

How dishonest PM aims to use incompetent opposition to force through undemocratic No Deal catastrophe

No Deal unpopular? Put it up against Prime Minister Corbyn...

Parliament is against *No Deal* and is forcing the Prime Minister's hand with Brussels. He failed to obstruct parliament. The public also seems to be opposed. At this point, it is difficult to see where Boris Johnson can turn to implement this undemocratic catastrophe of which he is so fond.

Anti-NoDealers cannot celebrate yet though. Johnson still has one potentially lethal weapon in his corner: the ultimate Useful Idiot of our times. Step forward, Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn has, indeed, been the focus of much Brexit-related debate this week, as were the Liberal Democrats the week before. The Lib Dems stole a march on Labour with Hard Remainers with their promise to revoke Article 50. Labour, meanwhile, did not commit to supporting either Leave or Remain in the referendum it will call if it wins a majority at the next election.

The rights and wrongs of both positions are irrelevant. The Lib Dems will not win a majority and neither will Corbyn. The real issue is what Corbyn's lack of appeal – he now has the [largest net-negative rating](#) of any opposition leader in history – means for the possibility that Johnson may win a majority and a pretext for *No Deal*.

Now let's be clear: to the extent that it's possible to tell – given that No Deal is unrecognisable from anything that was presented to the electorate in 2016 – **the electorate is against No Deal**. [Our own poll](#) and [Yougov's](#) both show this in about the same numbers:

- *Oppose or bad thing or unacceptable* in the **high 40's**;
- *Support, or the total of good thing and no difference, or acceptable* in the **mid to high 30's**;
- *Don't know* making the balance.

The strength of public opposition to *No Deal* and the willingness of voters to block any candidate favouring it mean that an election with an explicit promise of *No Deal* may very well backfire against Johnson. Our poll is still the only one to link voting intention explicitly to a Tory promise of *No Deal*, and we put Johnson's Tories on 311 with several downside risks. As we [explain](#), other recent polls projecting double-digit leads and huge majorities were based on Johnson dishonestly riding both *Deal* and *No Deal* horses at the same time.

That said, changing parliament is Johnson's only chance of forcing *No Deal* through. And he thinks he can do it because an election does what any strategist would advise him to do in this situation: don't make it about *No Deal* – conflate it with the question of Johnson vs Corbyn.

Do that, and a curious part of the electorate comes into play: Conservative voters who are opposed to No Deal. In both our and Yougov's poll, they are about a fifth of *2019 intended Conservative voters*.

This is indeed a curious segment: a fifth of the 30-35% of people who intend to vote Conservative - so about 6-7% of the electorate – are against *No Deal* or think it unacceptable. But they will vote for a Conservative government that has made clear that it will pursue *No Deal* if it cannot secure a deal – or in our poll, has hypothetically promised *No Deal*.

Why? These voters will obviously *put up* with *No Deal* if it avoids Prime Minister Corbyn. And that is what Yougov shows: while voters by 49-38 are against *No Deal*, they favour *No Deal* to Prime

Minister Corbyn 48-35, thanks to those “Tories in the middle” along with some help even from intended Labour and Lib Dem voters feeling the same.

This is why Oliver Letwin has recently [cautioned](#) that an election, while it is good at deciding how parliament is constituted, is bad at deciding single issues like Brexit, because a *general* election – clue in the name – inevitably mixes a *specific* issue like Brexit up with the broader question of who voters want to govern the country. Unfortunately, an economically illiterate, Soviet-sympathising national embarrassment leading the main opposition party does muddy the waters somewhat.

Faced with that as an alternative, voters may indeed give Johnson a majority, which he will then pretend constitutes a mandate for *No Deal*.

I used to have a different concern about Corbyn. After his surge in 2017 I worried that he would be the next Trump. A populist extremist takes over a mainstream party, tribal loyalists to the mainstream party dismiss criticisms of his extremism as a mainstream media vendetta against their party. As the extremist leader wins support at the extreme, facts are rendered useless in chipping away at his support in the mainstream. With this combination he can only ever gain in popularity.

I don't have that fear anymore. Now the problem is the opportunity that his *lack* of appeal affords to a dishonest [carpetbagger](#) like Johnson.

If any Conservative anti-NoDealers are reading this and wondering, simply ask yourself how many times you have heard “I'm against No Deal, but I'm more against Corbyn”.

That is how *No Deal* could happen, even when the public is against *No Deal*.

Anything looks better next to Jeremy Corbyn. And that's why an election is exactly the *wrong* way to solve Brexit.