with Europe and to help avoid any need for a hard border in Northern Ireland' and to negotiate 'tariff-free access' to the single market instead of single market membership (Brunsden, 2018). A month later, Starmer stated that Labour would not support a Brexit deal unless 'six tests' were met; 'does it ensure a strong and collaborative future relationship with the EU?; does it deliver the "exact same benefits" as we currently have as members of the single market and customs union?; does it ensure the fair management of migration in the interests of the economy and communities?; does it defend rights and protections and prevent a race to the bottom?; does it protect national security and our capacity to tackle cross-border crime?; and does it deliver for all regions and nations of the UK?' (Bean, 2017a).

A month later, Corbyn would face his first challenge over a call to support a second EU referendum with Owen Smith, who challenged Corbyn for the leadership but served as shadow Northern Ireland secretary, calling for the policy. In response, Corbyn sacked Smith from the shadow cabinet for breaking shadow cabinet collective responsibility by advocating a position

not advocated by the party (Stewart, 2018c). It was clear, at this point, the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership was strongly opposed to a second referendum and the leadership were keen to maintain the line of advocating a Brexit deal including a transitional period.

Whilst there was no appetite for a second EU referendum in 2017, support for the policy was growing in 2018. In April 2018 the 'People's Vote' campaign was launched and 100,000 people attended a rally they organised in June 2018 (UK in a Changing Europe, 2020; Kentish, 2018a). 27 polls were conducted on the issue from April 2018 to Labour's conference with 14 polls showing more support, than opposition, for a second EU referendum (with 13 results showing the opposite) (Wikipedia, 2023b). In August 2018, polling obtained by the Observer showed that 112 Westminster constituencies that backed a vote to leave the European Union in 2016 would, at that point in time, would now vote to remain in the EU (Press Association, 2018). This is not necessarily an endorsement of a second referendum however it shows a shift in opinion towards the EU in these seats. This polling showed that leave support had dropped from 421 to 309 seats and remain support had increased from 229 to 341 (Press Association, 2018). Although this is a large shift, the data shows almost 50/50 support on either side of the debate.

In the run up to Labour's conference, a YouGov poll was published showing that 59% of Labour's target voters, as in people who did not support the party but would 'might' or 'seriously consider' voting Labour, were in favour of a second referendum with 27% disagreeing (Shipman, 2018). Alongside this, a poll published on the eve of Labour's conference showed that 86% of Labour members supported the policy with 8% opposed to a public vote (Pickard, 2018). Corbyn was in favour of resolving Brexit via a general election, where all parties would put their Brexit plans to the country, however he stated he would be 'bound by the democracy of our party' (BBC News, 2018a). This stance is consistent with his

platform when standing for Labour leader as he stated he wanted members to form policies. Out of the 272 motions submitted to party conference that year, 55% (150) were related to Labour's position on Brexit (Cowburn, 2018a). Following a six-hour meeting, delegates agreed to debate a motion which committed the party to 'support all options remaining on the table including campaigning for a public vote' but that the priority for Labour would be to secure a general election and for parties to put their Brexit plans to the country (Kentish, 2018b).

Both the General Secretary of Unite the Union, Len McCluskey, and shadow chancellor John McDonnell stated that they believed that a potential EU referendum should not include the option of remaining in the EU whilst Starmer, in his speech to conference, stated that 'options must include campaigning for a public vote' and also said 'nobody is ruling out remain as an option', a line which was apparently not signed off by Corbyn's office (Kentish, 2018b; Casalicchio and Schofield, 2018). Corbyn himself refused to say how he would vote in a second referendum as he said 'we don't know what the question is going to be in a referendum' (Sparrow, 2018). Delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of the 'compromise motion' however the conference may have negatively impacted the public's perception of Corbyn over the issue of Brexit (Sparrow, 2018). Immediately after the conference a Sky Data poll was published which showed that 71% believed Corbyn would be an 'incompetent' Brexit negotiator with 22% believing he was competent (Allegretti, 2018). YouGov also stated that 'Brexit indecisiveness' damaged Corbyn's image, they polled 'people who previously had a favourable view of Jeremy Corbyn but no longer do' and they found that 43% of people mentioned Brexit as one of their reasons for no longer holding a favourable view, with 16% related to 'general/other', 13% 'not taking a position/weak/not opposing', 7% 'didn't talk to Theresa May/other politicians', 6% 'he is too leave/won't back a people's vote' and 3% 'he is too remain' (Curtis, 2019).

Whilst there were divisions over the next steps forward for Labour's Brexit plans, there was consensus that the party would oppose May's Brexit plan unless the 'six tests' were met (Bean, 2017a). In November 2019 the UK and EU's Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration was published, both May and Corbyn agreed to a televised debate to discuss the deal however this did not go ahead due to disagreements over the format of the event (European Council and Council of the European Union, 2023; Walker, 2018). This deal was put to Parliament on three occasions from January-March 2019 and Corbyn whipped MPs to vote against it, only 5 Labour MPs rebelled against the whip: Kevin Barron, Caroline Flint, John Mann, Rosie Cooper and Jim Fitzpatrick (Kao et al, 2019a). Whilst Corbyn had no problem uniting the party against the Conservatives, he was struggling to control the messaging in relation to his own party's Brexit position with Starmer saying 'Brexit can still be stopped' and Corbyn saying that Brexit would go ahead if Labour won a snap election (Jersey Evening Post, 2018; Stewart, 2018a). The way forward would be to commit to carry on with a policy which undermines his leadership via conflicting messages, commit to a second referendum with remain on the ballot which would risk the alienation of many leave voting Labour supporters (with a supermajority of Labour constituencies voting leave in 2016) or to commit to a soft Brexit/supporting May's deal which would risk splitting the party and undermine the decision made at conference if a general election could not be secured.

4.3.4 Movement towards a second referendum

Pressure for Labour to commit fully to a public vote instead of it being an 'option' was piling up. In January 2019, a poll conducted on behalf of the Party Members Project showed that 72% of Labour members believed that the party should support a second referendum (Walker, 2019b). On January 30th 2019, 5 Labour MPs supported a bill to 'return the decision to the British people by giving them the opportunity to decide in a public vote what kind of Brexit deal they want or whether they wish to remain in the EU on the current deal (Hansard, 2019a).

A month later, on February 18th 2019, 7 Labour MPs quit the Labour Party citing Labour's Brexit position, the handling of antisemitism in the party and Corbyn's leadership. They became known as The Independent Group and they were later joined by another Labour MP alongside three Conservative MPs (Perraudin, 2019). Chris Leslie said 'the evidence of Labour's betrayal on Europe is now visible for all to see' whilst Mike Gapes said that 'the Labour leadership is complicit in facilitating Brexit' (Marsh, 2019). Tom Watson, Labour's then-deputy leader, warned that more Labour MPs might quit the party (Cowburn, 2019b).

In response, Corbyn stated that Labour would support a second referendum to stop a no deal Brexit, a move welcomed by Watson and Starmer however Lucy Powell warned that 'at least 25 MPs' would vote against any vote in support of a second referendum (Elgot, 2019). Rebellions on either side of the debate were inevitable, with around a dozen Labour MPs expected to vote against the party whip whether Corbyn supported a second referendum or opposed it, however this policy announcement from Corbyn may have stopped further defections from the Parliamentary Labour Party. The Independent Group tabled an amendment in Parliament in favour of second referendum, Corbyn whipped Labour MPs to abstain (with Starmer noting that Labour were 'supportive of the principle but it's a question of timing') yet 17 Labour MPs, including 5 shadow ministers, voted against the motion leading to their resignations from the frontbench (Sabbagh, 2019). 13 days later on March 27th 2019, following additional pressure within and outside the Labour Party, Corbyn whips Labour MPs to support a 'confirmatory public vote' (Walker, 2019a; Cowburn, 2019a).

Following the failure of the government to pass a Brexit deal on three occasions, Article 50 was initially extended to April 2019, and then again to October 2019 to allow more time for negotiations (EUR-Lex, 2020). As the government deal could not be passed, alternative

strategies known as 'indicative votes' were put forward to MPs in an attempt the Brexit deadlock, the motion to hold indicative votes passed by 329 votes to 302 (Clarke et al, 2019). The first round of votes included; a confirmatory public vote; a customs union; Labour's alternative plan for Brexit (comprehensive customs union, close alignment with the single market, matching EU rights and protections, participation in EU agencies and funding programmes and access to the European Arrest Warrant); common market 2.0 (membership of the European Free Trade Association and European Economic Area); revoking Article 50 to prevent a no deal Brexit; a no deal Brexit; preferential arrangements (for the government to seek preferential trade agreements in case the UK is unable to implement a withdrawal agreement); and EFTA/EEA membership without a customs union (The Guardian, 2019).

Table 17: Indicative votes on Brexit, first round of voting

Vote	Total votes for	Total votes against	Vote defeated by X votes	Votes for (Labour)	Votes against (Labour)	No vote recorded (Labour)
Confirmatory public vote	268	295	**27**	198	27	18
Customs Union	265	271	**6**	226	12	5
Labour's alternative plan	237	307	**70**	232	4	7
Common Market 2.0	189	283	**94**	143	42	58
Revoke Article 50 to avoid a no deal Brexit	184	293	**109**	111	22	110
No deal Brexit	160	400	**240**	3	237	3
Preferential arrangements	139	422	**283**	3	233	7
European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) and European Economic Area (EEA) without customs union	65	377	**313**	4	124	115

Source: Uberoi, 2019a; Hansard, 2019b

Table 18: Indicative votes on Brexit, second round of voting

Vote	Total votes for	Total votes against	Vote defeated by X votes	Votes for (Labour)	Votes against (Labour)	No vote recorded (Labour)
Confirmatory public vote	280	292	**12**	203 (increased by 5)	24 (decreased by 3)	16 (decreased by 2)
Customs Union	273	276	**3**	230 (increased by 4)	10 (decreased by 2)	3 (decreased by 2)
Common Market 2.0	261	282	**21**	185 (increased by 42)	25 (decreased by 17)	33 (decreased by 25)
Revoke Article 50 to avoid a no deal Brexit	191	292	**101**	121 (increased by 10)	18 (decreased by 4)	104 (decreased by 6)

Source: Burn-Murdoch et al, 2019

Not only does this show that Parliament was deadlocked but so was Labour. Whilst there was minimal rebellion for Labour's alternative Brexit plan, there were a core group of MPs on every side of the debate who were unwilling to change their stance, in particular 24 MPs who voted against a second referendum. 10 Labour MPs, who rebelled against the Labour whip, made a significant difference in the outcome of the indicative vote relating to a customs union which, if passed, could have changed the outcome of Brexit negotiations. If a vote in favour of a customs union had passed then Parliament may have reached a compromise on a Brexit deal via an amendment to May's Brexit plan.

In an attempt to solve the Brexit impasse, meetings took place between the Labour leadership and the Conservative leadership in order to find a compromise (Cooper, 2019). Negotiations took place for six weeks and Corbyn noted that the negotiations were 'detailed' and 'constructive' however he pulled out of negotiations blaming the weakness of the government whilst May blamed the Labour leadership over the party's internal divisions over a second referendum (Castle, 2019; Stewart and Walker, 2019). Labour's internal divisions have been

noted and well documented, Lord Ashcroft claimed Starmer negatively briefed the press during cross-party Brexit talks between Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn with Starmer himself being the most 'deal-resistant of the party's negotiators' on the basis that he preferred a second referendum to a soft Brexit, Gavin Barwell stated 'Corbyn wanted to do it, but Starmer stopped it' alongside noting that Starmer would reject any deal which did not include a confirmatory vote, including on one occasion where he rejected the wording of a draft proposal that he himself (or his staffers) put forward earlier in the negotiations and Harry Lambert stated that May's team thought Labour were close to supporting a deal, however Starmer was 'pivotal in resisting a deal' (Ashcroft, 2021; Barwell, 2021; Lambert, 2021).

Eagleton then builds on this and states Starmer hindered the 'opportunity to reframe the Brexit debate on Labour's terms' on the basis that Starmer wanted to force the party towards a more remain stance which would divide the party, lose Labour the election and lead to a leadership election in which Corbyn would be replaced by Starmer (Eagleton, 2022; Henry, 2022). Starmer stated that a key reason why the negotiations failed was because May's government were 'refusing to countenance changes to the political declaration negotiated with Brussels' and that, with May announcing that she would resign as Conservative leader, Starmer made the point that Labour would struggle to have any confidence in a new Conservative leader honouring details laid out in the talks (Boffey and Stewart, 2019; Savage, 2019). Starmer has a reasonable defence for his actions and if Corbyn wanted a deal he could have side lined Starmer either by demoting him or sacking him from the shadow cabinet completely, however it seems any chance of a compromise may have happened without Starmer's interventions. Jon Cruddas 'regrets that Labour failed to respect the referendum and split the right' however he stated Corbyn 'didn't have the authority' (Lambert, 2021).

Lambert stated that Labour were 'broken by Brexit' and that if the leadership supported May's deal, which may have happened if a compromise was reached via the talks or if a customs union vote had passed in the indicate votes, then the right wing would have been split and that Labour's situation would have been 'transformed' in their favour (Lambert, 2021). This could have led to a split within the Conservative Party with Nigel Farage and William Hague stating that this would have done long term damage to the Tories, the Brexit Party might have aimed to take Brexit supporters from May and, avoiding a challenge of his own, Corbyn could have gone into an election focusing on domestic issues, similar to 2017, without Brexit overshadowing the campaign (Lambert, 2021). The negotiations, however, failed and no compromise was reached.

In July 2019, 56% of Labour members believed Corbyn was handling the issue of Brexit badly, 42% of Labour believed Corbyn was handling it well (Smith, 2019a). Lee Jones stated that 'Labour's Brexit capitulation is the end of Corbynism' as the movement towards a second referendum was a 'betrayal' of Labour supporters who voted to leave the EU who then voted for Labour to respect the referendum result in 2017 (Dunin-Wasowicz, 2019). Jones may have been right as the same month the poll was published, Labour would poll above the Conservatives for the last time under Corbyn's leadership, with all polls from 28th July until the 2019 election showing a Conservative lead (Wikipedia, 2023a).

When Theresa May stood down as Conservative Party leader, the Tories held a leadership election which resulted in Boris Johnson becoming party leader after he won 66.1% of the membership vote against Jeremy Hunt (Merrick and Woodcock, 2019). Johnson did not rule out a no deal Brexit, a plan opposed by not just the Labour leadership but also most MPs according to the indicative votes (Bogdanor, 2019). In response, Corbyn proposed a plan to

stop a no deal Brexit which would include installing him as a temporary 'caretaker' Prime Minister in which he would extend Article 50 and support a general election in which Labour would commit to a public vote on a Brexit deal (Mason, 2019b).

This situation would require the confidence of the House of Commons, meaning that a majority of MPs would have to support this proposal. Whilst the SNP and Greens supported this, Jo Swinson, leader of the Liberal Democrats, opposed the idea and suggested Ken Clarke or Harriet Harman should lead this 'emergency government' as Corbyn could not command the support of Liberal Democrats or rebel Conservative MPs (Simons and Singh, 2019). Angela Rayner, then-Labour's shadow education secretary, stated 'Jo Swinson does not get to choose who the leader of the labour Party is' and that, given the risk of a no deal Brexit, 'to say "I'm not working with him because I don't like him" is a very childish thing to do, and she needs to reconsider that' (Politics Home, 2019). This plan did not succeed, and Johnson prorogued Parliament for an extended period of time which risked a no deal Brexit happening by default as, if negotiations did not succeed, the UK would leave the European Union without a deal (Elgot, 2019). This failed, however, as the Supreme Court ruled that the prorogation of Parliament was unlawful (Bowcott et al, 2019).

In September 2019, Labour conference voted in favour of a Brexit policy in which Labour would negotiate a new Brexit deal and then this deal would be put to voters against the option to remain in the EU, with the party not committing to campaign to remain in the EU (however MPs would be able to campaign however they wanted) (Sparrow, 2019). Shortly after Labour's conference, Boris Johnson announced his intention to hold a general election in December to break the Brexit deadlock and this was approved, after days of discussions, between the two major parties (Mason, 2019b). The stance adopted at Labour conference would ultimately be

the position that Labour would take into the general election, with Corbyn announcing he would remain neutral in a second referendum (Stewart and Walker, 2019). The Conservative Party's position on Brexit was to 'get Brexit done' and get their deal passed via a Parliamentary mandate and the Liberal Democrats pledged to revoke Article 50 unilaterally without a referendum (Menon, 2019). According to YouGov, 70% of voters believed that Brexit was the most important issue facing the country at the time of the 2019. Whilst 57% of voters believed that the Conservatives' position on Brexit was clear, alongside 56% saying the same for the Liberal Democrats, the polling showed that 21% of voters believed Labour's stance on Brexit was clear with 65% saying it was 'unclear' (Abraham, 2019). The 2019 election results showed that, out of the 54 seats the Conservatives gained from Labour, 52 of the constituencies voted to leave the European Union (Wilkinson, 2019). Lord Ashcroft published a post-election poll, similar to the 2017 election, which showed that 73% of leave voters voted for the Conservative Party (16% for Labour) whilst 47% of remain voters voted for Labour (21% for the Liberal Democrats, 20% for the Conservatives), down from 51% in 2017 (Ashcroft, 2019). The Brexit Party agreed to stand down in over 300 Conservative held seats to support their campaign to 'get Brexit done', this ultimately helped unite the leave vote behind the Conservative Party whilst the remain vote was split.

In February 2019, Donald Tusk said that Corbyn's Brexit demands (including the option of a public vote), in relation to the decision passed at 2018 Labour conference and promoted by the leadership, were 'promising' (Zalan, 2019). A few months later, due to internal divisions over a second referendum, Labour's own membership, which was loyal to Corbyn, though that the leadership were handling the situation with Brexit badly. If indicative votes, or negotiations between May and Corbyn's teams, would have had a different outcome then the handling of Brexit by the leadership would have been different too however, ultimately, the indecisiveness

over the issue cost Labour votes on both sides with leave voters, including some 2017 Labour voters, uniting behind the Conservative Party whilst Labour could not unite the remain vote behind the party, despite offering a second referendum with remain on the ballot.

There was no easy option for Corbyn to pursue; supporting May's Brexit deal may have split the Conservatives and allowed Corbyn to focus his next election campaign on domestic issues however it also could have split Labour and led to a greater exodus of MPs following the split by The Independent Group; supporting a second referendum at an earlier period may have united more remain voters behind Labour however it would not have helped with the migration of support of leave voters from the party and with so many swing seats voting to leave the European Union a strategy of a second referendum may have been doomed from the start, regardless of when Labour adopted the position; and pursuing a soft Brexit via a customs union, and sacking second referendum ministers, may have solidified Corbyn authority as leader and perhaps could have gained support of leave voters, however remain voters who cared passionate about the European Union might have moved their vote towards the Liberal Democrats and could have damaged Corbyn's reputation with a mostly-loyal membership as 90% of members supported a second referendum.

In 2017, Corbyn had 'accepted the triggering of Article 50 and the end of free movement, but on the other he indicated ongoing support for a social Europe and the benefits of immigration', yet this strategy was effective because 'Leave-voting traditional Labour areas largely 'stayed loyal', while Labour also surged in some strongly pro-Remain areas, for example university towns and cities' (Hayton, 2022). Hayton explains that this was because Brexit was a key issue for Conservative voters, whilst the NHS and austerity were more important for those who voted for the Labour Party (Hayton, 2022). Although this 'ambivalent' strategy worked in the 2017

election, the increased divisions over Brexit in the country would lead to a 'major contradiction in.. strategy' for Labour as the 'party was led by an instinctive Eurosceptic whose primary base of support was the overwhelmingly pro-EU party membership (90% of Labour members voted to remain in the EU) (Hayton, 2022). Whilst Corbyn was able to enjoy some tactical victories after the 2017 election, including defeating the government on key votes, he was unable to establish a 'key strategic direction in relation to Brexit, in terms of either the final destination or how it might be reached' and that Labour's strategy was to hope that Brexit would 'consume and destroy the Conservatives' (Hayton, 2022). Corbyn tried to distance Labour from the issue of Brexit and attempt to focus more on domestic policy, however he was unable to do so and led to his Brexit strategy being 'characterised by shifting compromise, as he gradually and reluctantly moved towards a more pro-Remain position' (Hayton, 2022). Eventually, the party would shift to a second referendum position and this 'messy compromise', alongside competitor pro-remain parties who had long established their pro-remain credentials (e.g. the Liberal Democrats, The Green Party, and Change UK) 'saw Labour fail to effectively mobilise remain voters in the way the Conservatives did leave voters' (Hayton, 2022). Corbyn had to face in two directions in order to appeal to remain and leave voters, and whilst the 'ambivalent' strategy worked in 2017, it did not work in 2019 and, perhaps, a clearer Brexit strategy being outlined sooner or more coherently could have led to a different result for Corbyn.

It could have been the case that Corbyn solidified his authority and won the internal debate over the issue, as he did with anti-austerity economics, however he did not do this. Ultimately, the strategy was to emulate what happened in 2017 by attempting to focus on domestic issues, Corbyn himself said 'Labour stands not just for the 52 per cent or the 48 per cent, but for the 99%' (a reference to his 'for the many, not the few' slogan) in a November 2019 rally however, by that point, the issue of Brexit was dominant with 7 out of 10 voters believing it was the most

important issue at the time (Allegretti, 2019a). Many voters, on both sides, did not understand Labour's stance. An attempt by the leadership to compromise over Brexit may have been well intentioned, but a compromise may have only furthered divisions instead of uniting support.

4.4 <u>The handling of antisemitism</u>

This section will look at the handling of antisemitism in the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership, a topic that was widely discussed by academics and by journalists during his tenure as party leader. This section will consider academic perspectives on the topic, look at the well documented scrutiny over Corbyn's past and the Labour Party's response - alongside Corbyn's own personal response - to the increased scrutiny over this issue, why Corbyn was unable to close down the issue of antisemitism in the party including looking at numerous reports looking at the issue of antisemitism in Labour including: the Royall report, Shami Chakrabarti Inquiry, Home Affairs Select Committee (HASCRA) report, Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report, The work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) in relation to antisemitism, 2014-2019 (also known as the LabourLeaks report), and the Forde report. Finally, this section will look at the consequences over the handling of antisemitism in the party, including the negative impact on the relationship between the Labour Party and Jewish communities across the country, alongside the impact on perceptions amongst the wider public.

<u>4.4.1 Academic perspectives</u>

Antisemitism in the Labour Party was an issue that engulfed Corbyn's leadership according to many academics, political commentators, and voters. While antisemitism is a long-standing issue which pre-dates Corbyn's time in the party, the issue was one that was mentioned more frequently in the press under Corbyn's leadership compared to other leaders due to an increase of reported cases of antisemitism within the party under his leadership, scrutiny of past

comments and associations linked to Corbyn himself and questions raised over the investigative processes of the party. Whilst Corbyn and his supporters point towards his anti-racist credentials, including his historic campaigning fighting against apartheid in South Africa, against anti-black racism and indeed against antisemitism, the Equality and Human Rights Commission stated the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership oversaw a 'culture within the Party which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism and, at worst, could be seen to accept it' (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020, 6). The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) established a working definition of antisemitism in 2016 which is as follows:

> 'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities: followed by 11 contemporary examples of antisemitism' (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2016).

In addition to this, the IHRA use the spelling of 'antisemitism' instead of 'anti-semitism' because the additional hyphen is a '(legitimisation) of a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology' and that it 'divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews… antisemitism should be read as a unified term so that the meaning of the generic term for modern Jew-hatred is clear' (Lebovic, 2018). After long discussions and passionate disagreements on specific details in the summer of 2018, including debates on whether some examples should be accepted, the Labour Party decided to adopt the full IHRA definition of

antisemitism with all its examples. The divisions over this issue will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

Andrew Barclay et al found that although much of the British Jewish community had historically voted Labour, this had changed in recent times as a large majority now voted for the Conservative Party instead. They found that the perception of antisemitism in the Labour Party and the negative opinion of Corbyn, who many in the Jewish community felt was responsible for not dealing with antisemitism in the party, were key reasons why a political realignment had occurred amongst the British Jewish community. They also stated that 'Jewish voters give significantly lower ratings of Jeremy Corbyn at every level of propensity to support Labour' and that 'Jeremy Corbyn is disliked by Jews more than non-Jews, irrespective of how they feel towards Labour generally' (Barclay et al, 2019)

Ivor Gaber argued that Labour is not an antisemitic party but has tolerated an unacceptable level of antisemitic behaviour. He stated that Corbyn did not fully understand antisemitism and that British Jews 'have reacted so strongly against its perceived prevalence within the Labour Party' (Gaber, 2020, 70). He also noted that all 2020 Labour leadership candidates were aware of Labour's issues with antisemitism, and these could negatively impact the party (Gaber, 2020, 70). This led all the leadership candidates in 2020 to pledge to tackle the issue more thoroughly and to institute internal change to attempt to eradicate the antisemitism within the party.

One argument made by Dave Rich, in 'The Left's Jewish Problem' uses the analogy of apples in a barrel to comment on left wing antisemitism. Some would argue that antisemitism in Labour is a 'few bad apples' in an anti-racist barrel that can be removed. Rich argues that instead it is the barrel itself which is rotten which will taint all the apples inside it. Rich states that although there is a long tradition on the left to fight antisemitism there are also traditions

on the left that have allowed or even encouraged antisemitism, particularly the anti-Zionist left who dismiss the 'emotional, historic and spiritual Jewish connection to Israel' and the left wingers who promote Jewish conspiracies that arose from the era Soviet propaganda and that have become more prevalent in modern times (Rich, 2016).

Justin Schlosberg argued that the press misreported some key events related to the Labour antisemitism, including the debate regarding the IHRA definition of antisemitism. He argues that misreporting antisemitism is dangerous because it could normalise antisemitism, distract attention away from real antisemitic discourse and could stir up counter-outrage which 'may be misdirected at Jews on either the left or right of the political spectrum'. Schlosberg gave an example of a Daily Mail columnist calling a Jewish Corbyn supporter a 'useful Jewish idiot'. He also asks why the then-Conservative Prime Minister at the time, Theresa May, was not held accountable by the press for praising the Malaysian Prime Minister, who opened called themselves an antisemite. The issue of antisemitism was a key issue in the news agenda at the time with some of the press calling Labour 'institutionally racist' and arguing that a Corbyn-led government would be an 'existential threat to Jewish life' in Britain regarding how they handled the IHRA definition debate (Schlosberg, 2018: 4). This perhaps shows that the mainstream media were willing to focus on the issue within Labour but ignored potential problems within the Conservative Party, including their own issues over anti-Islamic behaviour. In 'Bad News for Labour' the authors found that the public believed 34% of Labour members were accused of antisemitism whilst, at the time, the figure was around 0.1%. The authors also defend Corbyn against the allegation that he was personally antisemitic by saying: 'Does anyone really believe that, if the Battle of Cable Street was refought in the UK, then Corbyn and the movement he leads would be anywhere else than on the barricades with the Jews, rather than on the other side with the fascists?' (Philo et al, 2019).

Image repair theory was developed by William Benoit to address the question of 'what a person or organisation can say when accused or suspected of wrongdoing' (Benoit, 2015). A person's reputation is important because it impacts how they are perceived by others, this is particularly important for political representatives who want to gain power as, ultimately, in elections it is the people who decide the outcome of an election. If a person/organisation's image is damaged then they can attempt to repair their image even if it is not fully restored, sometimes this is successful i.e. Tylenol managed to repair their image following an incident where their capsules were poisoned whilst others, for example the cyclist Lance Armstrong following admitting to doping in the sport, have struggled to restore their image (Beniot, 2015). The theory looks at different strategies, notably 'denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action and accepting responsibility'. Timothy Heppell utilised this theory by looking at Corbyn's handling of antisemitism in the Labour Party. Heppell states that Corbyn's approach was 'inappropriate, inconsistent and contradictory', he backs this up by claiming 'in the early to mid-part of his leadership tenure, Corbyn displayed a tendency towards denial. Throughout his leadership tenure Corbyn did engage in forms of corrective action' but 'the effectiveness of his attempts to demonstrate change was limited. For example, his maladroit handling of both the Chakrabarti inquiry launch and the debates about adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism, enabled his critics to construct a narrative of leadership failure vis-à-vis his interventions'. This led to a failure in crisis communication and that more effective communication could have shut down the perception of the antisemitism crisis (Heppell, 2021a: 26).

4.4.2 Scrutiny over Corbyn's past and response to increased scrutiny

In March 2018 Luciana Berger wrote to LOTO for an explanation regarding a response by Corbyn to a Facebook post in 2012 about a mural by artist Mear One (Stewart, 2018b). The

'Freedom for Humanity' mural featured antisemitic tropes, Dave Rich noted 'antisemitism normally comes in one of two ways.. racial stereotypes are used to make Jews look unappealing.. they have big noses, they are greedy, they only care about themselves or.. a conspiracy theory in which Jews are responsible for the ills of the world.. they run the banks, they run the media, they control politicians.. the mural painted by graffiti artist Mear One managed to combine both' (Rich, 2018). When the post was published the artist complained about plans for the mural to be removed and Corbyn responded 'Why? You are in good company. Rockerfeller [sic] destroyed Diego Viera's [sic] mural because it includes a picture of Lenin' (Stewart, 2018).

Following the complaint raised by Berger, Labour published a statement stating that Corbyn was 'responding to concerns about the removal of public art of the grounds of freedom of speech' however Corbyn himself later expressed 'sincere regret' for not looking closely at the image and said the 'contents of which are deeply disturbing and antisemitic' (Stewart, 2018; BBC News, 2018e). When showed the image during an interview with Andrew Marr the then deputy leader Tom Watson condemned the mural and defended Corbyn by saying 'you are showing it to me on a 32-inch screen on national television and I have seen it about 100 times on social media. it's very different from seeing it on Facebook when you are on the move' (BBC News, 2018f). There are three possible explanations to explains Corbyn's initial response; either Corbyn looked at the mural and did not notice the antisemitic tropes; he looked at the mural and did not understand that the tropes were antisemitic; or he looked at the mural and understood that the imagery was antisemitic. Watson's defence points towards the first explanation whilst Corbyn's personal condemnation of the antisemitic tropes shows that it is very unlikely to be the final explanation. If it is the second explanation however, it does show

a lack of judgement which damaged Corbyn's reputation on the handling of antisemitism in Labour and an apology was issued in an attempt to repair his image.

Scrutiny over Corbyn's Facebook also continued when the Jewish Chronicle noted that Corbyn was a member of at least three Facebook groups where antisemitic content was published: Palestine Live, the History of Palestine and The Labour Party Supporter Group. A Corbyn spokesperson responded: 'there are over 16,000 members of The Labour Party Supporter group. Jeremy has never posted in the group, did not follow its content and was not an active participant' (Weich, 2018). Corbyn engaged with the post about the mural however he did not engage within these Facebook groups beyond being a member and limited replies to some posts from individuals (it should be noted that the posts Corbyn were responding to were not scrutinised over antisemitism).

In August 2018 the Daily Mail published photos (taken from the Palestinian Embassy in Tunisia) showing Corbyn laying a wreath (Lee, 2018b). Corbyn wrote about the trip in 2014 and stated that he was at a service to commemorate Palestinians killed in an airstrike by the Israeli military in 1985, the attack was condemned by then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the UN Security Council passed a resolution which condemned the attack too (Corbyn, 2014; Hansard, 1985; United Nations Security Council Resolutions, 1985). The Daily Mail, however, claimed that Corbyn laid the wreath beside the graves of people linked to the Munich massacre, where 11 Israeli athletes were killed by the Black September terrorist organisation during the 1972 Olympic games in Germany (Sinmaz, 2018).The Black September terrorists who participated in the killings are buried in Libya however the Daily Mail state that Salah Khalaf, Fakhri al-Omari and Hayel Abdel-Hamid are linked to Black September and are buried at the cemetery (alongside Atef Bseiso) where Corbyn laid the wreath (Azar et al, 2011, 19; Lee, 2018b). The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) deny that either Shalah and Bsesio

were linked to Black September and Corbyn denied laying a wreath at their graves, insisting that he was laying a wreath at the aforementioned service to commemorate Palestinians killed in the 1985 attack.

Channel 4's FullFact stated 'Corbyn said that he did lay "a wreath in memory of all those who have died". According to a Daily Mail reporter who visited the cemetery, the available photos of Mr Corbyn holding a wreath show him 15 yards away from the memorial plaque for the 1985 victims – but directly in front of the plaque for Salah Khalaf and others. Speaking to Channel 4 News on Tuesday, Mr Corbyn's language seemed to suggest that Salah Khalaf was amongst those for whom he laid a memorial wreath' (Lee, 2018b). The incident, dubbed 'Wreathgate' by the Spectator, was noticed by then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who said 'the laying of a wreath by Jeremy Corbyn on the graves of the terrorist who perpetrated the Munich massacre and his comparison of Israel to the Nazis deserves unequivocal condemnation from everyone – left, right and everything in between' and Corbyn responded that his 'claims about my actions and words are false (Steerpike, 2018; Wells, 2018). Although it would be disingenuous to argue that Corbyn supported the Munich massacre the controversy made headlines internationally which Labour, and Corbyn himself, had to spend political capital on to rebut the story.

In May 2019 Corbyn was criticised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews for writing a foreword to the reissued version of the book 'Imperialism: A Study' by John Atkinson Hobson originally published in 1902 (Marsh and Stewart, 2019). The book is an analysis on the relationship between capital and imperialism, however a section of the book claims European finance was controlled by 'men of a single and peculiar race', a dog whistle for an antisemitic trope which suggests that Jewish people are controlling the financial situation in Europe (Marsh and Stewart, 2019). Corbyn called the book 'brilliant' and 'very controversial' in 2011 (Marsh

and Stewart, 2019). The Jewish Labour Movement condemned Corbyn by saying he endorsed 'antisemitic propaganda' (Jewish Labour Movement, 2019b). Corbyn responded to the criticism by saying the antisemitic language used was 'absolutely deplorable' but stated his foreword was analysing the process 'which led to the First World War, of the wars between empires in Europe – that's what the book was about' (ITV News, 2019). Numerous politicians have referenced Hobson's work without similar scrutiny, which was noted by Labour's spokesperson (Marsh and Stewart, 2019). It may well have been the case that Corbyn, and other politicians, are not endorsing every line of Hobson's book and are instead focusing on the wider arguments made by him, however despite calling the book 'controversial' Corbyn did not condemn the specific antisemitic reference until it was pointed out 8 years later.

In August 2018 video footage of Corbyn at a Palestinian Return Centre in 2013 emerged where he said a group of Zionists had 'no sense of irony' despite 'having lived in this country for a very long time' (Sparrow and Stewart, 2018). Luciana Berger condemned Corbyn saying that his comments 'makes me as a proud British Jew feel unwelcome in my own party. I've lived in Britain all my life and I don't need any lessons in history/irony' (Sparrow and Stewart, 2018). Corbyn insisted he used the term 'Zionist' in an accurate political sense and was referring to two specific members of the audience, not making a sweeping generalisation of all people who believe in Zionism as he stated 'this was dutifully recorded by the, thankfully silent, Zionists who were in the audience on that occasion' (Sparrow and Stewart, 2018; Labour Briefing, 2018). One of the audience members, Richard Millett, was identified in the national media and they initially pursued a libel claim against Corbyn (however this was later dropped) (PA News Agency, 2022). Another story published in August 2018 led to an apology from Corbyn for appearing on a platform with people whose views he 'completely rejects' at a Holocaust Memorial Day event in 2010 (BBC News, 2018d). A Holocaust survivor, who was one of the

panellists, compared Israel to Nazism however Corbyn did not condemn the comments at the time (Marsh, 2018). Also, as noted by the PoliticsHome, in 2011 Corbyn signed an Early Day Motion to change the name of Holocaust Memorial Day to Genocide Memorial day – Never Again for Anyone to reflect that 'Nazism targeted not only Jewish (people)', although Corbyn is on the record for commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day for many years including signing an Early Day Motion praising the organisation of a Holocaust Memorial Day event and urging local authorities to establish 'future Holocaust memorial days' in 2007 (Johnston, 2018; Leech et al, 2007).

The culmination of the aforementioned incidents, alongside complaints over the processes dealing with antisemitism within the party, led to a demonstration in Parliament Square where hundreds of people, including 'over a dozen Labour MPs', demanded that Corbyn 'do more to tackle anti-Jewish feeling in his party's ranks' (Cowburn and Kentish, 2018). Corbyn responded to the protest by saying 'I am sincerely sorry for the pain which has been caused, and pledge to redouble my efforts to bring this anxiety to an end. I must make clear that I will never be anything other than a militant opponent of antisemitism' (Cowburn and Kentish, 2018). Despite apologies and explanations, the relationship between Corbyn/The Labour Party and Jewish communities across Britain was damaged following the published revelations.

Jonathan Freedland stated that Corbyn is a 'a serially unlucky anti-racist who means well, but keeps overlooking racism against Jews even when it's right in front of him' (Freedland, 2019). However is this analysis fair? In 2019, Skwawkbox published a list of 'fifty times Jeremy Corbyn stood with Jewish people'. This list included 41 Early Day Motions where Corbyn condemned antisemitism, condemned people accused of antisemitism, condemned antisemitic attacks, praised people who tackled antisemitism and calling for the British government to help

Jewish people (including an EDM demanding refugee status for Jewish people from Yemen) (Skwawkbox, 2019; Abbott et al, 2010). The list also includes actions beyond EDM signatures noting that Corbyn, as a 28 year old Labour councillor, helped organise an anti-fascist demonstration against the National Front in Wood Green, led a clean-up of the Finsbury Park synagogue after an antisemitic attack in 2002, praised the work of the Holocaust Memorial Trust and, in 2015, organised a counter-demonstration in defence of Jewish residents in Golders Green against a fascist rally (Savage, 2022; Murray, 2022). Corbyn himself has also had a longstanding relationship with Chabad of Islington including attending menorah lighting ceremonies in his constituency for Chanukah (Toberman, 2017).

As leader, Corbyn published 37 statements via Twitter condemning antisemitism (this includes the spelling 'anti-semitism' in tweets), condemning antisemitic attacks and commemorating the victims of the Holocaust (Corbyn, 2024). Whilst Skwawkbox is not a politically neutral website, and was supportive of the Corbyn leadership, the claims can be verified by external sources, and it shows that Corbyn has proactively campaigned against antisemitism for many decades.

In response to the increased scrutiny over his past and the handling of antisemitism in Labour, Corbyn published a video and article in the Guardian to condemn and combat antisemitism (Corbyn, 2018a; Corbyn, 2018c). The article notes that 'Britain would not be Britain without our Jewish communities' and that 'Jewish people have also been at the heart of the labour movement throughout our history' however he acknowledged that there was a 'continuing problem' of antisemitism and that the party was 'too slow in processing disciplinary cases of antisemitic abuse' but 'any government I (Corbyn) lead will take whatever measures are necessary to guarantee the security of Jewish communities, Jewish schools, Jewish places of

worship, Jewish social care, Jewish culture and Jewish life as a whole in this country'. This article was published following the publication of educational materials, named 'No Place For Antisemitism', to combat anti-Jewish racism via political education (Rodgers, 2019b).

The materials contained links and resources including the IHRA definition of antisemitism, a Birkbeck university course on antisemitism, political education videos created by Momentum and a document which cites examples of antisemitic claims. Whilst the Jewish Leadership Council refused to endorse the document, there were meetings that took place between them, Corbyn and the Board of Deputies of British Jews which aimed to discuss the issue of tackling antisemitism and proposals to deal with the issue (Schofield, 2019). The organisations, although welcoming 'Corbyn's personal involvement in the discussion and his new comments recognising and apologising for antisemitism in the Labour Party', called the meeting a 'missed opportunity' as Corbyn's proposals 'fell short of the minimum level of action which our letter (published 28th March 2018) suggested' (Board of Deputies of British Jews, 2018).

The handling of antisemitism was not dealt with by the leadership personally but, instead, was dealt with by processes within the party. Guidance and instructions were updated throughout Corbyn's leadership including suspending several party members who part of a Facebook group (Palestine Live) with antisemitic comments, this was in place following the revelations that Corbyn was part of Facebook groups where offensive comments about Jewish people were published, although not by him (Elgot, 2018). Corbyn also supported proposals to speed up the response to serious cases of antisemitism in the party which would include referring cases to a special panel that would have the power to expel Labour Party members (Allegretti, 2019a). This proposal was introduced as Corbyn believed that the disciplinary processes at the time

were 'not good enough' and that 'some complaints have taken too long to deal with' (Allegretti, 2019a). The NEC, and later conference, would adopt the proposals (Lee, 2019b).

The conclusion of this sub-section points towards decades of activism campaigning against antisemitism by Corbyn and proactive measures by him in response to the increased scrutiny of antisemitism in the Labour Party. If Corbyn were an antisemite, then why would he spend a lot of time focusing on proposals to combat antisemitism and making numerous public statements condemning antisemitism alongside attempts to proactively reach out to representatives of Jewish communities within his constituency and across the country. Freedland's 'unluckiest anti-racist in history' is one he may sincerely hold, however it is hard to argue that this is objectively true as Corbyn has a long record of condemning antisemitism.

4.4.3 Why can't Corbyn close down the issue of antisemitism in Labour?

Ultimately, people will be able to make their own judgements about Corbyn based on the scrutiny of his past and his own actions to combat antisemitism however, given that the issue was continually raised in the 2019 general election and continues to be raised in discussions about Corbyn's leadership, Corbyn was unable to close down the issue. The handling of antisemitism in the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership has been well documented in academic and journalistic accounts. Alongside this, numerous reports have looked at this issue in extensive detail: The Royall Report, the Home Affairs Select Committee Report, The Shami Chakrabarti Inquiry, The work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit in relation to antisemitism, 2014-2019 (LabourLeaks), the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)'s Investigation into antisemitism in the Labour Party and the Forde Report.

4.4.3.1 Royall Report

Following allegations of antisemitism at the University of Oxford's Labour Club, the Labour NEC asked Baroness Royall to undertake an inquiry. Royall looked at around 300 pages of evidence from over 40 members of the Labour Club, welcomed requests for interviews, noted the Antisemitic Discourse Report 2013's definitions of antisemitism by the Community Security Trust (CST) and Brian Klug, and acknowledged that the Chakrabarti Inquiry was being written therefore a 'number of issues' were directly sent to the Chakrabarti Inquiry instead of being dealt with directly by Royall. In May 2016 the 13 page report was published which noted that, although there is 'no evidence the Club is itself institutionally antisemitic.. the lack.. of an effective complaints or disciplinary procedure.. mean that unacceptable behaviour – whether antisemitic or some other manifestation – may go unchallenged by either the victim or those in authority' (Royall, 2016, 10).

Royall noted that there is a 'cultural problem in which behaviour and language that would once have been intolerable is now tolerated.. some Jewish members do not feel comfortable attending the meetings, let alone participating' (Royall, 2016, 10). The Royall report states that antisemitism exists but also that it is unacceptable to use antisemitism as a 'factional political tool' following 'at least one case of serious false allegations of antisemitism' that are now a police matter, recommends against a lifetime ban of membership following antisemitic comments as 'people may change their views', that training should be supplied by Labour Students alongside the Jewish Labour Movement and for the NEC to ensure post-holders in the party have access to materials to help them tackle antisemitism, and suggests rule changes such as adopting a written definition of antisemitism and giving greater powers to the NEC to disqualify party membership for people found to be antisemitic (Pope, 2016a).

Many Royall report recommendations would be adopted throughout the years including workshops on tackling antisemitism which were run by Labour Students alongside the Jewish Labour Movement and Union of Jewish Students, however automatic lifetime bans were never introduced (Jewish Labour Movement, 2017).

4.4.3.2 The Shami Chakrabarti Inquiry

On April 26th 2016, a Facebook post from Labour MP Naz Shah was unearthed by Guido Fawkes. The post from 2014 (prior to her election as a Member of Parliament) argued that Israel's population should be 'transported' from the Middle East to the United States of America (Elgot, 2016c). Later that day, the Jewish Chronicle revealed another Facebook post where Shah compared Israel to the Nazis (Elgot, 2016). A day later, Shah was suspended from the Labour Party over these accusations in relation to antisemitism and apologised for the 'foolish' posts (Elgot, 2016). Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London from 2000 – 2008 (2000 – 2004, independent; 2004 – 2008, Labour), defended Naz Shah from accusations of antisemitism on BBC London by stating 'her remarks were over the top but she's not antisemitic', later in that interview he would say: 'when Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews' (Weaver, 2016). Livingstone was suspended for bringing the party into disrepute (Stone, 2016).

Following these incidents, Corbyn announced that he would set up an inquiry, chaired by Shami Chakrabarti, to look at 'antisemitism and other forms of racism including islamophobia within the (Labour) party' stating 'Labour is an anti-racist party to its core and has a long and proud history of standing against racism, including antisemitism. I have campaigned against racism all my life and the Jewish community has been at the heart of the Labour party and progressive politics in Britain for more than 100 years (Asthana and Stewart, 2016).

The Chakrabarti Inquiry aimed to 'consult widely with Labour Party Members, the Jewish community and other minority representatives about a statement of principles and guidance about antisemitism and other forms of racism, including Islamophobia', recommend compliance procedures and look into training programmes for candidates in order to deal with antisemitism and other forms of racism (Chakrabarti, 2016, 3). In June 2016 the report was published concluding that 'The Labour Party is not overrun by antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of racism' however she stated that there was an 'occasionally toxic atmosphere' and 'too many Jewish voices express(ed) concern that antisemitism has not been taken seriously enough' (Chakrabarti, 2016: 1).

Chakrabarti made 20 recommendations to tackle antisemitism and other forms of racism in Labour including drawing up an accessible complaints procedure; transferring the power of interim suspension from the National Executive Committee (NEC) to the National Constitutional Committee (NCC); greater use of sanctions; guidance on appropriate language; time limits governing each stage of the disciplinary process; and introducing training for Labour candidates from a local and Parliamentary level (Chakrabarti, 2016: 1, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22). The recommendations were suggested as a way to proactively tackle antisemitism and other forms of racism, Corbyn welcomed the proposals, the Jewish Labour Movement called the report 'a sensible and firm platform which gives the party an opportunity to get off the back foot and on the front foot in setting a new standard for tackling racism and antisemitism' and the Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, stated there should be 'full and unhesitating implementation of the report's findings' (Jewish Chronicle, 2016b).

The Chakrabarti Report was launched via a press conference which was introduced by Corbyn and Chakrabarti. Ruth Smeeth, a Jewish MP, walked out of the conference after being confronted by activist Marc Wandsworth - he made comments towards her which would lead

to his suspension, and eventual expulsion from the Labour Party (Honeycombe-Foster, 2018). She condemned Corbyn as he 'stood by and did absolutely nothing' and called for him to resign (Smeeth, 2016). The Chief Rabbi also condemned Corbyn following comments he made at the press conference where he stated that 'Jews were "no more responsible" for Israel's actions than Muslims were for "those various self-styled Islamic states"', he called the comments 'offensive' and that the comments caused 'greater concern' to the Jewish community instead of building trust as the comment seems to compare Israel to ISIS (BBC News, 2016a). When asked whether he was comparing Israel to ISIS Corbyn responded: 'no, no of course I'm not. The point in the report is that you shouldn't say to somebody just because they're Jewish, you must have an opinion on Israel. Any more than you say to anyone who is a Muslim you must have an opinion on any vile action that's been taken by misquoting the good name of Islam. I just ask people to be respectful and inclusive in their debate' (BBC News, 2016a).

There was also additional scrutiny of Corbyn's leadership following his decision to nominate Shami Chakrabarti for a peerage to the House of Lords a five weeks after the publication of the report. The Board of Deputies of British Jews labelled this a 'whitewash for peerages' scandal which 'raises serious questions about the integrity of Ms Chakrabarti, her inquiry and the Labour leadership' and the Chief Rabbi stated that the credibility of her report 'lies in tatters' (Mason, 2016a; Jewish Chronicle, 2016a). Corbyn's spokesperson stated the decision was made because 'Chakrabarti shares Jeremy's ambition for reform of the House of Lords (and) her career has been one of public service and human rights advocacy' Jewish Chronicle, 2016a).

Whilst there seems to be consensus over the implementation of the recommendations of the report to combat antisemitism, the aftermath of the press conference and appointment of Chakrabarti to the House of Lords, despite the justification made by Corbyn, seemingly

damaged the relationship between the Jewish community and the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership.

4.4.3.3 Home Affairs Select Committee Report (HASCRA)

In October 2016 the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee published a report, named 'Antisemitism in the UK', which looked at the extent of antisemitism in the country (HASCRA, 2016). The committee was made up of 5 Conservative MPs, 3 Labour MPs (it should be noted none of the MPs endorsed Corbyn for leader) and a SNP MP. The report did not focus specifically on the Labour Party and Jeremy Corbyn, however they were mentioned in the report. The Home Affairs Select Committee Report on antisemitism (HASCRA) looked at surveys including a survey of Labour Party members who joined after the 2015 General Election which noted that they 'found that 55% agreed with the notion that antisemitism is "not a serious problem at all, and is being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel"' (HASCRA, 2016: 40). HASCRA noted that a self-selecting survey of British Jewish people, conducted by the Campaign Against Antisemitism, found that 87% believed that the Labour Party is too tolerant of antisemitism among its MPs, members and supporters' (HASCRA, 2016: 43).

HASCRA make the claim that Labour is 'demonstrably incompetent' in dealing with antisemitism, that Corbyn was helping create a safe space for people with 'vile attitudes towards Jewish people' and notes that 'while the Labour leader has a proud record of campaigning against many types of racism, based on the evidence we have received, we are not persuaded that he fully appreciates the distinct nature of post-second-world-war antisemitism' (Boffey and Sherwood, 2016). The committee also believed that the Chakrabarti Inquiry was 'ultimately compromised' and independence thrown into doubt following the acceptance of a peerage and job in Corbyn's shadow cabinet (Boffey and Sherwood, 2016).

Corbyn criticised the politicisation of the report stating 'although the committee heard evidence that 75% of antisemitic incidents come from far right sources, and the report states there is no reliable evidence to suggest antisemitism is greater in Labour than other parties, much of the report focuses on the Labour party.. as the report rightly acknowledges, politicising antisemitism – or using it as a weapon in controversies between and within political parties – does the struggle against it a disservice' (Boffey and Sherwood, 2016).

4.4.3.4 Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Report

In May 2019, following 'a number of complaints about allegations of antisemitism in the (Labour) party', the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) stated that they would be launching an investigation which would seek to determine 'whether unlawful acts have been committed by the party and/or its employees and/or its agents' and 'whether the party has responded to complaints of unlawful acts in a lawful, efficient and effective manner' (EHRC, 2020, 123). It also looked at 'whether the Rule Book and the Party's complaint handling processes have enabled or could enable it to deal with antisemitism complaints efficiently and effectively, including whether appropriate sanctions have been or could be applied' and the steps taken by the Party to implement the recommendations made in the Chakrabarti, Royall and Home Affairs Select Committee reports' (EHRC, 2020: 6).

The EHRC report found 'specific examples of harassment, discrimination and political interference' which meant that the Labour Party did commit/was responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination and that 'although some improvements have been made to the process for dealing with antisemitism complaints, it is hard not to conclude that antisemitism within the Labour Party could have been tackled more effectively if the leadership had chosen to do so' (EHRC, 2020: 3; EHRC, 2020: 6). The 'political interference' refers to

interference beyond Labour's formal complaints process from the Leader of the Opposition's office (LOTO) and others, these interventions were not seen as 'legitimate' by the EHRC and was, therefore, 'indirectly discriminatory and unlawful' (EHRC, 2020: 9). 23 out of 70 complaints filed between March 2016 and May 2019 contained 'instances of inappropriate involvement' by LOTO and others (EHRC, 2020: 43).

The Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) decide whether to investigate a complaint, however one example provided in the EHRC report shows that LOTO and the General Secretary undermined the GLU by demanding that a complaint against Ken Livingstone went 'to disputes' (EHRC, 2020, 44). This specific example shows that LOTO wanted to speed up disciplinary measures against Livingstone and, according to Richard Sanders and Peter Oborne, 'it appears likely that the bulk of the interventions were aimed at expediting disciplinary action rather than hindering it', however the interference went beyond the formal processes which was unlawful (Oborne and Sanders, 2021).

The report found that Labour committed unlawful acts through the acts of their agents, who are defined as 'someone who has authorised functions or duties on behalf of an association, but is not a worker employed by it, even if there is no formal contract between them' (EHRC, 2020: 23). The agents cited in the report were Ken Livingstone and Pat Bromley, the former in relation to his widely condemned comments made in the interview defending Naz Shah and the latter for the use of antisemitic tropes in a Facebook post where they mentioned 'bogus AS (antisemitism) accusations' and a 'fifth column in the LP (Labour Party)' (EHRC, 2020: 28). Labour were legally responsible for the acts of its agents, in this case Ken Livingstone and Pat Bromley and were therefore responsible for unlawful harassment of Jewish people.

The overwhelming majority of cases of complaints of antisemitism that were investigated were social media posts, making up 59 out of 70 cases. The EHRC found that Labour had a social media policy, however it was 'applied inconsistently' and there was a policy, from June 2017 – mid 2018, of 'not investigating mere 'likes' or reposts' which meant that 'repeated sharing of antisemitic material could have escaped investigation, even where it could have amounted to a breach of the Party's conduct rule or unlawful harassment or discrimination' (EHRC, 2020: 7; EHRC, 2020: 12). The policy was dropped in mid-2018 because 'it was unclear why it was ever used, and an unreasonable restriction to place on investigating online misconduct' however the EHRC stated that the policy, when implemented, led to 'to extremely poor decisions made on antisemitism cases' (EHRC, 2020: 85; EHRC, 2020: 87). The EHRC believed that this approach was inconsistent with Labour's commitment to take a 'zero tolerance approach to antisemitism' however acknowledged that it was a positive measure from the party to drop the policy (EHRC, 2020: 88).

Not only did the report find that there was a 'clear breakdown of trust between the Labour Party, many of its members and the Jewish community' but also there was a failure to provide adequate training to those handling antisemitism, this failure contributed 'to a lack of trust and confidence in the complaint handling system' (EHRC, 2020: 3; EHRC, 2020: 90). The EHRC noted Chakrabarti's comments in her 2016 report stating that there should be appropriate training for staff because, to tackle antisemitism, staffers need to understand what it is and how to handle antisemitism complaints (EHRC, 2020: 91). The EHRC report claims that Labour implemented a 'comprehensive training scheme for sexual harassment complaints' however the party 'failed to develop or implement adequate training in relation to antisemitism complaints, despite the matter being raised repeatedly (6 times) internally since 2016', this

shows that the approach to sexual harassment allegations was different to complaints of alleged antisemitism (EHRC, 2020: 92).

Finally, the EHRC report notes numerous comments made within the Chakrabarti report, with 31 references to it throughout the publication, and it seems to show that problems when it came to dealing with antisemitism, including educational outreach, could have been dealt with more efficiently if the recommendations from the Chakrabarti report were implemented and that, as a result, the EHRC found that 'antisemitism was not given the same priority as other issues within the Labour Party at that time, including sexual harassment complaints' (EHRC, 2020: 93). Iain McNichol was the General Secretary for the Labour Party when the Chakrabarti report was published, he was later replaced by Jenny Formby. Chakrabarti noted that not all the recommendations of her report had been implemented under McNichol but that Formby wanted to make it a top priority (BBC News, 2018b). The report also 'acknowledged a lack of action between 1 November 2016 and 19 February 2018. Jennie Formby told us that GLU staff only initiated 72 notices of investigation for all complaints during this period, and the leaked report says that 24 of these related to antisemitism' (EHRC, 2020: 70). This shows that there were improvements in dealing with antisemitism complaints under Formby compared to McNichol, however there were still inadequacies within the party machinery to tackle the issue of antisemitism.

There were 18 key recommendations in the EHRC report which Labour had to legally adopt, this meant that whoever the leader was, whether Corbyn remained as leader following the 2019 election or if another leadership candidate won the 2020 leadership election, the recommendations would have had to have been implemented otherwise the party would be in breach of the law (Rodgers, 2020). One key recommendation was the prohibition of political

interference and implementing clear rules/guidance around antisemitism complaints, this would allow for a clear distinction between the leadership and the disciplinary process (EHRC, 2020, 57). The EHRC report also recommended; living up to a zero-tolerance commitment to tackling antisemitism by acknowledging responsibility for not living up to prior commitments and engaging with Jewish stakeholders; political education for staffers dealing with antisemitism complaints to help staffers identify and combat antisemitism; monitoring and evaluating improvements to the disciplinary process to ensure lasting change (EHRC, 2020: 12; EHRC, 2020: 14; EHRC, 2020: 66).

Jeremy Corbyn responded to the EHRC report by calling for the recommendations to be 'swiftly implemented' however that he did not accept 'all of its findings' (Corbyn, 2020). He also that 'one antisemite is too many, but the scale of antisemitism was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media', he followed up with the claim by citing a poll showing the public believed around a third of Labour members were accused of antisemitism when 'the reality is, it was 0.3% of party members had a case against them which had to be put through the process' (Corbyn, 2020; Lee, 2020). The report stated 'Article 10 will protect Labour Party members who.. express their opinions on internal Party matters, such as the scale of antisemitism within the Party, based on their own experience and within the law' which would give Corbyn the right to express his opinion on the scale of the problem of antisemitism in the same way Peter Mandleson was allowed to voice his opinion to reject the idea of implementing the recommendations of the EHRC report, however later that day Corbyn would be suspended from the Labour Party for making this comment (EHRC, 2020: 27; Rodgers, 2020b).

Keir Starmer stated he wanted to implement the EHRC's recommendations, and he condemned Corbyn for making his comment by stating 'I made it clear the Labour Party I lead will not tolerate anti-Semitism, neither will it tolerate the argument that denies or minimises anti-Semitism in the Labour Party on the basis that it's exaggerated or a factional row' (Mason, 2020a). 19 days after his suspension, Corbyn was reinstated to the Labour Party by a unanimous decision from the disputes panel, this was following negotiations between representatives close to both Corbyn and Starmer – whilst the deal would've led to the restoration of the whip Starmer reneged on this pledge and refused to allow Corbyn to sit as a Labour MP (Eagleton, 2021). The Board of Deputies for British Jews and the Jewish Labour Movement condemned the reinstatement of Corbyn to the Labour Party and raised concerns about the disciplinary process (O'Carroll, 2020).

A legal requirement of the EHRC report was to update the disciplinary process and a new process was put in place following a vote at Labour conference with 73.64% of the vote in favour of adopting the rule changes, however aspects of the process were condemned by Momentum because the 'process hands considerable power to the General Secretary', a person they believe has 'proven himself incapable of acting independently and has instead pursued a blatantly factional agenda' (Rodgers, 2021; Momentum, 2021). The EHRC report showed structural failures within the Labour Party to tackle antisemitism. The report did not label the party as institutionally antisemitic nor did it name Corbyn personally for the failures but, instead, blamed collective leadership for the failure to stamp out antisemitism.

New processes were put in place to tackle antisemitism under the Corbyn years however it is clear these measures did not go far enough and that there were shortcomings with these reforms, even if they were implemented with good faith to combat antisemitism. The report,

however, states the leadership could have done more if the political will was there, suggesting that the collective leadership either were not taking this issue seriously enough or refused to take further action when they knew they could. There was a broad consensus within the party to implement the recommendations of the report, however the discussion over the findings and the way processes should be implemented was not as universally accepted. The report also seems to conclude that, despite initial criticisms over the circumstances over the Chakrabarti report, that the report laid out important recommendations to combat antisemitism and that earlier intervention via her recommendations could have improved the structures within the party and led to faster action against antisemitism cases.

4.4.3.5 LabourLeaks Report

A week after Keir Starmer was elected as Labour leader, a 851 page report looking into the handling of antisemitism by Labour's internal structures was leaked (Bastani, 2020a). The report, called 'The work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) in relation to antisemitism, 2014-2019' (also known as the LabourLeaks report), was supposed to be a submission to the EHRC in regard to their investigation into antisemitism in Labour however Thomas Gardiner, a lawyer in the Labour Party, advised against the submission on the basis that content, including emails and WhatsApp messages, were 'presented selectively and without their true context in order to give a misleading picture' (Syal, 2020). However, the documents contain a lot of information where comments can be contextualised. The LabourLeaks report not only looked at the handling of antisemitism by the Labour GLU but it also revealed allegations of bullying including a staffer saying she hoped left wing activist Max Shanly 'dies in a fire', when Diane Abbott was crying in a toilet a senior staffer said 'shall we tell (journalist) Michael Crick' with a response saying 'already have' alongside being called 'truly repulsive' and 'literally makes me sick' and noted that a staffer joked about 'hanging and

burning' Jeremy Corbyn (LabourLeaks, 2020: 56, 43, 52). The report also revealed that senior Labour staffers undermined Labour's 2017 election campaign by diverting funds away from marginal seats (Stone, 2020).

The hostility towards the Labour Left by Labour Right staffers had an impact on the relationship between Labour HQ (led by Iain McNichol, the General Secretary of the Labour Party 2011-2018, a figure who was hostile towards Corbyn) and LOTO under Corbyn's leadership. The report showed allegations that Labour HQ under McNichol sat on cases of antisemitism and took limited action because, as reported by Rowena Mason in their analysis on the report, 'hostility to Corbyn curbed efforts to tackle antisemitism' (Mason, 2020b). Examples include the GLU taking a year to suspend a Labour member who defended fascists, eight months to suspend a council candidate who stated that the Holocaust was a 'hoax' and a year to launch an investigation into Ken Livingstone following his comments on Hitler and Zionism (Wickham, 2020). The EHRC report seems to back up this by stating that there was a 'lack of action' in relation to the complaints inbox from November 2016 to February 2018, noting that the inbox was 'largely left unmanaged' (EHRC, 2020, 70). Alongside this, the slow implementation of the Chakrabarti report recommendations was noted in the EHRC report and LabourLeaks seems to show that staffers who were hostile to Corbyn's leadership were responsible for this (EHRC, 2020: 117-119; LabourLeaks, 2020: 223). The aftermath of LabourLeaks led to the suspension of Emile Oldknow and Patrick Heneghan, two staffers who were named in the report, the former was allowed back into the Labour Party in February 2021.

The LabourLeaks report paints a picture of a dysfunctional relationship between Labour Right controlled Labour HQ and Labour Left controlled LOTO which led to mishandling of antisemitism cases alongside electoral sabotage accusations of bullying and accusations of

racism. It shows that Corbyn faced obstacles and opposition within his own party when it came to party governance, including the handling of antisemitism. Charlotte Nichols, who would become a Labour MP in 2019, stated 'Iain McNicol's gang were sitting on complaints not out of incompetence but to undermine Corbyn' (Nichols, 2019). Sitting on antisemitism cases, thus weaponizing antisemitism as a political weapon, had a detrimental impact on the relationship between the Labour Party and Jewish communities across the country.

4.4.3.6 The Forde Report

Martin Forde KC (then QC) was commissioned by Keir Starmer to investigate the circumstances and findings of the LabourLeaks report. The report was initially supposed to be published in July 2020 however this was delayed by 2 years (Sanders, 2021).

The Forde Report claimed that both factions treated antisemitism as a factional weapon: 'some anti-Corbyn elements of the Party seized on antisemitism as a way to attack Jeremy Corbyn, and his supporters saw it simply as an attack on the leader and his faction – with both 'sides' thus weaponizing the issue and failing to recognise the seriousness of antisemitism, its effect of Jewish communities and on the moral and political standing of the party' (Forde, 2022: 13). HASCRA stated most Labour members thought antisemitism was being used as way to undermine Corbyn's leadership, the outcome of the Forde Report shows that they were right to note this however Forde also claims that Corbyn supporters were also weaponizing the issue too (HASCRA, 2016: 4).

Forde stated that the authors of the LabourLeaks report were not 'seeking to play down or obscure the scale of antisemitism' and that 'our view is that they recognised the severity of the problem of antisemitism in the party (and in wider society) and were not trying to obscure or

excuse it' (Forde, 2022: 15, 21). This shows that the document was not written or published to ignore antisemitism complaints in relation to Corbyn's leadership. Thomas Gardiner's accusation that WhatsApp messages were cherrypicked and 'selectively edited.. are both unrepresentative and misleading.. having reviewed the transcripts and considered evidence from many of those involved, we do not agree. We find that the messages on the SMT WhatsApp reveal deplorably factional and insensitive, and at times discriminatory, attitudes expressed by many of the Party's most senior staff' (Forde, 2022: 25). This shows that the portrayal of the comments were not misleading, contrary to Gardiner's comments. Given that Gardiner's comments were justification for not submitting LabourLeaks to the EHRC investigation then, in hindsight, perhaps this was the wrong decision because the report could have contributed towards the EHRC investigation which could have helped show a clearer picture of the handling of antisemitism in Labour and pinpoint who was responsible for inadequacies when dealing with antisemitism complaints.

Forde also noted the 'dysfunctional' relationship between Corbyn's office and the Labour HQ, stating that factionalism left the party 'dysfunctional' which impacted the handling of antisemitism (Forde, 2022: 5, 46). In relation to wider claims of hostility between HQ and LOTO there was evidence, named the Ergon House operation, that £135,000 was diverted away from Labour candidates in marginal seats to anti-Corbyn candidates including in safe seats such as Leeds West (Forde, 2022: 68, 70). This was not 'sabotage' and 'a very small sum' according to Forde but arguably it could have made a difference in a handful of seats (Forde, 2022: 70).

Finally, Forde found that reporting by the BBC (including a Panorama documentary), the Sun, Sky News and the Jewish Chronicle into intervention by LOTO in antisemitism cases was

'entirely misleading' but this disinformation proved insurmountable for the Corbyn project (Forde, 2022: 51). Recommendations of the Forde Report included reform of Labour's disciplinary process, revised Code of Conduct to change party culture, education and training programme for staffers on antisemitism, Islamophobia and protected characteristics and the disentanglement of LOTO and HQ (Forde, 2022: 115-135).

4.4.4 What are the consequences over the handling of antisemitism

Corbyn was unable to shut down the issue of the handling of antisemitism in Labour in his time as Labour leader and it is clear the scrutiny of his past, alongside scrutiny of the handling of antisemitism in the party, was noticed by Jewish members of the Labour Party, Jewish people across Britain and the wider public too. This section will look at the responses to Corbyn's leadership on this issue within the party, Jewish communities in the UK and the wider electorate.

In the 2016 Labour leadership contest, the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), the socialist society within the party representing Jewish Labour party members that is officially affiliated to the party, decided to poll members by asking them who to support in the election. Out of the 58.9% of members who voted, 4% of JLM members voted to endorse Corbyn with 92% endorsing his challenger Owen Smith (Jewish Labour Movement, 2016c). The increased scrutiny of Corbyn's past and the party's handling of antisemitism over the years led to increased backlash from the Jewish Labour Movement.

At JLM's annual general meeting in 2019, although members in the organisation passed an amendment noting that Corbyn-aligned Momentum group had 'committed itself to tackling antisemitism within the Labour Party and wider society', members of the organisation voted

for a motion of no confidence in Corbyn's leadership (Jewish Labour Movement, 2019a; Jewish Labour Movement, 2019c). The National Secretary of JLM also warned that the organisation may have disaffiliated from the party due to antisemitism in the party (Jewish News, 2019). Within the wider Labour Party, the attitudes towards Corbyn's handling of perception had seen a shift throughout the years. In March 2018, 61% of Labour members who were polled stated that Corbyn was responding 'well' to 'claims of antisemitism within the Labour Party' with 33% stated he was responding 'badly'.

A year later, in July 2019, the 61% figure had dropped to 47% with 48% of Labour members believing that Corbyn was responding 'badly' (YouGov, 2019). Whilst 49% of the party membership still believed antisemitism was a 'genuine problem but it was being deliberately exaggerated' to damage Corbyn, Labour and criticism of Israel, the longer the complaints of antisemitism in the party went on for the more movement there was of opinion amongst Labour members over Corbyn's handling of antisemitism (YouGov, 2019). Amongst the wider public, according to a YouGov poll in February 2019, around a third of voters believed Corbyn was an antisemite with 4% stating he was 'very competent' when dealing with antisemitism complaints (Pogrund and Wheeler, 2019).

In April 2019, the Jewish Leadership Council conducted polling of British Jewish people which showed that 47% would 'seriously consider' leaving the country if Corbyn became Prime Minister, that 87% believe Corbyn is an antisemite and 90% would not vote Labour, compared to 18.2% support of British Jewish voters in 2015 (Beck, 2019; Survation, 2015). In the run up to the general election date in 2019, the then-Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, the spiritual leader of 62 orthodox synagogues, made an unprecedented intervention during an election campaign to state that Corbyn was allowing antisemitic 'poison' which was 'sanctioned from the top' to

take root in Labour and that 'the overwhelming majority of British Jews are gripped by anxiety' at the prospect of a Labour government led by Corbyn (Mason, 2019c). A spokesperson for Corbyn responded to the intervention by stating that 'a Labour government will guarantee the security of the Jewish community, defend and support the Jewish way of life, and combat rising antisemitism in our country and across Europe. Our race and faith manifesto.. sets out our policies to achieve this.. antisemitism complaints account for about 0.1% of the Labour party membership, while polls show antisemitism is more prevalent among Conservative than Labour supporters' (Mason, 2019c). Despite the launch of the Race and Faith manifesto and commitment to tackle antisemitism it was clear that, by this point, there was little support for the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership from Jewish people following the handling of antisemitism in the party.

Corbyn's opponents in the Conservative Party were also able to exploit the issue of antisemitism in Labour, and leading figures within the party would refer to Labour's handling of antisemitism, and the perception that Corbyn was an antisemite, as a way to attack Corbyn and the wider Labour Party. In the 2019 Conservative Party leadership debate, Boris Johnson said Corbyn was guilty of antisemitism: 'I think by condoning anti-Semitism the way he (Corbyn) does, I'm afraid he's effectively culpable of that vice' (James and MacLellan, 2019). Another party leadership candidate, Jeremy Hunt, in an interview with Jewish News accused Corbyn of 'deeply-held prejudices' against Jewish people and linked the atrocities committed at Auschwitz by the Nazi regime to Corbyn: 'when I went to Auschwitz I rather complacently said to myself, 'thank goodness we don't have to worry about that kind of thing happening in the UK' and now I find myself faced with the leader of the Labour Party who has opened the door to antisemitism in a way that is truly frightening' (Cohen, 2019).

Due to the dysfunctional handling of this crisis by the Labour Party, political opponents were effective at capitalising on the divisions within Labour. If the leadership, instead, were more effective at handling this issue, possibly by introducing measures sooner or by overhauling Labour HQ to ensure a positive – instead of dysfunctional - relationship between the leadership and HQ, then perhaps the Conservative Party would not have been able to have effectively attack Corbyn's Labour on this issue.

To conclude, Corbyn's past has been heavily scrutinised in relation to antisemitism. Whilst critics might argue that his initial response to the Mear One mural, membership of Facebook groups, Wreathgate, his comments about 'no sense of irony' (if it is to be believed that Corbyn was referring to all Zionists instead of two audience members) and failing to condemn a panellist for comments made at Holocaust Memorial Day event in 2010 shows that either Corbyn doesn't care about antisemitism, or is an antisemite, supporters would point to his decades long activism campaigning against antisemitism including the 50 examples that were outlined which aligns with the claim that Corbyn is a lifelong activist against racism including antisemitism. Regardless of the perspective either way, the handling of antisemitism in the party was one which was raised continually during Corbyn's leadership.

When looking at the reports into antisemitism in Labour, all the reports note that cases of antisemitism exist in the Labour Party and none of them seek to deny the existence of the problem. There are, however, seemingly differences in opinion about who is responsible for the inadequacies in dealing with the problem. HASCRA seems to blame Corbyn for creating a 'safe space for antisemites', EHRC blames collective leadership, the Forde Report blames the weaponisation of antisemitism on both sides of the party whilst LabourLeaks claims Corbyn wanted to deal with the problem but staffers who were hostile to his leadership undermined

him. Whilst it is noteworthy that the Labour leadership introduced more processes to deal with antisemitism complaints, there were errors made that damaged the relationship between the party including the reluctance to adopt the full IHRA definition with all of its examples, which led to months of media attention in which Labour, and Corbyn himself, had to spend a lot of countering claims of Corbyn's leadership not being able to deal with antisemitism in the party. If the party had adopted the full definition, as it ended up doing anyway, months beforehand then divisions in the party would not have been front and centre in the media spotlight for months thus the perception of Corbyn's handling of antisemitism may not have been damaged and possibly, could have been improved.

Some of Corbyn's opponents, however, also damaged the relationship between Labour and Jewish communities. As noted in LabourLeaks, some Corbynsceptic staffers who were responsible for processing antisemitism complaints sat on cases of antisemitism instead of dealing with them and EHRC notes that the complaints inbox went unmonitored for months. The failure to deal with cases of antisemitism led to a backlog and people who made antisemitic comments were not processed within Labour's disciplinary system. According to James Schneider 'it suggests that some of those most responsible for the failure to deal with antisemitism in the Labour party, which has frightened Jewish people and damaged the party, worked against the elected leadership and tried to shift the blame' (Schofield, 2020). Whether it was incompetence or maliciousness, the actions, according to Schneider, 'allowed Holocaust deniers to remain in the party and deliberately undermined the chances of a Labour government' (Schofield, 2020).

The Forde Report notes that antisemitism was used as a factional weapon by Corbyn's opponents within the party and the failure to deal with complaints, and then blaming Corbyn,

would be one example of this. Forde also claims that supporters of Corbyn weaponised the issue of antisemitism as they 'saw it simply as an attack on the leader and his faction'. A YouGov/The Times poll in March 2018 showed that 30% of Labour members that were polled believed that antisemitism 'is not a serious problem at all, and is being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel, 47% believed 'it is a genuine problem, but its extent is being deliberately exaggerated to damage Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel' whilst 19% believed 'it is a serious problem that the party leadership needs to take urgent action to address', in July 2019 the figures were 24%, 49% and 24% respectively (FullFact, 2018; YouGov, 2019). Whilst Forde's claim may be correct for some people, it fails to note the supporters of Corbyn who believe it is a 'genuine problem but its extent is being exaggerated' and those who believe it is a serious problem. It is also important to note that not all of Corbyn's opponents weaponised the issue of antisemitism.

The way in which the Chakrabarti report was presented made it difficult to gain credibility and the report was condemned by numerous sources within and outside the party despite the fact a key finding in the EHRC report was that a problem with the handling of antisemitism in Labour was linked to the slow speed of the implementation of the Chakrabarti report recommendations. The problem with the Chakrabarti report was not the report itself but, rather, the circumstances around the report. It is also important to note that there are contradictions between reports, with the EHRC report noting that antisemitism was treated differently to other forms of discrimination (notably comparing the processes of dealing with antisemitism with the more effective mechanisms of dealing with sexual harassment complaints) whilst the Forde Report claims that antisemitism was not treated differently to other forms of discrimination.

The reports provide valuable insights and a broad picture shows that all wings of the party could have done more to address the handling of antisemitism in Labour. It was clear, however, that Corbyn himself and wider Labour Party's credibility in relation to the handling of antisemitism lost confidence from a significant number of people within Jewish communities across Britain. Just 4% of Jewish Labour Movement members supported Corbyn for Labour leader in the 2016 Labour leadership contest, the organisation issued no confidence in his leadership, and they stated they would not campaign to make Corbyn Prime Minister. Alongside this, the Chief Rabbi made an unprecedented intervention during an election campaign by condemning Corbyn as 'unfit for office' and polling shows the overwhelming majority of Jewish people had significantly strong opinions against Corbyn himself and the Labour Party under his leadership.

4.5 <u>Summary</u>

When it comes to analysing Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party in relation to the Partycraft model's criterion of positioning and decision making, overall there is a mixed picture of Corbyn's ability to mould the party in his image. Whilst his leadership was effective in some areas, notably the policy agenda in the 2017 and 2019 manifestos, his leadership was ineffective is other areas, notably Brexit and perceptions around the handling of antisemitism in the party.

This chapter has looked at the way Corbyn managed key issues within the Labour Party during his leadership. Corbyn started off his leadership with a hostile NEC, general secretary, Parliamentary Labour Party, Welsh Labour leadership, Scottish Labour leadership and Labour HQ. By the end of his leadership, whilst hostility from the Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour HQ continued, his supporters had gained control of the NEC, the role of General

Secretary, and the leadership positions of Welsh Labour and Scottish Labour. It is clear that Corbyn had managed to shift Labour's domestic agenda towards an anti-austerity, pro-public ownership, and free education platform as many policies that he had been advocating for decades had made it into the manifesto, and his successor was elected on a platform similar to the vision outlined by Corbyn in the previous leadership elections and 2017/2019 general elections.

Whilst Corbyn was successful in shifting the Labour Party towards his ideological image in regard to domestic policy, the divisions over Brexit proved to be extremely difficult for Corbyn to overcome. Labour's Brexit position shifted over time which negatively impacted public perception of Corbyn with him being seen as an indecisive leader and the eventual referendum policy was poorly received in leave voting areas. Arguably, any Labour leader would have struggled to bridge this Brexit divide, with a majority of Labour voters voting to remain but most Labour MPs representing leave voting constituencies. Whilst an 'ambivalent' approach seemed to work in 2017, by 2019 the Brexit divisions had widened and became more important to voters compared to other issues such as domestic policy. Whilst the Tories were able to mobilise leave voters towards their party, Labour had struggled to mobilise enough remain voters and had to compete with other pro-remain parties (whilst the Brexit Party endorsed the Conservative Party in 318 seats).

The handling of antisemitism in Labour also negatively impacted confidence in Corbyn's leadership from Jewish people in Britain and the wider public. The discussion over Corbyn himself being antisemitic is subjective, with supporters pointing towards his decades long record of combatting racism (including antisemitism), and attempting to combat antisemitism by reforming internal structures and streamlining disciplinary cases, whilst opponents criticised

not only his past associations but also his internal reforms which did not root out the problem of antisemitism. When it comes to the question over whether or not Corbyn was able to shift the Labour Party on this issue, whilst Corbyn was able to pass some reforms, the reports showed that more measures could have been implemented, and they criticised the leadership over political choices, however the issue was also weaponised by political opponents to damage Corbyn's image, including allegations that anti-Corbyn staffers working in Labour HQ sat on antisemitism cases instead of dealing with them. By the 2019 election, not only had many 2017 Labour voters who voted to leave the EU lost confidence in Labour, but also Jewish people across the country who did not trust Labour under Corbyn's leadership over the handling of antisemitism.

Chapter 5: Concerns about competence: Was Jeremy Corbyn, as party leader, an asset or a liability for the Labour Party?

'Trust is a function of two things: character and competence. Character includes your integrity, your motive and your intent with people. Competence includes your capabilities, your skills, and your track record. Both are vital.' - Stephen Covey

5.1 Introduction

The final criterion of the Partycraft model looks at the competence of political leaders, with effective leaders being able to mobilise support of the voters in key elections and not being perceived as an electoral liability for the party that they lead. An important goal for a leader in a Parliamentary democracy isn't just to effectively manage their party and shift public opinions but also to gain political power and defeat their opponents electorally. To achieve this, it is important for leaders to be seen as competent in order to build a coalition of support and whether a leader is seen as an asset or a liability can have consequences for political parties which seek electoral victory. The main focus of this substantive chapter will look at the following question: was Jeremy Corbyn, as party leader, an asset or a liability for the Labour Party? This chapter will look at Labour's electoral performance and whether he was responsible for helping or hindering Labour's electoral campaigns including the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

In order to discuss this topic this chapter will look at; academic discussions on leadership competence and leadership effects, including discussions over valance politics and the personalisation of British politics, to provide a background over the importance of leadership within political parties; look at whether or not Corbyn was an asset or a liability for the Labour

Party from 2015-2019 by looking at Labour's opinion polling, comparing the results of the 2017 and 2019 general elections to historic general elections (including seat data, vote share, and Conservative majorities), looking at Corbyn's satisfaction ratings (including comparisons to Labour/Conservative vote share, Conservative leaders he faced during general election campaigns, and other contemporary/historic leaders of the opposition); why Corbyn was a polarising political leader who maintained strong support from his supporters despite declining polling ratings; and the ways in which look at the ways the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership sold itself to the wider public including discussions about media hostility towards his leadership, social media outreach and his appeal towards specific sections of the electorate. It should also be noted that the chapter will include data from opinion polling and, although polling can be helpful to look at in order to help judge the public mood at the time, it is important to look at the limitations including the wording of questions to avoid biases, the potential margin of error (around 2-3% which applies to all parties) which means that polls 'can be inaccurate in terms of predicting election results' and acquiring sample sizes that are large enough to make the polling viable (Swan, 2018).

5.2 <u>Academic discussions on leadership competence and leadership effects</u>

      5.2.1 <u>Leadership competence</u>

David Butler and Donald Stokes, link social class to partisanship in voting i.e. working class voters alignment to the Labour Party and middle class alignment to the Conservative Party (Butler and Stokes, 1974). This explanation is known as class-cleavage and it perceives voting as an expression of the people's 'fundamental political identity' (Bartle, 2003: 318). Ivor Crewe, Bo Särlvik and James Alt criticise the work by noting that party loyalties had declined compared to the prior two decades from the 1974 general elections and that partisan loyalties had declined substantially (Crewe et al, 1977, 131; Abramson, 1978). Not only this but,

according to Kieran Hurwood, much of the historic 'literature on social and class cleavages so far has focused on how class as a social identity attached to political positions has declined as countries have reached post-industrialism' (Hurwood, 2021). These counter-arguments are noteworthy because, although the authors all note that there has been a shift in support for the two main political parties in the UK, they disagree why and note that discussions about more recent general elections may require an alternative model as the class-cleavage analysis is, in their opinion, outdated.

Whilst noting the historic contributions of academics in regard to traditional partisanship (i.e. key issue dimensions and class-cleavage), the valance-based approach, stating that competence is an important aspect in regard to voting behaviour, has increasingly been discussed by numerous academics as a more viable explanation for voting behaviour in contemporary politics. David Denver and Mark Garnett noted that, due to the media giving more prominence to party leaders (and the shift in voting behaviour from the aforementioned traditional partisanship to perceptions of competence from party leaders), campaigning in general elections in the early 2000s emphasised the importance of party leadership (Denver and Garnett, 2012). Timothy Heppell contributes to the discussion by stating that 'leaders personify their parties' and this aligns with the plethora of work showing the increased personalisation of political campaigning (Heppell, 2023). For example, Gareth Smith argues that brand personality impacts voter's perception of policies:

> 'Researchers asked two groups of people whether they agreed with the Conservative Party policy on immigration. One set was told it was Conservative policy, and the other just had the policy described to them but unattributed. The unattributed policy's net approval rate was 12 points higher than the attributed one, which strongly suggests that

"the Conservative Party's image was so bad that people suddenly stopped liking policies when they found out they belonged to the Conservative Party" (Smith, 2009: 210)

This shows that voters care a lot about the branding of political parties and that, if the image of a party becomes toxified, then policies could become less appealing to voters due to association with a toxic brand, therefore the perception of a party can be more important than their policy platform. Following the outcome of the 2019 election, BMG polling for The Independent suggested there was support for many of Corbyn's policies, however Corbyn's name 'toxified' these policies by association as participants had a negative perception of the Labour leader (Woodcock, 2020).

Harold Clarke, David Sanders, Marianne Stewart and Paul Whitley analysed data from the 1964 election up until the 2001 election. These academics looked at why British citizens vote in general elections, how they engage in political processes and why they vote for certain parties. They explain 'the closer that an individual voter locates him or herself to a particular party on a key issue dimension, such as the left-right continuum, the more likely he or she (sic) is to vote for that party in an election' and that 'leadership images, evaluations of economic performance, and assessments of issue competence' also are important when determining how to vote (Clarke et al, 2004: 316). A 2009 article by the same authors conclude that perceptions of competence are impacted by people's perception of the leaders of political parties, known as valance-based voting (Clarke et al, 2009). These arguments not only emphasise the importance of positioning, i.e. partisanship based on key issue dimensions, but also emphasise the importance of the image of party leadership and their perceived competence. If voters view leaders positively, including their competency, then they are more likely to vote for the party that the party leader is leading. This is helpful when looking at discussions over Corbyn's

leadership because, although there was popular support for many of the policies he was advocating, his personal popularity was limited (Woodcock, 2020).

The role of personalisation is particularly important given the increased presence of TV Prime Ministerial television debates, where party leaders are given a platform to defend their manifesto and attack political opponents in front of an audience of millions. Dominic Wring and Stephen Ward note that, although the television debates in 2010 did not decide the outcome of the election, they were important in relation to the public perception of Nick Clegg and the 'strong' response by hostile media outlets in the aftermath of the debates (Wring and Ward, 2010). Every general election since 2010 has included TV debates and Peter Bone MP introduced the General Election (Leaders' Debate) Bill numerous times since 2017 in order to set up a commission to 'make arrangements for debates between leaders of political parties' (Parallel Parliament, 2019; UK Parliament, 2021). Television debates will likely continue to be part of future general election campaigns and party representatives, including leaders, will have to engage. A key topic in one TV debate in the 2017 election focussed on Theresa May not showing up, although the televised debate did not shift the outcome of the election it is noteworthy that an audience of millions saw the Prime Minister being attacked by all party leaders, she later admitted she regretted not attending the debate (Heffer, 2019; Withey, 2017).

This personalisation of politics puts a lot of emphasis on the performance of party leaders which may have a negative impact on voter behaviour. Darren Lilleker and Ralph Negrine state that the centralised approach to party politics (i.e. emphasis on the national party and figurehead) became more unpopular throughout the New Labour governments and that the locally focused model, promoted by the Liberal Democrats, was more engaging for voters (Lilleker and Negrine, 2008). This approach allowed the Liberal Democrats to increase their support in

certain areas, however the scale might be unsustainable when looking at the country as a whole due to the amount of resources needed to engage with the entire population. Labour under Corbyn's leadership essentially replicated this model and launched a community organising campaign unit, with paid staff, to engage voters in their local communities and campaign on local issues, however community activism, by itself, can not necessarily fix the public perception of the leader as Corbyn's personal approval ratings remained low after the unit was established (Nathoo, 2018; Sultana, 2021).

There are lots of academic perspectives about whether the impact of competence on voter behaviour is positive or negative. There is consensus within the academic community that party leaders, and their perceived competence, is important when discussing general elections, for example political parties spend a lot of money on election campaign materials to shift public perception in their favour/against political opponents (Milazzo and Hammond, 2017). In summary, the traditional assumption of class-based politics has been challenged which has led to a new assumption of valance-based politics. This valance-based approach has also led to discussions over the personalisation of politics. These academic perspectives will be considered throughout the chapter. To understand the public perception of the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership will require analysis of perceived competency and handling of important issues, such as Brexit, antisemitism, and electioneering, to understand the broader context.

5.2.2 Leadership effects

A leader has a key role to play in election campaigns including holding rallies, participating in the media via interviews/debates and, in recent times, on social media as well, however the scale of the impact made by a leader has been debated within academic circles for decades.

This section will look at the different academic discussions around leadership effects and will provide important background information for the rest of the chapter regarding Corbyn's electioneering.

Clive Bean and Anthony Mughan looked at leadership effects within Parliamentary elections in Australia and Britain and assessed the impact of leadership when it came to public perception of parties by using the Bob Hawke (Australian Labor Party) vs John Howard (Australian Liberal/National coalition) and Michael Foot (UK Labour) vs Margaret Thatcher (UK Conservatives) as case studies. The authors stated 'how party leaders are perceived is ultimately an empirical question, albeit with important substantive implications' (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1168), therefore they looked at the popularity of the leaders by comparing key characteristics (such as 'caring', 'determined', 'likeable as a person', 'effectiveness' and others) and their electoral effect. The research showed that both Bob Hawke and Margaret Thatcher were seen as more effective (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1170) than their opponents and their analysis showed that 'leadership qualities influencing how individuals vote are remarkably uniform from one leader to the next' and that 'the effects of individual characteristics (the authors were referring to qualities such as 'caring', 'determined', 'likable as a person' and others) may be quite small, but variation in the extent to which opposing party leaders are seen to possess them can make their combined impact the difference between victory and defeat in a close election' (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1174).

Their research also showed that the 'Presidentialisation' of politics has meant that leaders symbolise their parties in the public eye and that incumbent leaders have experience in office which gives them an advantage over oppositions leaders, although this advantage is limited if voters perceive the opposition leader as effective (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1175). They

concluded that 'party leaders can influence the distribution of votes in parliamentary contests' and that arguably the impact of Bob Hawke was the difference between his party winning or losing in 1987 (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1175). The authors say that critics (the authors do not state specifically who) will argue that the personalisation of politics 'trivialises democracy as individuals are encouraged to make their voting decisions on the basis of ill-informed judgements about the idiosyncratic personality characteristics of individuals who rise and fall from the political stage' (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1175). However, Bean and Mughan believe this claim is backed up by little evidence and that, instead, 'prime ministerial candidates... will have a positive electoral impact to the extent that they conform to this mental image of what a leader should look like' (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1176). This research shows some interesting conclusions and, although it was published in 1989, many arguments can still be applied in the modern day, particularly when it comes to the 'Presidentialisation' of politics (Bean and Mughan, 1989: 1175).

Building on this Daniel Stevens and Jeffrey Karp agree that party leaders may play an important role in parliamentary elections as 'leaders now attract more attention than ever' due to the role of the mass media, so their research looks at how media exposure influences leadership evaluations (Stevens and Karp, 2012: 787). They state that 'election campaigns matter more in Britain than in the past - because voters' preferences are less deeply rooted – and that media coverage of leader may play a key role in how much they matter' (Stevens and Karp, 2012: 787). Their research combined content analysis of press coverage with polling data during the 2005 election and compared characteristics of 'competence', 'responsiveness' and 'trustworthiness' between Tony Blair and Michael Howard, which is broadly similar to the research published by Bean and Mughan. Blair was 'viewed as significantly more competent than Howard but Howard was seen as significantly more responsive to voters than Blair, and

the two were considered equally (un)trustworthy. In other words, if trust was the key dimension of character, the Conservative leader held no overall advantage over Blair' (Stevens and Karp, 2012: 793).

This shows that both leaders were seen as untrustworthy, but the voters saw Blair as a more competent candidate for Prime Minister, which is arguably an important criteria in the eyes of some voters. They concluded that 'trust is far more important than competence and responsiveness to voters' concerns', that 'media attention to character in Labour and Conservative newspapers was associated both with the growing influence of trust' (Stevens and Karp, 2012: 802) and that 'even if the net impact of media priming ('the amount of coverage of character in the press and leadership evaluations alongside the tone of coverage of character and leadership evaluations') of character considerations on support for Blair was small in 2005, the corollary is that in another election, if shifts in the impact of character attributes such as trustworthiness and responsiveness were less symmetric, there is clear potential for the amount of coverage of a candidate to have a large impact on net support for a leader and thus for his or her party', that is to say that although the impact of the media was not enough to sink Blair's premiership that, in a future close election, the role of the media could swing an election (Stevens and Karp, 2012: 803).

A leader, therefore, will have to properly navigate the media and aim to raise their profile in a positive way via newspaper articles and other forms of media. Failure to do so could impact their public perception and, therefore, impact their party's polling and electoral performance. Although this research is more modern compared to Clive and Bean's research (Stevens and Karp's research was published in 2012) it only focuses on a single election and they themselves conclude that their research needs 'further testing' with future research that explores 'how

exposure to other media, particularly television, primes leadership evaluations. In addition, while our analysis is limited to examining how press coverage affects leadership evaluations, future research should explore how priming ultimately affects vote choice' (Stevens and Karp, 2012: 803). The research from Stevens and Karp shows that the media have an important role to play when it comes to the leaders reaching out to voters, however it is also important to look at the role the media plays in public life and whether their role goes beyond reasonable and fair criticism of political figures.

These academic arguments conclude that a leader of a political party does have an impact on the public perception of party polling and, ultimately, their performance in an election. Therefore, when looking at Labour's performance from elections taking place from September 2015 – April 2020 it is important to look at the role Corbyn played in these various campaigns, how the media reported on him/his party and the public opinion of his electoral opponents too because if his opponents were performing proportionally better than this could've led to more support for his opponents.

5.3 <u>Was Jeremy Corbyn an asset or a liability?</u>

Given the importance of leadership in party politics, to help better understand public perception of the Labour Party from 2015-2019 the issue over whether Corbyn helped or hindered Labour's image should be discussed. This section will cover Labour's polling from 2015-2019, Corbyn's personal satisfaction ratings, Corbyn's satisfaction ratings compared to Labour and the Conservative Party's vote share alongside a comparison with Conservative leaders he would face in a general election, and how Corbyn compared to contemporary and historic leaders of the opposition to look at whether are they excessively low compared to other leaders or if they are similar.

5.3.1 <u>Data</u>

    5.3.1.1 <u>Highs and lows of opinion polling for the Labour Party and outcome of general</u>

    <u>elections under Corbyn</u>

Public opinion shifted radically from September 2015 – April 2020 for various reasons which

will be analysed throughout the thesis, these include the aftermath of the 2016 EU referendum,

the 2016 leadership contest, the 2017 election, growing Brexit divisions and the 2019 election:

Table 19: Opinion polling highs and lows under Corbyn's leadership, 2015 - 2019
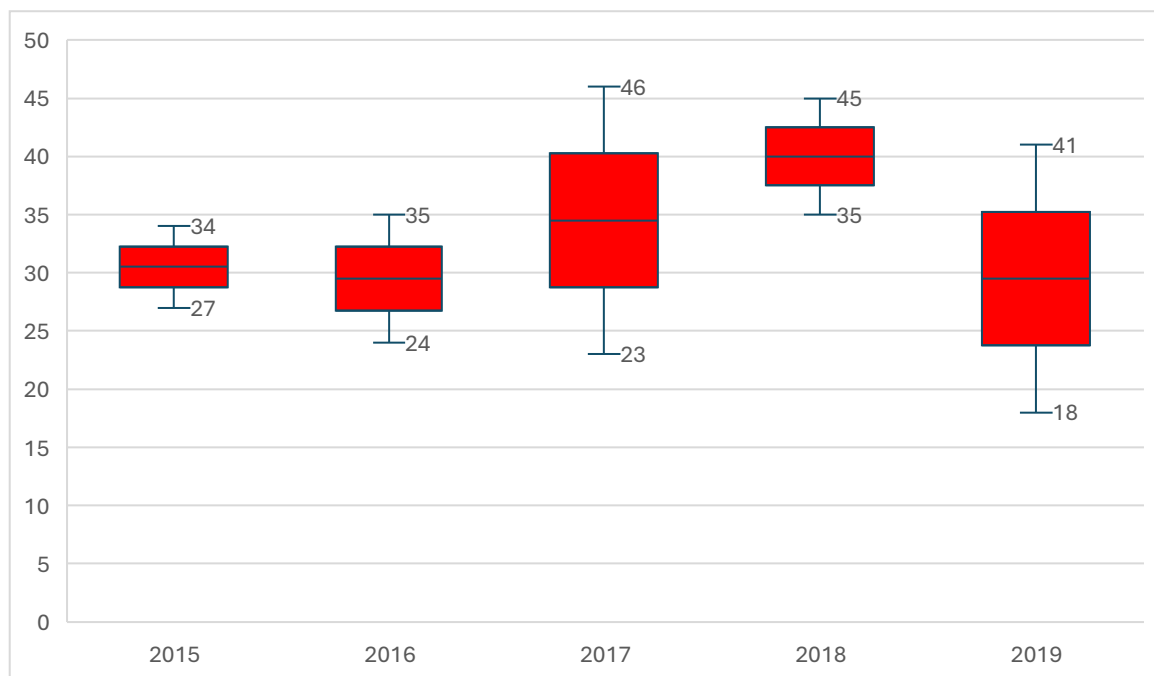
Source: Wells, 2022

Opinion polling is helpful to predict broadly what the public opinion is within a country

however an election shows what the public opinion was at the time during the campaign and

the final result can make or break a political career. An effective leader will aim to defeat their

opponents or, at the very least, attempt to weaken them significantly via the ballot box. Here is

how Labour under Corbyn's vote share compares to previous leaders.

Table 20: Labour's share of the vote, 1983 - 2019
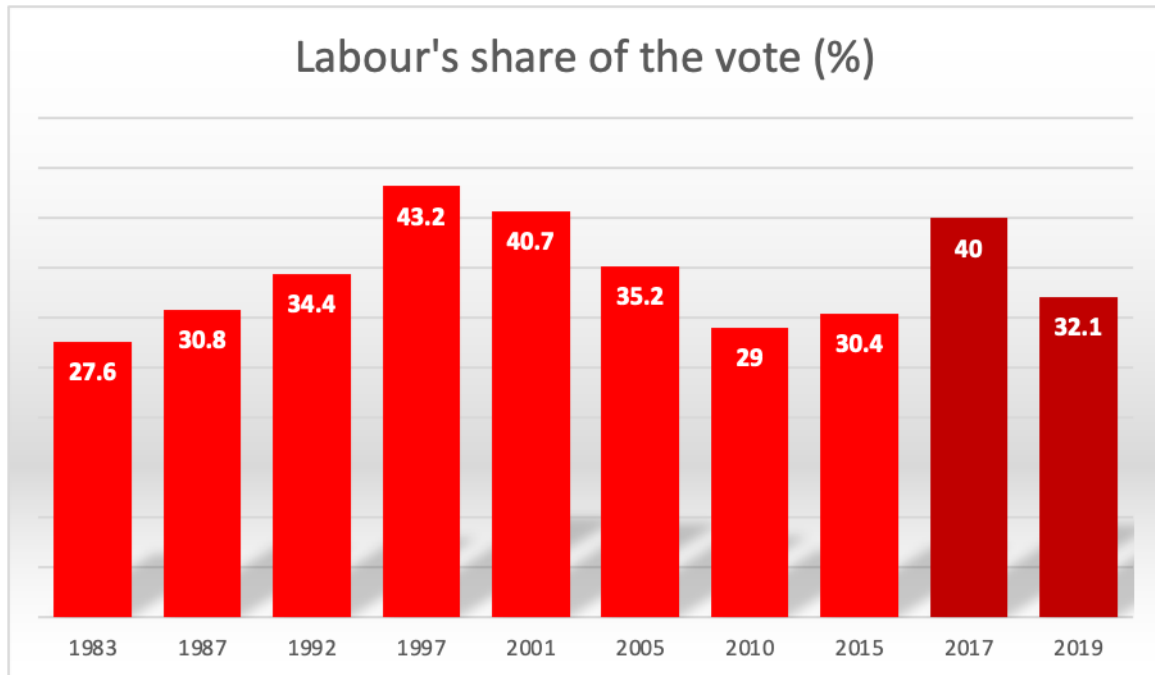
Source: Cracknell and Pilling, 2021

The graph shows that Labour under Corbyn won 40% of the vote in 2017 (12,877,918 votes) which was the most votes for the party since 2001 (where Labour won 10,724,953 votes). This vote share was the highest increase in the share of the vote since 1945 (Agerholm and Dore, 2017). The 2019 election, however, shows a decline in the share of the vote of 7.9% which is almost the same decline in the share of the vote between 1997 – 2005 after two terms of a Labour government, although the vote share was higher than the defeats in 2010 and 2015. Although vote share is important to look at it should also be noted that First Past the Post, or Single Member Plurality, impacts the share of the seats a party receives. A party winning 20% of the vote, for example, will not necessarily hold 20% of the seats. Therefore, it is also important to note the number of seats Labour won historically, including under the Corbyn years.

Table 21: Labour seats won in general elections, 1983 - 2019
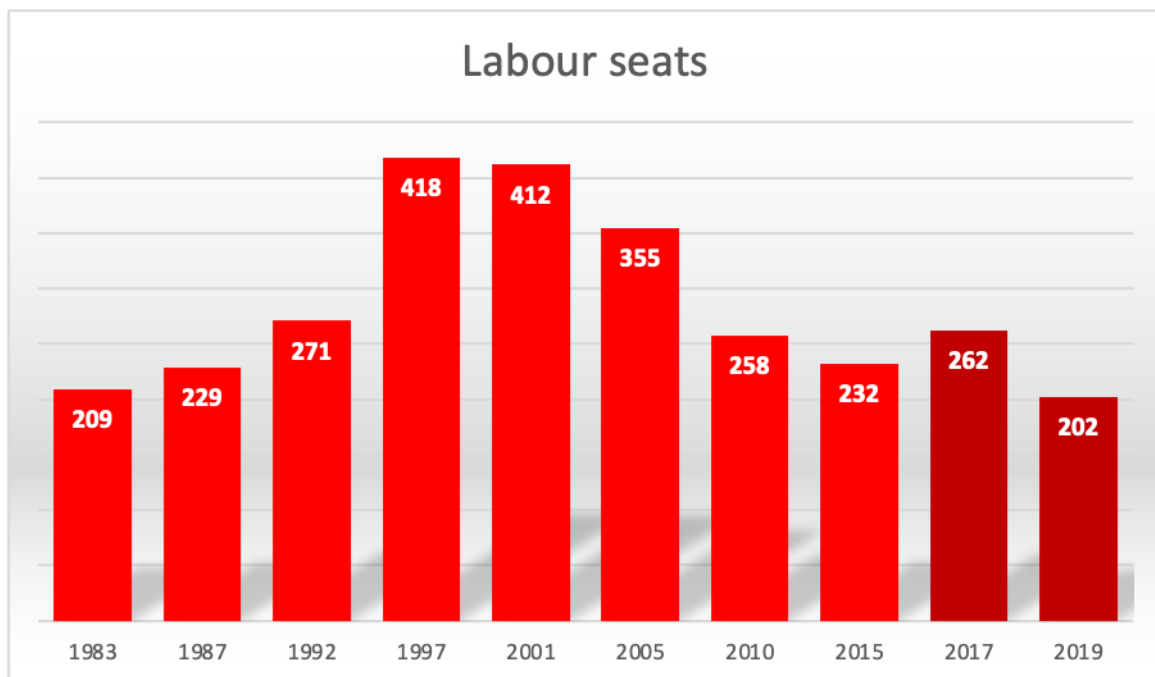
Source: Cracknell and Pilling, 2021

The result in 2017 shows that Labour gained 30 MPs compared to 2015 - this was enough to take away the Conservatives' Parliamentary majority at the time. The 2019 result, on the other hand, shows a decrease of 30 MPs compared to 2015 and a decrease of 60 compared to 2017. This result led to Labour receiving the fewest number of seats since 1935 (Cracknell and Pilling, 2021). Whilst the BBC announced the 2019 result was 'the worst since 1935' this neglects the share of the vote so another comparison which can be helpful to look at the scale of the results would be to look at the size of the Conservatives' majority. The success of the Conservative Party can't solely be attributed to Corbyn as parties can, and do, strengthen or harm themselves electorally based on leadership and their actions in power. The larger the majority the more power a party arguably has, therefore the table below will look at the size of Conservative majorities over the last few decades.

Table 22: Conservative Party Parliamentary majorities, 1983 - 2019
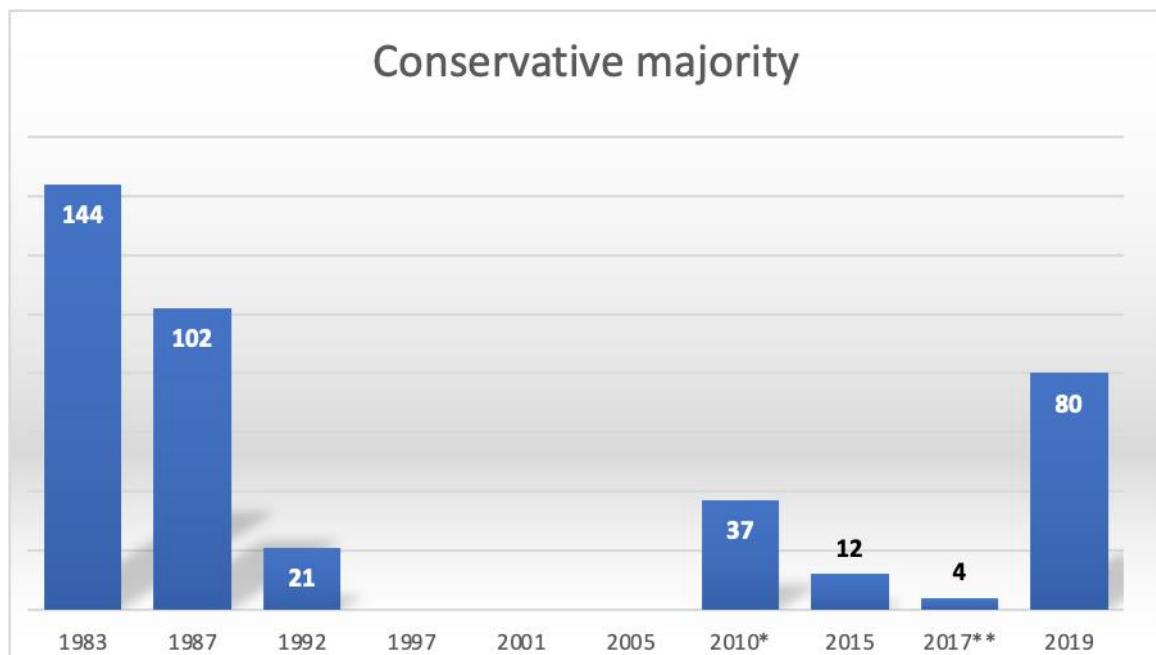
*Coalition with the Liberal Democrats

**Supply and confidence agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party

Source: Cracknell and Pilling, 2021

Whilst the 2017 result shows the smallest Conservative** majority whilst out of power the 2019 result shows the worst result for Labour since 1987, although the majorities in 1983 and 1987 were much bigger than the 2019 result. This shows that, although this was the largest Conservative majority for decades, the scale of the victory for the Conservative Party was not as large as 1987, let alone 1935.

5.3.1.2 Parliamentary by-elections in the Corbyn years

The 'exclusive focus on choice in elections to the exclusion of other equally important values or institutions' has been criticised by some scholars including Terry Lynn Karl (Roberts, 2010, 23) however given that Parliament's authority is a key principle in the uncodified British constitution and is the 'supreme legal authority in the UK' it is difficult to ignore the role of general elections and Parliamentary by-elections when it comes to political power in the United

Kingdom (UK Parliament, 2022). One of the electoral tests for a leader prior to a general election is the performances in Parliamentary by-elections which may occur after the resignation, recall or death of a Member of Parliament. Given the importance of the role of Parliament in British politics it is interesting to look at how Labour under Corbyn performed in Parliamentary by-elections. The following table looks at the by-elections held during the Corbyn years.

Table 23: By-elections during the Corbyn years

Constituency	Area of the United Kingdom	Labour share of the vote	Increase/decrease in the share of the vote compared to the previous election	Labour majority and comparison to previous election	Voter turnout (and comparison to previous election)	Outcome
Oldham West and Royton, 2015	Greater Manchester	62.1%	+7.4%	38.7% (+4.5%)	40.3% (-13.3%)	Labour hold, increased majority
Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough, 2016	South Yorkshire	62.4%	+5.9%	42.5% (+8.8%)	33.2% (-21.6%)	Labour hold, increased majority
Ogmore, 2016	Wales	52.6%	-0.3%	36.4% (-0.6%)	43.0% (-20.7%)	Labour hold, decreased majority
Tooting, 2016	London	55.9%	+8.7%	19.8% (+14.5%)	42.5% (-27.2%)	Labour hold, increased majority
Copeland, 2017	Cumbria	37.3%	-4.9%	N/A	51.3% (-12.5%)	Conservative gain from Labour
Stoke-On-Trent Central, 2017	Staffordshire	37.1%	-2.2%	12.4% (-4.3%)	38.2% (-11.7%)	Labour hold, decreased majority
Lewisham East, 2018	London	50.2%	-17.7%	25.6% (-19.3%)	33.3% (-36.1%)	Labour hold, decreased majority
Peterborough, 2019	Cambridgeshire	30.91%	-17.16%	2% (+0.7%)	48.43% (-19.07%)	Labour hold, increased majority

Source: Hawkins and Watson, 2017; Watson, 2020

The following table contains the results of the by-elections held under the Corbyn years where Labour were defending their seats. Labour did not gain any additional seats via by-elections from 2015 – 2019. It should be noted that the 2016 by-election in Batley and Spen was significantly different compared to all other by-elections conducted between 2015 – 2019 due to the tragic circumstances that surrounded the election. Following the murder of Jo Cox all other parties with representation in Parliament (that were eligible to stand) refused to put

forward a candidate therefore this by-election has not been included in the table (Loughborough University, 2016b).

The data shows that out of the 8 by-elections where Labour were holding their seat 7 were held and 1 was lost. The Conservatives gaining Copeland was the first time since 1982 where a governing party gained a seat from the opposition since 1982 (Bean, 2017b). Out of 8 by-elections Labour increased their share of the vote in 3 seats and saw a decline in 5 constituencies.

Table 24: Increase/decrease in the share of Labour's vote in by-elections during Corbyn's leadership
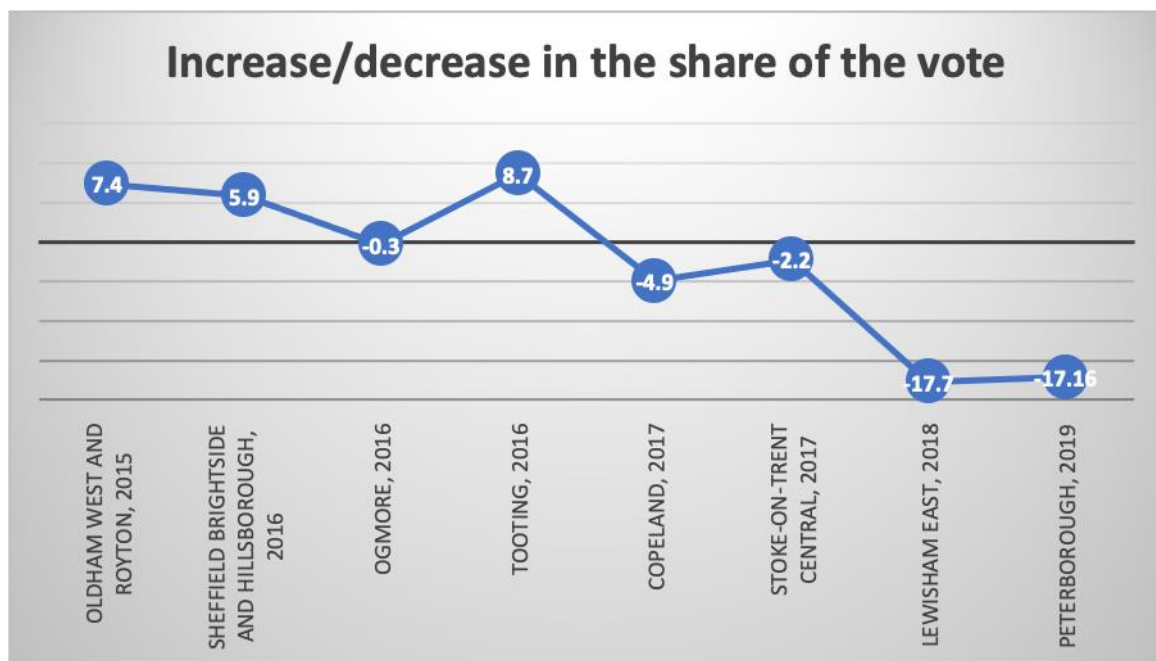
Source: Hawkins and Watson, 2017; Watson, 2020

When looking at increased/decreased majorities Labour increased their majority in 4 seats whilst in the other 4 constituencies Labour saw a reduced majority:

Table 25: Increase/decrease in Labour's vote majority in by-elections during Corbyn's leadership
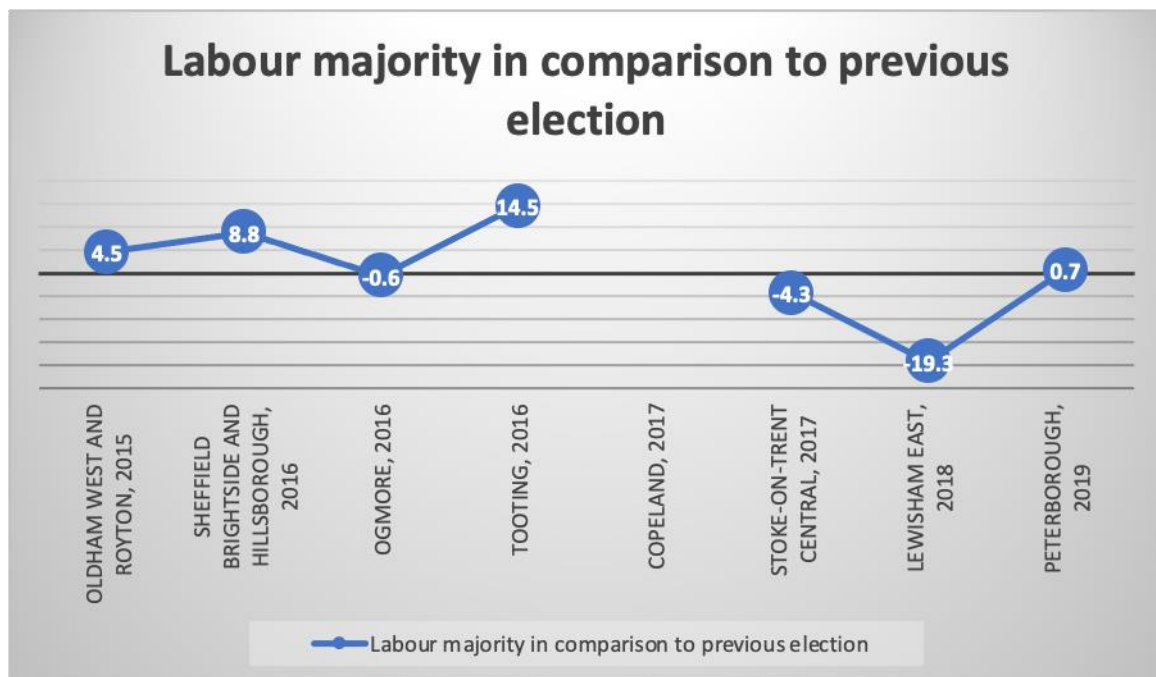
Source: Hawkins and Watson, 2017; Watson, 2020

It is also interesting to note the performances of the Labour Party in by-elections before and after the EU referendum in 2016. Prior to the referendum in June 2016 Labour increased their share of the vote and majorities in every by-election with the exception of Ogmore in 2016 whilst every by-election held after the EU referendum of 2016 showed a decline in the share of the vote for Labour and a decreased majority except for the result in the 2019 Peterborough by-election. This suggests that Labour were able to appeal to voters better before the referendum rather than after, although this could be correlation rather than causation.

5.3.1.3 Non-UK Parliament nationwide elections during the Corbyn years

Political power is also held in the UK via referendums, local authorities and, more recently, Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners. However British politics is arguably very centralised, meaning that power in central government is significantly more extensive than the

aforementioned elected positions (Lewer, 2021). There have been numerous scholarly debates on the impact of the electoral system including the argument that electoral systems have an impact on key areas of governance which can impact the relationship with governance and voters which has an impact on political processes in which parties are involved (Menocal, 2011). It is also interesting to note that if different voting systems were in place in various different elections then the outcome of these elections would be different, so the impact of First Past the Post, or Single Member Plurality, should also be taken into consideration when looking at the different discussions regarding historic election alongside the elections Labour under Corbyn participated in. Whilst non-majoritarian electoral systems are used in Wales and Scotland for their respective national elections, they are not used in Westminster general elections, which take place under First Past the Post, and majoritarian electoral systems are used across England with First Past the Post and the Supplementary Vote being used in various elections in the country. In the United Kingdom there are numerous examples of non-Parliamentary elections including local elections and elections in devolved administrations. These elections can help opposition parties gain political power beyond Westminster and these elections cover a large population which can show how parties are appealing to many voters in certain nations and regions prior to a general election.

The data collected in the following table looks at the local elections of 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections, the 2016 Welsh Assembly elections and the 2019 European elections. The vote share in local elections isn't precise but is, rather, a projection. It is important to note that the electoral system used is not uniform across all of these elections; First Past the Post (FPTP) was used for local authorities; the Supplementary Vote (SV) was used for Mayors as well as Police and Crime Commissioners; and Additional Member System (AMS) was used for the Scottish Parliamentary and Welsh Assembly elections

(Electoral Reform Society, 2017). As mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter the impact of electoral system on the relationship between voters and political processes must also be noted and taken into consideration when analysing the data.

Table 26: Labour's vote share and increased/decreased political representation in non-UK Parliamentary elections 2016 - 2019

Election	Area of the United Kingdom	Projected Labour share of the vote and comparison to previous election (if applicable)	Increase/decrease in overall seats	Increase/ decrease in councillors	Increase/ decrease in councils	Increase/ decrease in Mayors	Increase/decrease in Police and Crime Commissioners	Voter turnout
2016 local elections	England	31%	N/A	-18	+/- 0	+2	+2	34%
2016 Scottish Parliamentary election	**Scotland**	**Constituency: 22.6% (-9.2%)** **Regional: 19.1% (-7.2%)**	**-13**	-	-	-	-	**55.8%**
2016 Welsh Assembly election	**Wales**	**Constituency: 34.7% (-7.6%)** **Regional: 31.5% (-5.4%)**	**-1**	-	-	-	-	**45.3%**
2017 local elections	England, Scotland and Wales	27%	N/A	-382	-7	-1	N/A	35%
2018 local elections	England	35%	N/A	+79	+/- 0	+/-0	N/A	34.7%
2019 local elections	England*	28%	N/A	-84	-6	+1	N/A	37.2%
2019 European election	**United Kingdom**	**13.6% (-10.8%)**	**-10**	-	-	-	**N/A**	**37.2%**

(*Northern Ireland also held elections but Labour do not stand)

Source: Uberoi et al, 2016; Hawkins, 2016; Audickas, 2016; Dempsey, 2017; Dempsey and Watson, 2018; Uberoi, 2019b; Fella et al, 2019

The following datapoints will be used as reference points in the discussion over whether Corbyn was an asset or a liability to the Labour Party and their wider electoral performance.

5.3.1.4 What were Corbyn's satisfaction ratings from 2015-2019

The data in this section will look at Corbyn's personal ratings. IPSOS Mori conducted polling throughout Corbyn's leadership to measure voter satisfaction and dissatisfaction with his leadership:

Table 27: Corbyn's net satisfaction ratings (IPSOS Mori, 2015 – 2019)
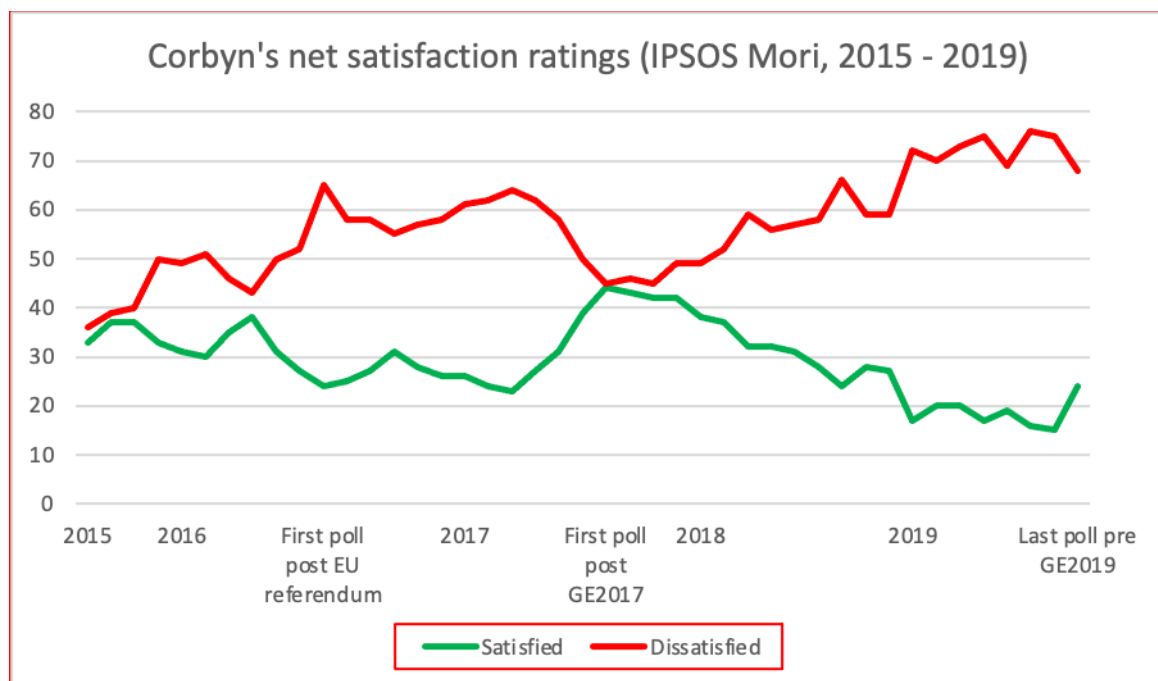
Source: Mortimore, 2020

The data shows that voters were more dissatisfied, than satisfied, with Corbyn throughout the entirety of his leadership with no polls showing a net satisfactory rating for his leadership. Corbyn's satisfaction ratings were within the margin of error when he started off as leader, the net satisfaction ratings decreased following the EU referendum, they increased during the 2017 election campaign, and then saw an overall trajectory downwards from that period of time.

5.3.1.5 <u>Corbyn's satisfaction ratings compared to Labour and Conservatives' vote share and Theresa May/Boris Johnson</u>

Data from IPSOS Mori data has been combined with opinion polling data from September 2015 – December 2019 which shows Corbyn's satisfaction ratings in comparison to projected Labour and Conservative vote share.

Table 28: Conservative vs Labour vs Corbyn's satisfaction ratings
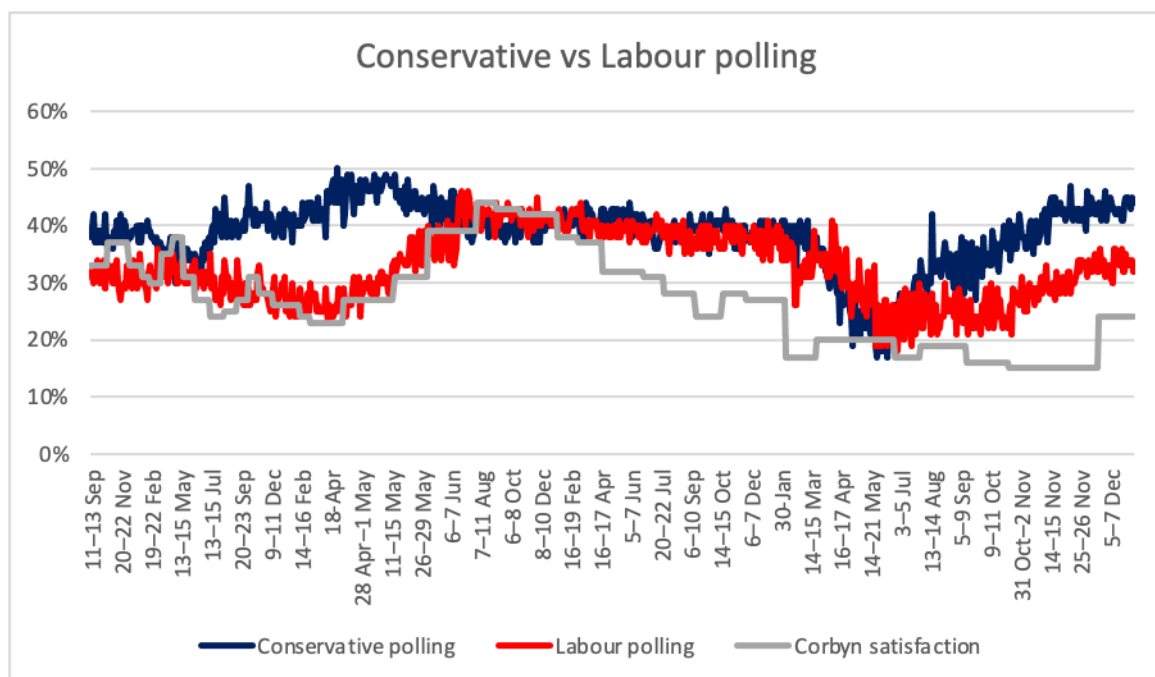
Source: IPSOS Mori, 2020b; Mortimore, 2020

The data shows a huge fluctuation of support for Corbyn and, indeed, both Labour and the Conservatives (particularly in mid-2019, coinciding with the European Parliamentary elections that year). A wider discussion on these fluctuating ratings will take place later in the chapter.

Another important piece of data to look at is the comparison between Corbyn and his popularity compared to his Conservative opponents that he would face in a general election: Theresa May and Boris Johnson. The graph below looks at the respective leaders' satisfaction ratings.

Table 29: Candidates for Prime Minister satisfaction ratings

Candidates for Prime Minister satisfaction ratings
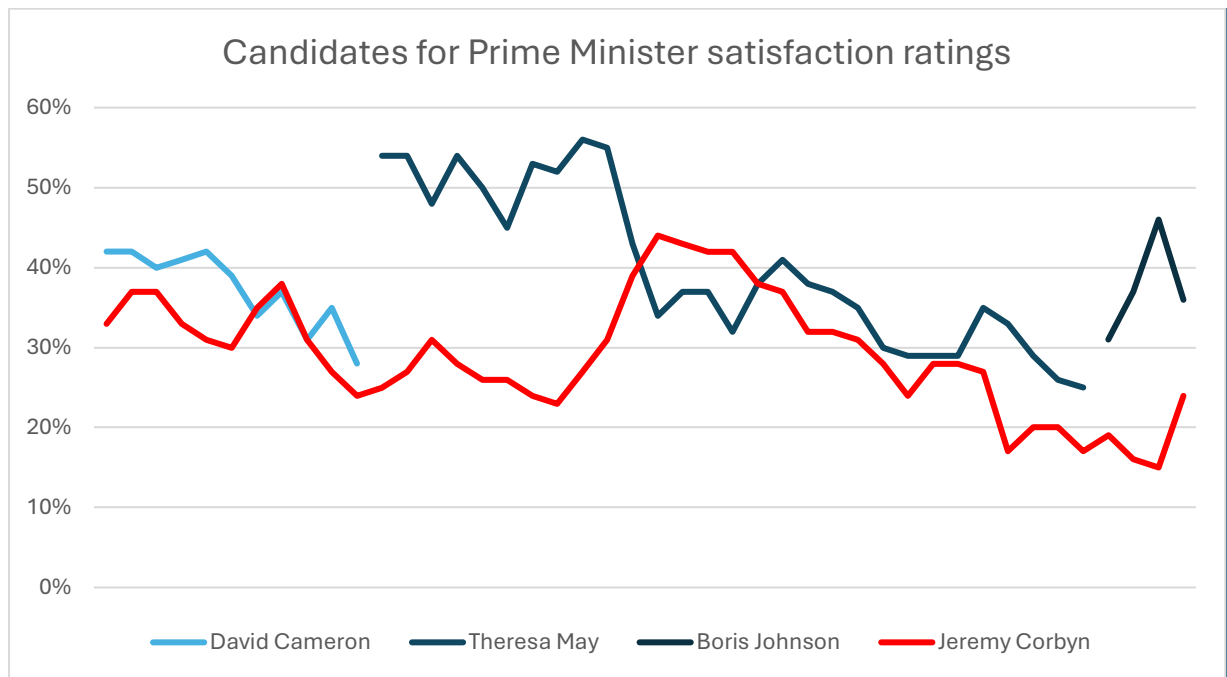
Source: Mortimore, 2020

The data shows that Theresa May was significantly more popular than Corbyn all the way until the aftermath of the 2017 general election. Corbyn would maintain a lead over May for a few months and his popularity would remain close to the margin of error throughout her premiership. Johnson, on the other hand, kept a lead over Corbyn throughout Corbyn's leadership.

5.3.1.6 How does Corbyn's ratings compare to other opposition leaders (are they excessively low compared to other leaders or are they similar)

It can also be helpful to contextualise Corbyn's satisfaction ratings with other Labour opposition leaders in order.

Table 30: Satisfaction with Leader of the Opposition: Highest net scores achieved by each leader 1979 - 2020
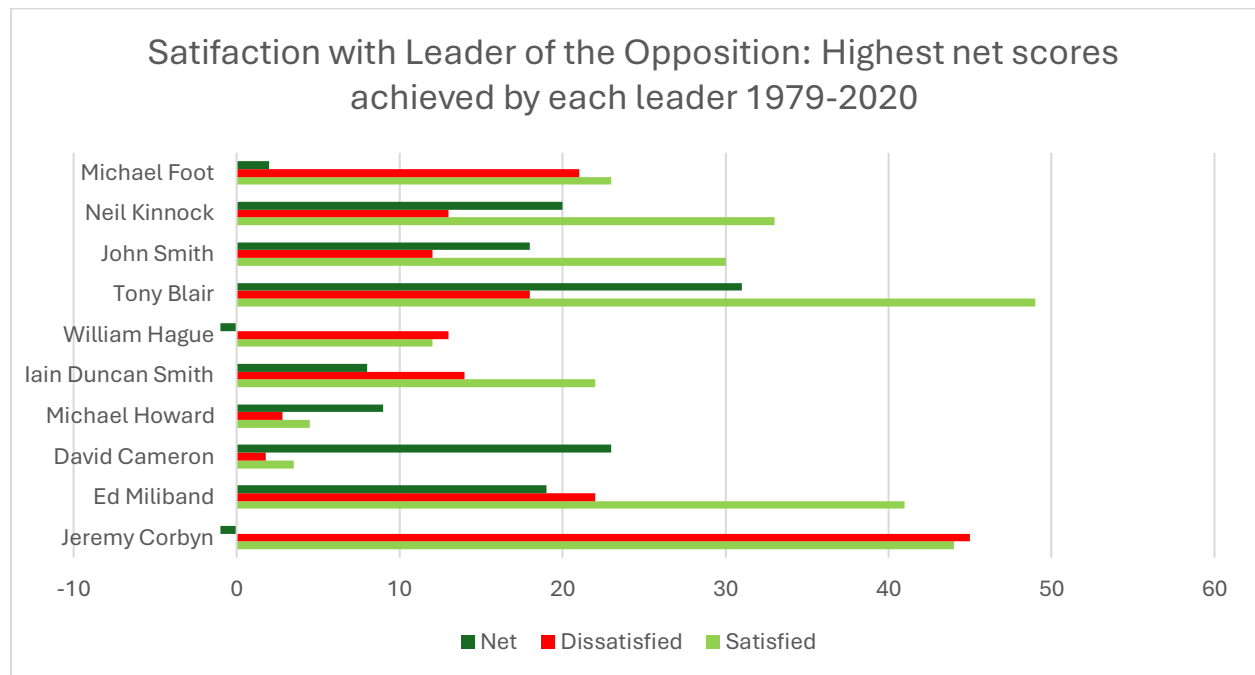
Source: IPSOS Mori, 2020a

In the 2017 general election Labour were initially polling at very low levels historically, polling around the 24% figure just before the election was called, however the election result showed that Labour under Corbyn won 40% of the vote. However, the 2019 result showed that Corbyn's popularity, although receiving a slight increase in support, was still historically low compared to other leaders.

5.4 Discussion

In order to assess whether or not Corbyn was an asset or liability for the Labour Party, the aforementioned data will be used as a reference point when it comes to various discussions including the results of various elections (therefore looking at Corbyn's comparison with previous leaders), the relationship between Labour's projected vote and Corbyn's popularity

and whether or not certain events impacted Corbyn's popularity which, in turn, would've improved or hindered the Labour Party.

5.4.1 Analysing the polling

This section will look at the relationship between Labour's projected vote and Corbyn's personal popularity, including looking the polling crossovers between the two datapoints and pinpointing particular moments in time e.g. 2016 EU referendum, the leadership challenge, the discussion over the IHRA definition, adoption of the second referendum stance and more to see if these events impacting Corbyn's popularity and, in turn, Labour's polling.

The data shows both support for Labour was broadly lower for the Conservatives from 2015 – 2017 although there was a period where Labour overtook the Conservatives in 2016, a year when the EU referendum and a leadership challenge occurred. The polling shows a larger decrease in support for the Conservatives compared to a slight increase in Labour's polling during this time, likely due to the Conservative leadership election of 2016 and the divisions that were focused on by much of the media during/following the EU referendum. When May was elected as Conservative leader the party saw a large increase in support whilst Labour declined, it should also be noted that Corbyn's popularity was significantly lower than May's during this period of time (Kirk, 2022). The data shows that Corbyn was quite unpopular in the run-up to the 2017 campaign and held lower popularity ratings than May when postal votes were going out but, over time, Corbyn's popularity increased which coincided with an increase in support for Labour (Lambert, 2021; Kirk, 2022). As mentioned earlier in the thesis a YouGov poll published immediately after the 2017 election showed that the 3 main reasons why people voted Labour were manifesto/policies (28%), anti-Tory (15%) and Jeremy Corbyn (13%) whilst the main reasons why people voted for the Conservatives were Brexit (21%), anti-

Labour (16%) and anti-Corbyn (14%) – this shows that voters' motivations in support of Labour were broadly driven by Corbyn and his policies whilst the Conservatives' support relied on Brexit and opposition to Labour/Corbyn (Smith, 2017). This shows that, for millions of voters, Corbyn would have been seen as an asset to Labour's campaign as his popularity increased alongside his ability to promote policies he advocated whilst others may see Corbyn as a liability due to the fact millions of voters seemingly turned out to vote for the Conservative Party just to stop him from winning. The question is whether a leader could've gained support in that election like Corbyn did, whilst promoting the policies coherently, whilst not mobilising as many as 14% of Conservative voters to turn out in opposition.

Following the aftermath of the 2017 election Corbyn's popularity was higher than May and, at the same time, Labour were ahead in the polls including polling at a high of 46% at one point (Lambert, 2021; Kirk, 2022). Throughout 2017 and 2018 the data notes that Corbyn may have fallen below May's personal popularity however there was not a significant difference between the two leaders, this was also reflected in the polling where Labour and the Conservatives broadly polled within the margin of error of each other in Westminster polling (Lambert, 2021; Kirk, 2022). Both leaders saw a slow decrease in popularity during this time period, with May's lowest ever approval ratings coinciding with the 2019 European election results. Following the 2019 European elections May resigned followed a poor result for the Conservative Party, leading her to be replaced with Boris Johnson who started off with high approval ratings. Neither Corbyn and Labour would hold a lead over Johnson or the Conservatives from Johnson's election as leader until the 2019 election. It should also be noted that Corbyn's popularity going into the 2019 election was lower than his initial popularity going into the 2017 election and whilst he did receive a slight increase in support he, and the Labour Party, were unable to recreate the same 'bounce' in support which was achieved in 2017. This data suggests

there is a link between the performance of a leader and the support for the party from 2015 – 2019. When Corbyn polled at his highest the party he led would also be polling high too, whilst when his support was much lower compared to his opponents the Labour Party would also suffer a decline in support too (Lambert, 2021; Kirk, 2022).

5.4.2 By-elections

Historic data shows that opposition parties usually perform better that governing parties in by-elections. Taylor and Payne analysed 459 by-elections between 1919 and 1972 and noted that the opposition performed better than the government in 85% of cases (Price and Sanders, 1998, 131). It is noteworthy, however, that turnout in by-elections are usually smaller than turnout in general elections, with Alia Middleton noting that 'turnout in by-elections may be almost universally lower than in the preceding general election', and the data in the aforementioned tables shows that turnout in by-elections under the Corbyn years were much lower than the turnout in the previous general election (Middleton, 2023: 360). Given this assumption, backed up by evidence, it should be expected that this should apply to Corbyn as well. This section will look at the electoral performances in the by-elections held when Corbyn was leader and analyse the results to measure whether or not Corbyn was successful overall when it came to by-elections.

The importance of by-elections in Britain has been widely debated by scholars with Pippa Norris claiming by-elections are 'sometimes but rarely' important, John Ramsden and Chris Cook claim that they don't bring down governments but can 'destroy its morale as well as to preserve the uncertain unity of the opposition' and that David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh note that by-elections can destabilise a government if the majority is small and can even eliminate their majority altogether (Norris, 2008: 19-20; Ramsden and Cook, 1973: 2). One

key example of this was John Major losing his majority in February 1997 due to defections and losing by-elections (Maer, 2010: 11). When comparing the aforementioned data to historic data it shows that Labour under Corbyn performed worse than historic averages, suggesting that Corbyn was less successful than contemporary and historic opposition leaders in Parliamentary by-elections.

5.4.3 <u>Non-UK Parliament nationwide elections during the Corbyn years</u>

Christopher Prosser established a model which looked at local election results and whether or not they could predict the outcome of the general election that followed. Prosser claimed that his model, with some adjustments, shows that 'local elections might offer a promising source of data for future long range election forecasting' (Prosser, 2016: 10). This suggests that local elections may be useful for predicting how a party may perform at a general election, therefore if a leader performs badly at local elections then it could foreshadow the performance in the subsequent general election. With this in mind it could be useful to use the model in reference to Labour under Corbyn's performances in the local elections and the 2017/2019 elections.

The 2016 local elections showed Labour winning 31% of the vote which was 0.6% higher than Labour's vote share in the 2015 general election (Garland and Terry, 2015) alongside an increase in Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners, however Labour also saw a net decrease in councillors elected by -18. The Scottish Parliamentary elections were the first to be held after the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, an event which had a wide ranging impact on voting behaviour and a huge increase of support for the Scottish National Party (SNP) to the detriment of the Labour Party in the 2015 general election (Garland and Terry, 2015). The results showed a 9.2% decline in Labour's share of the vote in constituencies, a 7.2% decline in the share of the vote in regions and a decrease of 13 seats which can be

interpreted as a big decline in support for Labour, however given the realignment that happened following the Scottish independence referendum it would be difficult to blame the decline in support solely on Corbyn, although he stated in the 2015 leadership election he wanted to attempt to appeal to Scottish voters which did not materialise in this election (Carrell, 2015). The other major nationwide election that took place in 2016 were the Welsh Assembly elections where Labour were the incumbent government. Labour saw a decrease in the share of the vote in both the constituency and regional ballots however Labour only lost 1 seat, albeit the reduced seat count meant that Labour lost their majority in the Assembly (requiring 30 seats).

The 2017 local elections were very unique compared to the other local elections as the election was held in the middle of a general election campaign. Opinion polling showed strong support for the Conservative Party and low poll ratings for Labour which were reflected at the ballot box (a month later Labour received 40% of the vote, showing a big shift in public opinion from the local elections to the general election). The projected vote share showed the Conservatives 11% ahead of Labour, with the parties receiving 38% and 27% respectively. Labour lost 382 councillors, 7 councils and 1 Mayor. With weeks to go before the 2017 general election Prosser's model, if accurate, should've pointed towards a clear Conservative landslide – an opinion that was shared by the Guardian's editorial team at the time (Guardian Editorial, 2017). However, 35 days later Labour's vote share increased from 27% to 40% and, instead of a Conservative landslide, the party lost their overall majority. This outcome shows that Prosser's model failed to predict the outcome of the 2017 general election based off local election performance as the vote share in the local elections was significantly different from the immediate general election.

The 2018 local elections led to the only local election outcome which showed an increase of Labour councillors with a net gain of 79, however the vote share declined from the 2017 general election from 40% to a projected vote share of 35%. Despite a decrease in the share of the vote the BBC projected that if the local election results were replicated in a general election then Jeremy Corbyn would likely end up as Prime Minister, in a Labour minority/coalition/supply and confidence government, with 283 seats. Theresa May's Conservatives, on the other hand, would have received 280 seats (Cockerton, 2018) although it should be noted that voters might not vote the same way in local elections compared to general elections due to the different issues that may arise during the respective campaigns, not to mention the increased popularity when it comes to voting when it comes to general elections.

In 2019, with the exception of the general election that took place in December that year, two nationwide elections were held via European elections (where voters would elect Members of the European Parliament) and local elections. The European elections weren't initially expected to be held as the deadline for Britain to leave the European Union via Article 50 was in March 2019, however because Article 50 was extended beyond July 1st 2019 this necessitated the requirement for the UK to hold European elections which were the first (and only) to be held since the UK voted to leave the European Union (Fella, 2019). The campaign was, unsurprisingly, dominated by the issue of Britain's relationship with the European Union. When the election was initially called Labour were polling ahead of all other parties, however as the campaign went on support for both Labour and the Conservatives decreased whilst support for the Brexit Party (pro-leave) and Liberal Democrats (pro-remain) increased. The final outcome showed a decrease in Labour's share of the vote by 10.8% with Labour finishing third behind the Brexit Party on 30.79% and Liberal Democrats on 19.78% (European Parliament, 2019). The Conservatives received 8.86% of the vote which was their worst ever

result in a national election since the party was founded (Brazier, 2020, 55), Theresa May resigned as leader the same week although she resigned before the results were announced on the Sunday that week (Rovnick et al, 2019).

The European elections were held on 23rd May 2019, a few weeks after the 2019 local elections. There was a crossover between the campaigning periods which perhaps could have had an impact on the local elections' outcome. The results showed a decrease in 84 councillors for Labour with the party winning 28% of the vote, 12% behind the 2017 election outcome however the projected share of the vote was the same as the Conservative Party. The Prosser model was again unsuccessful at predicting the election that followed as it significantly underestimated the Conservative share of the vote (the party won 28% in the 2019 local elections but 43.6% in the 2019 general election) however the model almost predicted Labour's vote share with the party winning 28% in May and 32% in the December general election. It is also interesting to note the strong performance of the Liberal Democrats in both the 2019 European (19.6%) and local elections (19%), however although the party usually performs better at local elections compared to general elections this large increase in support was not replicated in the December general election (Cracknell and Pilling, 2021). Even though the Liberal Democrats increased their share of the vote by 4.2% they actually ended up with 1 fewer seat compared to the previous general election in 2017 (Payne, 2019).

Simon Jenkins claimed these specific European elections were 'meaningless' because the results can be read anyway people want it to be read (Jenkins, 2019). Whilst Prosser's model completely failed to predict Labour's performance in the 2017 general election it did manage to broadly predict Labour's support for the general election in 2019. The overall outcome from local elections, devolved administrations and the European elections showed that Labour under

Corbyn failed to make substantial gains and, in fact, made broadly overall losses across the board.

5.5 <u>**Why is Corbyn such a polarising figure and why did he maintain core support despite low approval ratings**</u>

When politicians put their name forward for the office of Prime Minister they are expecting to receive support and backlash from within their own party, the media and the wider public. Jeremy Corbyn received overwhelming support from the party grassroots but unprecedented hostility from the Parliamentary Labour Party. He was the politician that received the most abuse in the 2017 general election but also, according to the Mirror, in that same year he drew the biggest crowd at Glastonbury festival since the Rolling Stones in 2013 (Fisher, 2017; Aitken, 2017). Corbyn's popularity, towards the start of his leadership and immediately after the 2017 election, either was higher or slightly lower than the margin of error of Labour's popularity, however by the time the 2019 election was called Corbyn's leadership was a liability for the image of the Labour Party. Despite this, Corbyn's position as leader was arguably unchallengeable due to maintained support from the membership within the party. This section will look at the reasons why Corbyn was a polarising figure, why he was seen as a liability and why he maintained strong support.

5.5.1 <u>Why is Corbyn a polarising figure?</u>

Throughout his leadership, Corbyn's dissatisfaction ratings were always higher than his satisfaction ratings. Although the polling gap was essentially closed immediately following the 2017 general election, voter satisfaction for Corbyn decreased and dissatisfaction increased to levels that never recovered for the leadership. Deltapoll research, commissioned by the Tony Blair Institute, used focus groups and polling to look at why Labour lost the 2019 general

election and this included looking at voters' views on Corbyn via focus groups and opinion polling. The reasons why Corbyn was unpopular was because of:

> 'His past associations and what it said about his patriotism; a perception of extremism and his left-wing attitudes particularly on issues of security; his high spending policies; and his "sitting on the fence" on Brexit; failing properly to tackle anti-Semitism; and general leadership capability and difficulty in seeing him as Prime Minister all congealed together into a lethal mix in many of these voters' minds' (Deltapoll et al, 2019)

The research conducted polling which asked voters who voted for Labour in 2017, 'Labour loyalists' (voters loyal to the Labour Party who were unlikely to shift support) and 'Labour defectors' (voters who initially supported the Labour Party but no longer did for the 2019 election); 68% of those who were polled stated that they supported Labour values with 42% saying they like Corbyn and 46% saying they don't like Corbyn; 32% of 2017 Labour voters thought policies in Labour's 2019 manifesto was too extremely, with 24% of Labour loyalists and 52% of Labour defectors agreeing; 67% of Labour loyalists believed Corbyn provided very/quite clear leadership on Brexit with 73% of Labour defectors saying he provided very/quite unclear leadership; and 45% of those polled agreed 'it is right and proper to spend this kind of money' (in relation to Corbyn's spending commitments) and 39% disagreeing (Deltapoll et al, 2019). This polling shows polarising opinions of Corbyn, with Labour loyalists showing a lot of strong support for him and Labour defectors showing strong opposition to his leadership, particularly in relation to his handling of Brexit and public spending commitments.

As discussed in the positioning chapter, there was increased popularity for redistributive politics under Corbyn's leadership. In the 2017 election, the launch of the manifesto in May

coincided with a large increase in support for both Labour and Corbyn's personal ratings however, by the time of the 2019 general election, the launch of the manifesto did not replicate the increased support seen in 2017. That is to say that, by 2019, Labour policies were popular but Labour, and Corbyn, were not (see table 28).

Prior to the 2019 election being called, 54% of people who voted for Labour in the 2017 election wanted Corbyn to step down before the next general election with 29% saying he should stay (Babington and James, 2019). William Booth and Karla Adam noted this by saying that lots of voters want 'radical change.. they're just not sure they want him' (Adam and Booth, 2019). After January 2018, Corbyn very rarely polled higher than the Labour Party and the last time Corbyn had higher approval ratings than both the Conservatives and Labour was on 9th-10th June 2019, although both parties had significantly decreased support in the run up to the 2019 European elections with a huge shift in voting intentions towards the Liberal Democrats amongst 2016 remain voters and towards the Brexit Party amongst 2016 leave voters (Curtice, 2019).

Despite low approval ratings in 2019, Corbyn's still maintained strong popularity amongst the Labour Party membership. In a poll published in July 2019, 82% of Labour members believed he had the 'right priorities for the country', 56% believed Corbyn was doing well as leader, 56% indicated that he should lead Labour into an election, 56% stated he would beat Johnson in a general election and 42% 'expected Jeremy Corbyn to be a good leader and he has been' compared to 29% of members who expected Corbyn 'be a good leader, but he has been a disappointment' (Smith, 2019a). Despite strong opposition within the Parliamentary Labour Party, and decreased support amongst the membership (despite still receiving majority support), there was no appetite for a third leadership challenge. There was no organised attempt

to mobilise a leadership challenge from Corbynsceptics and Jonathan Ashworth, then Corbyn's health secretary, admitted 'we fucked it up in 2016 when we went too early' in regards to a challenge against Corbyn, indicating that the 2016 leadership challenge was the attempt to remove Corbyn and it failed (Mason, 2019a). The membership data shows that, although there was less support for Corbyn in comparison to the 2015 and 2016 leadership elections (where he won 59.5% and 62% of the vote respectively), the party membership continued to back Corbyn as they believed he could beat the Conservatives in an election (polling from June 2017 – July 2019 showed the possibility of Corbyn-led Labour government, see previous table) and that he had the right priorities for the country in relation to policy, suggesting that they believe that, if Corbyn were to gain power, he would use this to benefit the country in way which would please the overwhelming majority of the party membership. That is to say, his leadership could be deemed as authentic but this, in itself, may not be enough to show that Corbyn was effective as a leader.

Andrea Whittle wrote about the rise and fall of support for Corbyn based on the perspective of authenticity and noted three discourses; that Corbyn is authentic and that is his appeal; that Corbyn is not authentic; and Corbyn is authentic but this is a weakness. Characteristics of authentic leadership include 'always sticking to their principles' and 'only express opinions that they truly hold' whilst effective leaders 'are savvy about managing the media', 'are willing to change their position if others judge them to be wrong' and 'are willing and able to do whatever it takes to make themselves and their party electable' (Whittle, 2020). The authenticity aspect of Corbyn's leadership seemingly appealed to the Labour membership, according to the data, however, as discussed in the positioning chapter, perceived indecisiveness was damaging his image as an authentic leader according to 14% of people who previously held a favourable view of Corbyn but no longer did in January 2019, although

Corbyn led Johnson on 'honesty, authenticity and his ability to reach out to ordinary people' in the run-up to the 2019 election (Curtis, 2019; Whittle, 2020). Whittle also argues that Corbyn may have been seen as authentic but this was a liability, for example Whittle states 'infighting within the party.. was blamed on Corbyn's inability to compromise and unite a 'broad church within the party' and that the traits which led to the perception that Corbyn was authentic also translated into his leadership being dogmatic and 'was unwilling to listen to alternative viewpoints' (Whittle, 2020: 14). If an effective leader needed to compromise in order to win an election, an authentic leader who sticks to their principles could damage the party electorally.

5.6 <u>How did Labour sell itself with Corbyn as leader?</u>

This section will look at how a hostile media framed Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, Corbyn and Labour's outreach on social media during the 2017 and 2019 elections, and how meme culture was utilised by Corbyn's supporters to reach out to a wider audience.

As discussed throughout the chapter, Corbyn's net satisfaction ratings were in the negative throughout the entirety of his leadership of the Labour Party. Despite this, the party achieved 40% of the vote in the 2017 general election and 32% in the 2019 election. Corbyn may have had negative ratings, however he was also framed by an incredibly hostile press. This isn't unique to Corbyn, as other leaders such as Michael Foot and Ed Miliband also received a large hostility too, however Cammaerts et al was able to quantify how much hostility Corbyn received from much of the media in 2016. In July 2016, twice as much airtime was given to Corbyn's critics in comparison to his supporters according to research produced by Birkbeck (University of London) and the Media Reform Coalition (Cox, 2016). Bart Cammaerts, Brooks DeCilla and João Carlos Magalhães published research looking at the press coverage of Jeremy

Corbyn when he was standing for Labour leader in 2015 and they made the case that the media distorted the truth when reporting on him and his views. The authors state that the media plays four roles; monitorial (also known as 'watch dog'), where they report objective reality and hold those in power to account; facilitative, where they aim to ensure a diversity of backgrounds and opinions in their reporting; radical, where journalists act as agents for social change and raise injustices; and collaborative (also known as 'guard dog') where the views of journalists align with the interests of the establishment. They argue that the 'British press offered a distorted and overly antagonistic view of the long-serving MP' (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 191) and that, arguably, the watch dog became the guard dog. Firstly, they looked at the tone of newspapers in regard to Corbyn and found that; 14% wrote positive stories about him/his views; 19% were neutral; 33% were critical; and 34% were antagonistic (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 197).

The tone of newspapers was overwhelmingly hostile to Corbyn and this was to be expected from right wing news outlets, however the authors also note that 'the degree of positive exposure in the left-wing and centrist press is a bit higher (than right wing outlets), but it would be fair to say their support for Jeremy Corbyn is at best lukewarm, and they are also often very hostile' (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 196). Not only were newspapers, in general, hostile to Corbyn but also they did not fairly reproduce his views as; 52% of articles wrote articles about him with his views absent; 27% had Corbyn's views present without alteration; 22% had his views present but taken out of context; and 15% had his views present but challenged (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 199). This shows that, although over a third of articles written published his views and challenges of his views, almost two-thirds of articles either didn't even mention his views at all or presented them in a distorted manner. Alongside this many outlets would attempt to delegitimise Corbyn with ridicule, scorn and personal attacks with 30% of articles showing

ridicule and scorn; 13% resorting to personal attacks; and even 9% attempting to delegitimise through association by linking Corbyn to the IRA, Hamas, Hezbollah and/or terrorism (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 200; (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 202).

Not only this, but 22% of articles denoted Corbyn as a dangerous or as being dangerous (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 203). It is also interesting to note who defined Corbyn as a dangerous/dangerous with 9% of article space coming from journalists, 4% coming from non-Labour politicians and 6% coming from Labour politicians (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 203). This shows that hostility towards Corbyn in regard to being defined as a danger was coming more from Labour politicians than non-Labour politicians, showing how deep the civil war was in Labour. It is expected that a leader of the opposition will face scrutiny by the press but this research showed that although the press played a monitorial role, and to some extent a facilitative role, much of the media represent Corbyn as a 'deviant enemy of the British people and of the British state' and that 'positioning the leader of the largest opposition party in the United Kingdom as a deviant enemy, rather than a legitimate political actor, the British media has acted in an undemocratic manner' (Cammaerts et al, 2020: 206).

Whilst the Labour Party did engage with mainstream media, including writing articles, sending representatives on to TV programmes and participating in general election debates, Labour, and Corbyn, relied much more on social media for outreach. According to Robert Booth and Alex Hern, Labour dominated the 2017 election digitally to motivate the voter base instead of focusing on attacking the Conservative Party (Booth and Hern, 2017). Paolo Gerbaudo, Federico Marogna and Chiara Alzetta noted that Labour's 'positive positing' attracted many voters, with Corbyn's personal Facebook page engaging ~5 million in comparison to Theresa May engaging ~771,000 users. Labour also 'had the upper hand attracting 3 million user

engagements over the course of the campaign, almost three times the number of user interactions achieved by the Conservatives (1.3 million) during the campaign' (Gerbaudo et al, 2019). Alongside posts from Corbyn and Labour, Momentum (a Corbyn supporting group within the Labour Party) published pro-Corbyn/anti-Tory videos which reached 1 in 3 Facebook users in the UK in the last week of the general election campaign (Momentum, 2017).

Momentum also used social media to host training sessions for activists, reaching 100,000 people to encourage them to campaign in Labour-Tory marginal seats, and reminding 400,000 people to vote on election day via WhatsApp (Momentum, 2017). Labour and Corbyn's outreach on social media reached a much wider audience compared to the Conservatives and May and, according to Jag Singh, the founder of MessageSpace, the Tories 'failed to harness the rapid reaction capabilities of social media campaigning' (Booth and Hern, 2017). A global survey by UNICEF and Gallup, covering 21 countries, notes that social media is disproportionately consumed by young people in comparison to elderly people (Klar, 2021). A discussion over the impact of 'meme culture' will be discussed later in this section which will note that even though Labour unprecedented amount of support from young people (who are more likely to interact with social media), there was also an unprecedented lack of support from elderly people (Novara Media, 2020).

In 2018, Mark Zuckerberg announced that Facebook's algorithm would be prioritising posts from user's friends and family over media and businesses in order to help users 'connect with each other' and that the service was better for 'people's well-being' (Wong, 2018). These changes, noted by Owen Jones, 'made it harder for Labour's content to go viral' and impacted pro-Labour sites like Novara Media and Skwawkbox (Jones, 2020; D'Urso, 2019). This algorithm change would mean that political parties' social media strategy had to change at the

next election and, when the election was called, it was clear that both parties had been planning ahead. In the first 4 days of December 2019 Labour published 100 adverts whilst, in comparison, the Conservatives published 6,000 (Lee, 2019a). Whilst the Conservative Party published 3 Facebook posts a day in 2017, they published nearly 21 a day in 2019 (Fletcher, 2019). Labour utilised videos in the 2017 election, publishing 9 videos a day in 2017, however this reduced to 5.5 videos a day in 2019 (Fletcher, 2019).

On Twitter, Corbyn's engagement with the platform was strong with 4 tweets receiving 99,000+ likes from 1st December – 12th December 2019. A post replicating a meme format called 'bae come over', a joke about couples inviting each other over to each other's house, received 148,000+ likes (Corbyn, 2019c). An anti-Tory post received 98,000+ likes, an anti-establishment post received 106,000+ likes and a post about his Brexit stance received 109,000 likes (Corbyn, 2019d; Corbyn, 2019b; Corbyn, 2019a). Meanwhile Boris Johnson's most liked tweet, replicating a scene from the movie Love Actually, received 32,000+ likes (Johnson, 2019). This shows that, during the election campaign, Corbyn was able to receive more engagement via Twitter than Johnson. However, according to Pulsar 89up Social Media Election Index, when looking at both Facebook and Twitter, the Conservatives initially had more engagement on the combined platforms however, by the end of the campaign, Labour had more engagement.

Table 31: Post engagement by week on Twitter and Facebook
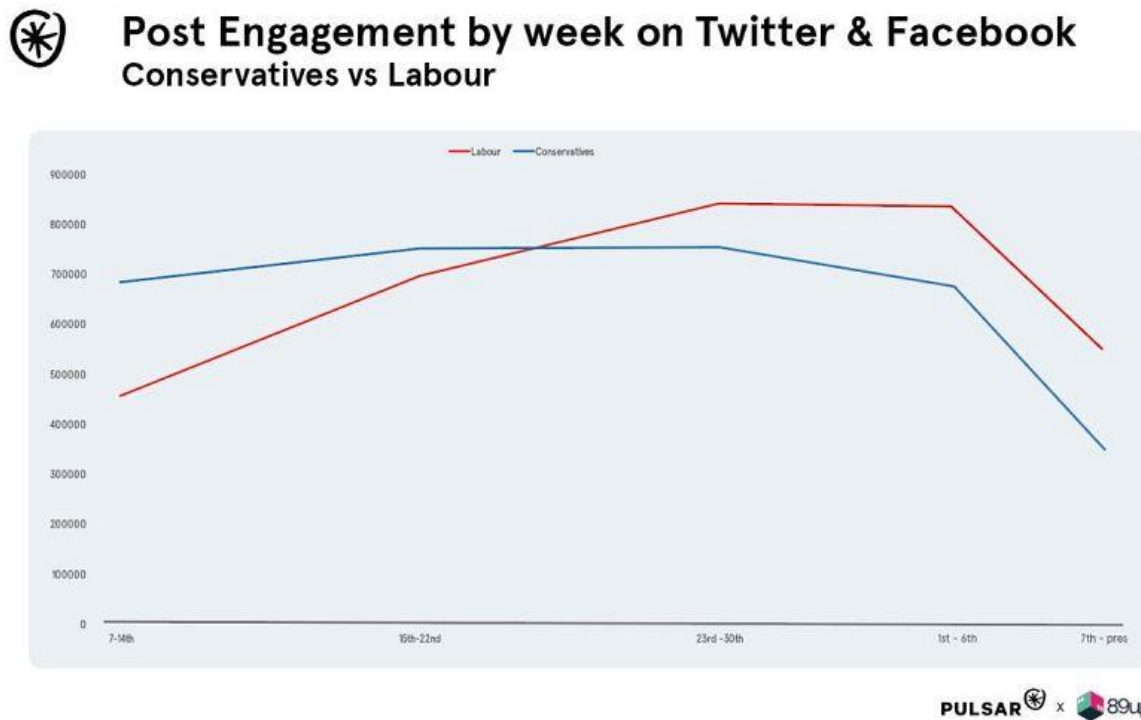
Source: Holroyd, 2019

This shows that, in comparison to the 2017 election, the Conservatives had much more engagement and that Labour weren't able to replicate their success in terms of achieving significantly more outreach than their opposition in comparison to 2017.

Neil Park estimated that there were 66.8 million people in the United Kingdom by mid-2019, with 47 million registered to vote in the 2019 general election (Park, 2020b; Park, 2020a). In December 2019, there were 44.86 million users on Facebook and 13.7 million Twitter users from the United Kingdom with 43% of Twitter users, in the first quarter of 2020, stating that they used Twitter 'several times a day' (Dixon, 2023; Rose, 2019; Dixon, 2022). Whilst Twitter has an active following, there are significantly fewer people on the platform in comparison to Facebook. Whilst some of Corbyn's Twitter posts received a vast amount of engagement, the outreach is limited as, out of 47 million potential voters, and not all 13.7 million Twitter users

being able to vote (some of whom are underage or not registered at all, the exact figure is unknown), only a small subsection of the population engaged with the posts. This analysis, when contrasted with the election results, Corbyn was able to mobilise well on social media, however this support was pocketed and was unable to swing a general election towards a Labour victory.

There is a growing body of research which looks at the impact of 'meme culture' in regard to communication, collective thinking, and outreach to citizens. Limor Shifman notes that memes are 'cultural units that spread from person to person', for examples images and videos which are humorous in nature (Shifman, 2013). Yulia Petrova published a paper which looks at the formation of internet culture and the impact of the internet regarding 'society's thinking', they note that memes are a language that can be remixed/transformed using familiar ideas within internet culture, this arguably helps connects and creates communities on the internet on platforms which are used by billions of people across the planet (Petrova, 2021). Liam McLoughlin and Rosalynd Southern looked at the impact of memes and responses from the general public during the 2017 election. The most shared video of the campaign was a video of Corbyn super-imposed on grime artist Stormzy, this received 9 million views and was shared 100,000 times (McLoughlin and Southern, 2020).

A video published after the 2017 election of Corbyn clapping his hands, followed by him saying 'we're back and we're ready for it all over again', with the caption 'when you walk back into the sesh after throwing up' received 2.6 million likes which was the most liked tweet in their sample (McLoughlin and Southern, 2020). Arguably the most famous meme which impacted popular culture during the 2017 election, and subsequent months that followed, was a chant of 'Oh Jeremy Corbyn' to the tune of Seven Nation Army by The White Stripes (Harrison, 2017).

The chant began spontaneously after Corbyn appeared as a guest speaker for The Libertines at the Wirral Live festival in May 2017, this chant was then shared in a Facebook post by Jeremy Corbyn which received over 2 million views on Facebook (Corbyn, 2017). The chant continued to be used during the election by supporters of Corbyn with Andrew Harrison stated, by the time Glastonbury festival in 2017 occurred, 'the chant was established as the long-lost bridge between pop culture and politics' (Harrison, 2017).

Ina Fever stated that the meme culture around Corbyn mocks 'mainstream media's attempts to manage what is politically possible' whilst sharing content that is 'optimistic, hyperbolic and full of bravado' (Fever, 2017). Whilst a strategy of meme culture is not enough to shift public opinion to swing an election, it allowed supporters of Corbyn's leadership to sell the man, the party, and the policies to a receptive audience which, occasionally, reached millions of people. There are, however, limitations to this approach. Political memes are arguably very appealing to a very specific section of the electorate: young people. As noted in research published by Paul Mihailidis, 'researchers have found that young people function through an expanded understanding of political participation that prioritizes social change, activism, and advocacy over formal mechanisms like voting, volunteerism, military duty, and taxes (Mihailidis, 2020; Dalton, 2008).

Labour under Corbyn's leadership engaged well with young people and received an unprecedented level of support amongst the generation, however given that his message was already appealing to young people then this approach could be seen as 'preaching to the converted' and failing to appeal to a wider electorate, for example Owen Jones noted that Corbyn 'amassed unprecedented support from younger people and an unprecedented lack of support from older people' (Novara Media, 2020). When campaigning, leaders tend to use

different methods to reach out to voters. Corbyn may have been good at using social media as a method of voter outreach, however, given that Corbyn was unable to win either the 2017 or 2019 elections with this method, shows that he was ineffective in comparison to his political opponents regarding other, perhaps conventional, methods of voter outreach e.g. engagement with the mainstream media.

5.7 **Summary**

This chapter has looked at various discussions including the impact of leadership effects and whether Corbyn was a liability for Labour by analysing various datapoints covering Corbyn's personal popularity, Labour's popularity in the polls, May/Johnson's popularity, Corbyn's popularity in relation to contemporary opposition leaders, the popularity of other parties in the polls and election results. The discussions over leadership effects, including Bean and Mughan arguing that leaders do impact the distribution of votes and that the Presidentialisation of politics has linked leaders with their parties in the eyes of the voters, Stevens and Karp stating that the increased role of the media has increased the attention of leaders and Cammaerts et al stating that much of the media were antagonistic to Corbyn, shows that leadership is arguably important, that the media can influence voters and that numerous media outlets were hostile to Corbyn (Bean and Mughan, 1989; Stevens and Karp, 2012).

Despite the hostile media, social media helped Labour and Corbyn reach out to voters. Labour had strong social media outreach in both 2017 and 2019, whilst the Conservatives had a weak 2017 digital campaign but were much stronger in 2019. Alongside social media, Corbyn became part of meme culture, which may have mobilised support amongst young people and active internet users, but this is only a small subsection of the wider electorate, and Party leadership, and therefore Corbyn, will have an impact (and was perhaps at a disadvantage due

to media hostility) on Labour's vote share and this is backed up by the data. When taking all of this into consideration, in relation to the Partycraft model's criterion on competence, this analysis shows that, in some cases, Corbyn arguably helped Labour but, in other cases, he arguably hindered Labour and their support across the country.

Corbyn performed, in general, worse in Parliamentary by-elections compared to his predecessors, overall he oversaw hundreds of losses in local election results and during the 2019 election he likely hindered Labour's chances due to his low popularity compared to Johnson and the inability to navigate the issue of Brexit in the run-up, and during, the campaign. On the contrary Corbyn's policies were cited as the top reason why people voted Labour in 2017 – with him personally rating in third – and Labour under his leadership were able to mobilise 12.8 million votes alongside achieving the highest increase in the share of Labour's vote since 1945 in the 2017 election.

Due to nature of centralised system of the UK the general elections will be seen as, arguably, the most important and the data suggests that Corbyn, at his strongest, could've won enough support to put him in Number 10 however the height of his popularity would not last long and, at his lowest, Labour would lose heavily to the Conservatives (although the argument of 2019 being 'the worst result since 1935' misses out important datapoints including that 2019 – with the exception of 2017 – was the highest vote share for Labour since 2001 and that the Conservative majorities were bigger in 1983 and 1987).

From the start of his leadership up to pre-2017 election Corbyn was a liability, during the 2017 election and the immediate aftermath of the campaign Corbyn was an asset to Labour (although his leadership was cited as one of the key reasons why people voted for the Conservative Party

during the election), and by the 2019 election Corbyn's leadership was again seen as a liability for the party. Corbyn was unable to win enough support in order to form a government, despite sporadically polling higher than May on a personal level, which suggests he was not an effective electioneer overall although it would be wrong to dismiss the broadly high levels of support for Labour under Corbyn's leadership following the aftermath of the 2017 election until late 2018 and that, if a hypothetical election were held during this time period, it would be difficult to justify the argument that Corbyn would definitely lose.

Conclusion

'I believe in a decent, socially just society.. my voice will not be stilled, I'll be around, I'll be campaigning, I'll be arguing, and I'll be demanding justice for the people of this country, and indeed, the rest of the world'

- Jeremy Corbyn at his last Prime Minister's Questions as Labour leader, 2020

6.1 Summary of the thesis

Leadership models are helpful to analyse leadership by using data to determine whether party political leaders are effective. This thesis has used Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party as a case study and has used qualitative analysis alongside quantitative data via the Partycraft model and looked at four substantive questions to answer the wider question over the effectiveness of his leadership. Whilst Greenstein's Presidential leadership model, Bennister's Leadership Capital Index, and Bulpitt's Statecraft theory look at leadership of governing parties, the Partycraft model was created to fill a research gap in the wider field of party leadership models by looking, instead, at the effectiveness of opposition party leaders (Greenstein, 2000; Theakston, 2011; Bennister et al, 2014; Bulpitt, 1986). The Partycraft leadership model looks at four areas of interest: acquisition of leadership, party management, positioning and decision making, and competence.

The first substantive question asked: how did Corbyn acquire the Labour Party leadership and did he have a strong mandate to lead? This area was important to cover because a leader elected with a large mandate is more likely to have security in the role in the long term, whilst a small mandate can make a leader vulnerable to challenges to their leadership if there is even a small change within the mood of the party. The rules in which leadership contests are conducted can also have an impact on the outcome of these contests. Labour Party leadership contest rules

have changed throughout the decades, from the election of the leader via the Parliamentary Labour Party, then via the electoral college, then via one member, one vote (alongside other substantive rule changes e.g. electoral college reforms and nomination thresholds). Whilst one member, one vote gave more power to the Labour grassroots, the Parliamentary Labour Party still held influence in this leadership contest as they were the section of the party that were able to determine who was allowed on the leadership ballot due to the 15% threshold to nominate candidates.

Corbyn received extremely little support from Labour MPs, and only just managed to onto the leadership ballot due to nominations from non-supportive MPs to 'broaden the debate'. Whilst little support was shown from the PLP, Corbyn was elected by a perfect storm caused by a huge increase in party membership because of his candidacy, a new electoral system which placed the power to elect a leader via this mass membership, a policy platform supported by the majority of party members, and the poor performance of the other leadership candidates. If the leadership contest were held under PLP votes or the electoral college then Corbyn would've lost the 2015 leadership contest despite overwhelming support from the grassroots of the party.

Corbyn's leadership victory was also contextualised within wider academic framework; Stark's model, looking at acceptability, electability, and competence, suggests voters will back a candidate who is acceptable to them, is electable, and is competent however the model does not explain why Corbyn won because he did not lead in these areas; May's curvilinear disparity notes that the Labour Party membership were on the left of the PLP and they had the power to elect a leader, therefore these conditions were right for a grassroots rebellion and the 'left, liberal' anti-austerity members could comfortably vote for Corbyn over other candidates; and Murr's party leadership model states that a party leader that wins a leadership contest by the

largest margin amongst MPs is the most likely to win a general election, Corbyn received extremely little support from MPs, and whilst the 2017 election was close, the model proved correct in 2017 and 2019. Corbyn won the 2015 leadership contest with 59.5% of the vote, and then 62% after the 2016 leadership challenge, which showed that he received a strong mandate from the people who had the power to elect the leader of the Labour Party, however the relationship between Corbyn and the Parliamentary party would prove to be difficult when managing the party as leader.

The next substantive chapter looked at the question: was Corbyn effective at managing the Labour Party? If a party leader cannot control their party, then they cannot implement their vision and they could potentially divide their party, this could lead to negative perception amongst prospective voters alongside leading to internal challenges to destabilise or remove the leader (Greene, 2014). The history of the Labour Party is deeply rooted in factionalism, with the fight between the left vs right of the party evolving through time from Bevanites vs Gaitskellites, Bennites vs Healeyites, and, under Corbyn's leadership, Corbynites vs Corbynsceptics.

Factional opposition, including in Corbyn's case, isn't just due to policy differences but also personal differences too e.g. personal dislike for the leadership figure. Leaders have to keep their party together, from the grassroots to the Parliamentary Party, however Corbyn received minimal support in the leadership contests from Parliamentary colleagues. As Corbyn was effective at winning leadership contests it would prove difficult for Corbynsceptics to remove him from the leadership, therefore they were given two choices: either leave the party and set up a new movement to electorally challenge Labour in the same way that the SDP did in the 1980s (a few MPs left Labour to form the Independent Group) or stay and fight (which most

MPs ultimately did, and ultimately won following the end of Corbyn's leadership and the election of Keir Starmer as Labour leader, despite him promising to build on Corbyn's legacy).

Gilbert states PLP's opposition to Corbyn was because they were ideologically opposed to Corbyn's platform, whilst Crine et al's work shows that there were rebellions on Corbyn's stance on immigration, intervention in Syria, Trident renewal, and Corbyn's leadership itself via the no-confidence motion by 2015-2017 MPs but there was more support for key policies from the new intake of 47 Labour MPs following the 2017 election (20% of the Socialist Campaign Group have, however, been deselected by Starmer) (Gilbert, 2021a; Crines et al, 2018).

Another criticism of Corbyn's leadership was noted by Mike Gapes (MP who eventually defected from Labour to the Independent Group), who stated that he would not show loyalty to Corbyn because he rebelled on 20% of votes against the Labour whip as a backbencher (Morris, 2010). There were also public tensions between Corbyn and deputy leader Tom Watson, with Watson making public interventions and setting up the Future Britain Group to organise Corbynsceptic MPs in the PLP.

There were attempts to remove Corbyn from the party leadership including the non-procedural no confidence vote by Labour MPs, mass resignations which essentially shut down the opposition (some MPs were holding more than one job), and the 2016 Labour leadership challenge which included the NEC attempting to block his candidacy. This shows that Corbyn received minimal support from his Parliamentary colleagues. Whilst Corbyn did not have much support from the PLP, he won a lot of support from the extra-Parliamentary Party including party members and trade unions, most CLPs and trade unions nominated Corbyn for leader and

the party selectorate voted for him with 59.5% support in 2015, then 62% support in 2016 (winning votes in all categories: membership, affiliated members, and registered supporters). A poll showed, at one point, 81% of Labour members thought he was doing well in the job, with 19% saying he was doing 'badly' (see table 10).

The handling of Brexit negatively impacted Corbyn's reputation, however he still maintained majority support throughout his leadership (Smith, 2019). Corbyn was also very supportive of trade unions and that support was reciprocated by the unions themselves and a majority of members in both leadership contests. The Labour NEC is also an important body within the party as they make decisions over internal mechanisms within the party. Corbyn initially didn't have control but Corbyn supporters would, over time, gain the balance of power, increase the membership of the NEC by 3 (which were elected by a majority supporting membership) and reduced threshold for MP nominations alongside reducing the threshold to allow a deselection process to occur in a CLP (a compromise position instead of introducing mandatory reselections). Overall, this shows that Corbyn did not have much control of the PLP, but he did have strong support from the extra-Parliamentary party.

Another important aspect of the Partycraft model relates to positioning and decision making, with the chapter looking at the question: was Corbyn able to shift the Labour Party on key political issues? The chapter focussed on a how a leader uses their position as leader to mould the party in their image, in this case how Corbyn aimed to shift the party in the vision he promoted in both leadership contests. Positioning and decision making looks at how leaders operate within the party on key policy discussions, with the discussion about Corbyn focusing on how he shifted Labour's domestic agenda, the handling of Brexit, and the handling of antisemitism in Labour. The chapter looked at discussions which noted that Corbyn was

effective at promoting his ideological vision within the party, and moving Labour from a pro-austerity, anti-nationalisation party to an anti-austerity, pro-nationalisation party. The 2017 manifesto included many policies that Corbyn had been promoting for years, with the 2019 manifesto (with the exception of the Brexit position) promoting even more Corbynite policies as Corbyn's allies assumed more control over the party (e.g. the NEC).

The issue over the handling of Brexit would have been difficult for any Labour leader to navigate as 1/3 of Labour voters and 2/3rds of Labour constituencies voted to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum whilst the party position, in that referendum, was to support a vote to remain in the EU. Therefore, a leader would need to find a position that would bridge the divide between these two camps or, at least, advertise a stance that would not alienate a large portion of Labour voters who fell on either side of the debate. Corbyn was harshly criticised by internal opponents for the handling of Labour's remain campaign, and the response to the campaigning was a key factor in the mobilisation for a leadership challenge in 2016, however supporters of his leadership would note that he attended numerous rallies/TV debates, made more media appearances than any other Labour MP (Alan Johnson led the Labour In For Europe campaign) and the media focus was 'slightly obsessed with the blue on blue war that's going on' which made it difficult for Labour In for Britain to cut through (Channel 4, 2016). The Labour leadership would then have to decide how they would proceed following the referendum result, especially with the 2017 election being called.

Corbyn had wanted to focus more on domestic policy in that election and promoted an 'ambivalent' stance on the EU, this stance was arguably successful because it did not alienate a large number of Labour voters as issues such as austerity and the NHS were seen as more important in comparison to the issue of Brexit for Conservative voters in that election (Hayton,

2022). After the election, Labour struggled to establish a 'strategic direction' for the outcome of Brexit and relied on a strategy which hoped that Brexit would 'consume and destroy the Conservatives' (Hayton, 2022). After many tense discussions in the party and factional infighting throughout the years, Labour's position shifted from a soft Brexit stance to the option of a public vote and then commitment to a second referendum. This debate caused a lot of tension within the party, with arguably sabotage by Corbyn's Brexit secretary, and successor as leader, Keir Starmer who hindered the 'opportunity to reframe the Brexit debate on Labour's terms' (Henry, 2022). This long debate led to the perception that Corbyn was 'indecisive' on Brexit, and this 'indecisiveness' massively damaged Corbyn's image, with this being the key reason why 'people who had a favourable view of Corbyn but no longer do' alongside 42% of Labour members who thought he handled the issue badly, in comparison to 56% of members who thought he handled the issue well (Curtis, 2019; Smith, 2019).

Finally, the chapter looked at Corbyn's handling of antisemitism in the party, including personal scrutiny and party reforms. There was a lot of criticism of Corbyn's past, including his response to the Mear One mural, membership of Facebook groups in which some members posted antisemitic content, Wreathgate, his foreword to Hobson's Imperialism: A Study, controversary over his 'no sense of irony' comment at a Palestinian Return Centre in 2013, appearing alongside a platform in which a Holocaust survivor compared Israel to Nazism, and signing an Early Day Motion to change Holocaust Memorial Day to Genocide Memorial day (it should be noted that Corbyn also signed an Early Day Motion urging councils to establish 'future Holocaust memorial days' (Stewart, 2018; Weich, 2018; Lee, 2018a; Marsh and Stewart, 2019; Sparrow and Stewart, 2018; Johnston, 2018; Leech et al, 2007). The scrutiny of Corbyn's past, alongside increased scrutiny of the handling of antisemitism complaints in the party, led to a protest of hundreds of people, including 'over a dozen Labour MPs', in

Parliament Square which demanded that Corbyn should do more to address and 'tackle anti-Jewish feeling in his party's ranks' (Cowburn and Kentish, 2018).

Corbyn's supporters, in response, note that Corbyn has a long record of anti-racist activism, including challenging antisemitism. The supportive outlet Skwawkbox published a list of 51 examples of Corbyn standing with Jewish people, including directly condemning antisemitism/people promoting antisemitism, leading the clean-up of Finsbury Park synagogue after an antisemitic attack, organising a counter-demonstration in defence of Jewish residents against fascists, and calling for the British government to recognise refugee status for Jewish people from Yemen (Skwawkbox, 2019). Corbyn also published educational materials called 'No Place for Antisemitism' which aimed to inform Labour members about how to identify and combat antisemitism alongside updating disciplinary processes within the party to streamline antisemitism cases (Rodgers, 2019b; Allegretti, 2019).

Not only was there increased scrutiny of Corbyn's past, but also the issue of the handling of antisemitism in the party under his leadership. Numerous reports looked at antisemitism in Labour; the Royall report noted that antisemitism exists in Labour but that the issue should not be used as a 'factional political tool' and that rule changes should be implemented to tackle antisemitism; the Chakrabarti Inquiry noted 'an occasionally toxic atmosphere' and offered 20 recommendations to combat antisemitism; HASCRA claimed that Labour members were too tolerant of antisemitism and that Labour were 'demonstrably incompetent' in dealing with this issue; the EHRC report stated that Labour were responsible for unlawful acts of discrimination against Jewish people, noted that the Chakrabarti Inquiry recommendations were slow to be implemented, and made legally binding recommendations for Labour to adopt; the LabourLeaks report showed that there was a 'dysfunctional relationship' between Labour HQ

and LOTO, and staffers that were hostile to Corbyn's leadership 'curbed efforts to tackle antisemitism'; and the Forde Report noted that the issue of antisemitism was weaponised, that factionalism left the party 'dysfunctional', and offered recommendations to reform Labour's disciplinary processes (Pope, 2016; Chakrabarti, 201: 1; EHRC, 2020: 3; EHRC, 2020: 93; Mason, 2020b; Forde, 2022: 5, 46; Forde, 2022: 115-135). The question over whether Corbyn is an antisemite is subjective, however this chapter shows that Labour's relationship with Jewish communities across Britain was damaged due to errors made by the party leadership and factional interference by his opponents.

The final substantive chapter looked at the question: was Corbyn considered an asset or a liability for the Labour Party? If a leader is seen as a liability for their party or incompetent, then this could negatively impact their party's electoral prospects. This discussion looked at Corbyn's electoral performances, his satisfaction ratings in comparison to Labour's vote share and other leaders, why Corbyn maintained support from his supporters, and how Labour under his leadership sold themselves to the public.

Academic discussions looked at leadership competence and leadership effects, the former noting that competence is an important aspect in relation to voter behaviour and that the branding of parties/personalities within the parties matter, and the latter noting that a leader does have an impact on public perception and, therefore, electoral performances. The question over whether or not Corbyn was an asset or a liability required looking at polling data and electoral results, and the data showed that Labour under Corbyn's leadership polled at a low of 18% and a high of 46%. The 2017 election result was the highest share of the Labour vote since 2001, the highest increase in the share of the vote since 1945, and the most Labour MPs elected to Parliament since the 2005 election and, whilst the 2019 result exceeded vote share in 2010

and 2015, it resulted in the fewest number of Labour MPs elected to Parliament since 1935 and the Conservatives held their largest majority since the 1987 election.

Corbyn was unable to form a government in the two general elections that he fought which reinforces the assumption that Corbyn was an unelectable leader, however despite not winning the June 2017 election or December 2019 election, polling from June 2017 – July 2019 showed the real possibility of a Corbyn-led Labour government as polling showed Labour within the margin of error within the Conservative vote share. When it came to electoral performances beyond general elections, Labour held on to 7 seats out of 8 by-elections, there was an overall net loss of councillors in all local elections (except 2018), and there was a net overall loss of representatives in all Scottish, Welsh, and European elections. There was, however, an increase in representation of Labour Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners overall. The discussion also looked at Corbyn's satisfaction ratings, and the data showed that voters were more dissatisfied with Corbyn than satisfied throughout the entirety of his leadership (see table 27). Corbyn's satisfaction ratings were broadly similar (however rarely exceeding) in comparison to Labour's polling, however by April 2018 Corbyn's ratings were lower than Labour's opinion polling (see table 28).

Corbyn was a polarising figure who maintained core support, especially amongst the Labour membership, but also faced strong negative opinions from those who opposed his leadership inside and outside of the party. The chapter finally looked at how Corbyn sold the Labour Party to the public whilst leader, and the strategy used to reach out to the wider public. Corbyn received an extraordinary amount of hostility from much of the media and relied more on social media to reach out to voters, the party (alongside Corbyn's own personal pages) were successful in winning the social media battle vs the Conservatives and their leader in 2017

however they were unable to replicate this success in 2019, in part due to a stronger social media campaign by the Conservatives and because of algorithm changes. Meme culture also helped mobilise support and sell the party to young people however this mobilisation was catered for a very specific audience, and Labour received an unprecedented lack of support from elderly people which was not offset by unprecedented support from young people.

6.2 <u>The Partycraft model</u>

<u>Table 32: Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party measured by the Partycraft</u>

<u>Model</u>

<u>Chapter</u> <u>Issue</u>	Acquisition of leadership	Party Management	Positioning and decision making	Competence: is the leader seen as an asset or a liability?
	Effective at acquiring and maintaining the position of leader of the Labour Party	Effective at handling the extra-Parliamentary Labour Party Ineffective handling of the Parliamentary Labour Party	Effective at shifting the domestic agenda within the party Ineffective handling of the positions of Brexit and antisemitism in the Labour Party, in part due to errors made by the leadership and in part due to factional intervention	Despite the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership winning the highest increase in the share of the vote for the party since 2001 in the 2017 election, and polling showing the prospect of a Labour government from June 2017 – July 2019, overall Corbyn was seen as a liability, rather than an asset, for the electoral prospects for Labour (in particularly after July 2019)

Performed, overall, well in this area
Mixed in this area
Performed, overall, poorly in this area

The Partycraft model notes that Jeremy Corbyn was, overall, effective at acquiring the leadership of the party and maintaining his position, despite a leadership challenge, due to being effective at maintaining support of the extra-Parliamentary Labour Party who had the power to decide the outcome of leadership contests. Regarding positioning, he was effective at shifting the domestic agenda within the Labour Party and the policy platform promoted at both the 2017 and 2019 elections were close to the ideological vision that he not only promoted during the leadership contests, but also policy positions that he had been advocating for decades. His 'ambivalent' Brexit position in the 2017 election also did not alienate core Labour voters for voting for the party under his leadership and, therefore, he was effective at bridging the divide between Labour remain voters and Labour leave voters in that election by focusing on domestic issues.

This coalition of voters, however, would be more split by 2019 election due to the post-2017 election discussions over Brexit within the party. His policy platform, alongside campaigning, helped mobilise Labour's vote to their highest vote share since 1997 despite the internal divisions that had preceded that election campaign. However, Corbyn was, overall, ineffective at managing the Parliamentary Labour Party and some MPs left the party in response to his leadership. He was also ineffective at handling the issue of Brexit following the 2017 election, with the changing position of the party coming across as incoherent and this led to the increased public perception that Corbyn was indecisive which had a negative impact on his personal ratings. The handling of antisemitism was also ineffective with numerous reports noting that more measures should have been put in place to deal with the issue, however he was also met with factional interference by opponents within the party. Finally, in regards to competence, Corbyn was seen an electoral liability, particularly after July 2019 where no polls showed Labour ahead of the Conservatives.

This research has made a significant contribution to academic discussions on leadership models, and the creation of the Partycraft model has filled a research gap by allowing people to measure the effectiveness of opposition leaders, not just leaders of governing parties. There are potential limitations to Partycraft which are similar to critiques noted about Bulpitt's Statecraft model, for example Simon Griffiths' critique about Statecraft, stating that the model has limited means due to four criteria to summarise broad arguments, can also be applied to Partycraft. However, Hayton's rebuttal to Griffith's critique of Statecraft can also be applied here as a pluarity of factors can be discussed within each criterion, allowing for a comprehensive discussion about relevant topics. Establishing a leadership model which can analyse the effectiveness of opposition leaders has utility as opposition leaders can have significant influence over the political direction not just over their own political party, but also the country by holding the government to account, shifting the public narrative on policy discussions, and gaining electoral support i.e. winning millions of votes or gaining more Parliamentary representation which can be influential in events such as a hung Parliament.

The Partycraft model can be used not just to look at Corbyn's leadership but also historic and contemporary opposition leaders. Future research utilising the Partycraft model could include; Nigel Farage's leadership of UKIP including how the party under his leadership won 3.88 million votes in the 2015 general election, and how his leadership shifted the public narrative on Britain's relationship with the European Union; the Roy Jenkins/David Steel leadership of the Social Democratic Party/Liberal Alliance in the 1983 general election and how the alliance took votes away from established parties; and David Cameron's leadership of the Conservative Party in opposition to see how a leader put their party on the path to power. Alongside this, the answer to the substantive questions have provided helpful insights into Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, and this deep analysis of his leadership compliment the growing body of

academic research on British politics and history of the Labour Party. The Partycraft model has used both qualitative and quantitative data to reach these conclusions in each area. This comprehensive analysis of the Corbyn years can be utilised in potential future research relating to discussions over Corbyn's leadership and left wing leadership of political parties in general. The creation of the Partycraft model also provides a helpful tool for future researchers to make significant contributions to the field of political science by adding to existing debates in relation to historic and contemporary leaders, alongside measuring the effectiveness of current and future opposition leaders.

The first line of this thesis noted that Corbyn's leadership will be remembered in the history books. His opponents will want to do what they can to avoid a Corbynite leadership happening again, whilst his supporters can build on some of the successes made during his tenure and learn from mistakes to fight for a country 'for the many, not the few'. Corbyn's reign as leader may be over, but the debates about his leadership may never end.

7 **Bibliography**

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