

Jeremy Corbyn's Surge

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Region: [Europe](#)

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The pollsters only got it partly wrong this time, though the most spectacular prediction cock-up was that on what would happen to British Labour prior to the exit polls. Scotland crept up with a Tory surge, netting 12 seats, and there were scattering and skirmishing victories over the Scottish National Party, which suffered a considerable bruising.

But what mattered here was a return to the two-tiered showdown, the battlefield which saw Labour mount a challenge that recovered electoral ground almost to the tune of 10 percent from the last vote in 2015. At the end of this bloody carnival, the only one left tall and standing was Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn's gains, constituting the greatest vote share for Labour since Attlee in 1945, stimulated a movement to harry what must be regarded as a crippled Tory government in need of friends. While the Conservatives were the ultimate victors, it was so utterly Pyrrhic as to warrant reconsideration of their leadership choices.

After all, such electoral bloodshed had been entirely unnecessary for Theresa May, who ran what has been termed, even by some conservatives, the worst election campaign in living memory.

"The decision to call an election," wrote a smug Rod Liddle, who had been on the money from the start, "was arrogant and complacent – and so was the subsequent campaign." [1]

Having fallen short of a majority by eight seats, May has had to court the Democratic Unionist Party with their 10 seats. Overnight, they have become powerbrokers, the buttressing element of a fragile union. This presents its own problems for May, given the position taken by its leader, Arlene Foster, against a "hard Brexit".

This particular pertains to the border with the Republic of Ireland. "No one wants to see a hard border, Sinn Féin [the opposition party in Northern Ireland] talk about it a lot, but nobody wants a hard border." [2]

There were the fuming figures who still found deep troubles with the Corbyn surge. Extreme views about JC being a friend to Islamic extremism and sympathetic to anti-Semitism did their rounds from the poison pen of such publications as the Tower Magazine. [3] Count him, claimed Toby Young in the Spectator, to "side with Britain's enemies, never allowing his judgment to be clouded by jingoism." [4]

But Corbyn's greatest satisfaction will be had against those who thought his insistence on principle too much of a handicap.

"We are a Labour government in waiting not a protest movement," charged Owen Smith, who failed in an effort to overthrow Corbyn.[5]

Only a flint-styled pragmatism, went the Labour apparatchiks jaded by the New Labour days, would win over the British voter.

"He has stuck doggedly," Young remarked in bile-dripping gest, "to his brand of hard-left politics for more than 50 years."

Writers such as J.K. Rowling, taking time off from writing fiction, decided to pillory Corbyn as a person who would "lead Labour to electoral oblivion. Of that there is no doubt." Figures known for their trashier brand of journalism, not to mention inventiveness on sources (Piers Morgan stand up!), predicted majorities for the Conservatives of between 90 to 100 seats.

Zaid Jilani at The Intercept also took note about predictions on Corbyn's election performance in the US, many of which were not much better. An ill-considered David Axelrod, deemed the master strategist behind President Barack Obama's victories, suggested that British Labour had suffered a mad lapse into "Corbynization".

The party had "sort of disintegrated in the face of their defeat [in 2015] and moved so far left that it's, you know, in a very- in a very frail state."

Labour, having been tossed out off traditional lands in Scotland in the last election, did edge forward, but another surprise on the night, and one that poured cold water on the SNP's Nicola Sturgeon, was the Tory surge in the north. Much of that could be put down to the feet of the charismatic (they do not come often) Ruth Davidson, whose presence outshone that of May's dull steel approach. Brexit's disorienting effects have been considerable.

A stunning figure, and one that must be heartening to those permanently engaged in the task of encouraging those to enroll and vote, was the youth vote. Even the Tories benefited from their participation, though in the main, Corbyn was their man.[6]

May has been wounded, and in a political sense, mortally. This, despite actually obtaining a greater share of the vote for the Conservatives from 2015. She has made herself weak before Europe in imminent Brexit negotiations, and has arguably damaged the prospect of a credible Brexit taking place at all. She has made herself a sitting rich target within the Tories, who had to scramble on election night to restrain opinion and criticism of their leader. (Witness the warnings of Iain Duncan Smith in that regard.)

Her bungling was occasioned by pure hubris, and few, including many in the Labour party, believed that the nemesis would come in the form of Corbyn. But there he is, having not only survived, but emboldened his progressive cause. While across the Atlantic, Trump storms as a violent, nativist option, Corbyn supplies the alternative, an antidote from a progressive core.

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Notes

[1] <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/06/boris-johnson-is-not-the-answer/>

[2]

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-10/uk-election-democratic-unionist-party-dup-brexite-explained/8606954>

[3] <http://www.thetower.org/5054-the-extremist-ties-of-labours-jeremy-corbyn/>

[4] <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/06/all-hail-comrade-corbyn-i-recognise-greatness-when-i-see-it/#>

[5]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/04/watch-live-jeremy-corbyn-goes-head-to-head-with-rival-owen-smith/>

[6] <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/09/corbyn-may-young-voters-labour-surge>

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