Leftism exhausted: the organisational constraints to ideological change in the British Labour party, 2010-2020

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it). The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party. I declare that my thesis consists of 77,331 words.

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Abstract:

Why are left parties in a state of crisis? Existing explanations tend to explain this outcome through exogenous processes, like de-industrialisation and the expansion of education, that have re-aligned the structure of party competition by reducing demand for left parties. By implication, there is little that left parties can do in response. However, I argue that left parties' historical growth and survival was contingent on their capacity to adapt to exogenous pressures. I synthesise articulation theory with an organisational approach to party politics, which provides me with the conceptual tools to identify a process whereby a party responds to a critical juncture that disarticulates its social bloc through ideological re-orientation. This is contingent on the emergence of new types of actors within a party's power structure who provide new interpretations on the party's social relations. This new internal dynamic must be institutionalised and legitimised across the party organisation. This process updates the party's orientation and provides it with the relevant ideas to articulate a new social bloc. However, I argue that the way in which left parties cartelised in the 1990s creates in-built constraints that are centred on the hegemonic dominance of electoral professional elites, which prevents this process of orientation from unfolding. I apply this argument to the case of the British Labour party in the period 2010-2020. This is an important case as Labour was one of the few parties to attempt an avowed shift from a cartel organisational structure and Third Way orientation. I show that the cartel power structure enabled pre-existing elites to stymie both Ed Miliband's reformist attempt at re-orientation, and Jeremy Corbyn's more radical shift. The thesis is significant as it challenges behaviouralist accounts of left party decline. My findings have implications for our understanding of the place of mainstream parties in contemporary party systems and opens up questions over whether de-cartelisation is possible.

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Chapter 1: Explanations of left party decline: do they bear any responsibility?

"Pasokification" has become a widely used term to describe the dramatic collapse in support for left parties[1] in high-income democracies. The term is derived from the experience of PASOK, Greece's main party of the centre-left, whose vote share collapsed by over 30% at elections held in 2012. Other left parties have suffered similar fates. At the 2022 French Presidential election, the Parti Socialiste's (PS) candidate, Anne Hidalgo, secured just 1.8% of the vote. This is a remarkable collapse when compared with the 34.1% that François Mitterrand had enjoyed in the first round of the 1988 Presidential election and even the 28.63% that François Hollande received in the first round of the 2012 Presidential election. Likewise, in the Netherlands, the Labour Party's (PvDA) vote share collapsed to 5.7% in 2017, the lowest in its history, and it failed to improve on this figure at elections in 2021.

These parties have lost their supporters to parties across the political spectrum. PASOK has, seemingly permanently, been supplanted by their more radical left-wing rival Syriza. In France, the situation is more complex. The PS' lost votes appeared to split in different directions. Younger professionals switched to either the centrist insurgency of Emmanuel Macron or the radical left-winger Jean-Luc Mélenchon; older working class voters either supported Mélenchon or continued a long-term gradual switch to the radical-right by voting for Marine Le Pen (Amable & Palombarini, 2021; Burn-Murdoch et al., 2017). That both Macron and Mélenchon had previously served as Ministers in Socialist governments is a deeper reflection on the inability of the PS to sustain a broad ideological coalition.

[1] In this thesis I refer to 'left parties' as established "left" parties within a party system. These parties can be seen as synonymous with Social Democratic parties and can be contrasted with "radical left" parties that have (re)emerged in high income democracies in the last decade.

Not all left parties have suffered complete Pasokification. In recent years the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Swedish Social Democrats (SAP), the Norwegian Labour Party (A/Ap), the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), the Portuguese Socialist Party and the New Zealand Labour Party have either won the highest vote share in their national party systems or returned as major parties of government. Yet, with the exceptions of the New Zealand Labour Party and the Portuguese Socialist Party, all of these parties have suffered significant electoral declines to the point that they are clearly at their weakest standing since WWII as their most recent vote shares are typically around 20 percentage points below their post-war highs.

In the face of electoral decline and increased multi-faceted competition, left parties have been accused of lacking ideological clarity or conviction. In response to the financial crises of the late 2000s and early 2010s, left parties either implemented austerity policies if they were in government, or provided bi-partisan cover from opposition (Bremer, 2018). In many cases, these parties appeared surprised at their anti-system opponents' capacity to mobilise anti-elite sentiment in various shades of opposition to the consequences of the financial crisis (Hopkin, 2020). Indeed, there is a plausible argument that PASOK and the PS would not have collapsed if not for their leader's implementation of austerity policies in response to the financial crises of the late 2000s. This reveals a broader question, implicit in academia and more direct in political commentary, as to whether these parties are even "left" anymore? (eg. Judt, 2009; Keating & McCrone, 2012).

The electoral and ideological collapse of the left is a puzzle that has motivated substantial research, and it is the overarching question behind this thesis. In this introductory chapter I outline the three broad categories of explanations of this puzzle: socio-structural transformation; increased party competition; and left party responses to the financial crisis. I argue that existing explanations of left party decline are overwhelmingly focused on identifying structural or exogenous causes. They point to the erosion of the working class or the rise of populist parties as reducing demand for left parties. Yet, in doing so, these explanations fail to question the extent to which left parties are responsible for their own demise. In this chapter I seek to contextualise the present wave of

left party decline within their broader historical development. In doing so, I demonstrate that these parties' histories are not characterised by a single-linear process of success followed by decline. Instead, left parties have had to respond to critical junctures that have forced these parties to question and ultimately change their ideologies. By approaching party change as a question of capacity I question why contemporary left parties have failed to engage in significant processes of change?

In this thesis, I develop an organisational approach to the question of left party decline. This allows me to analyse the process through which parties make decisions and I place specific attention on the power dynamics between different types of actors. I develop a conceptual framework that links a party's ideological orientation at a given historical moment to the power dynamics that structure the party organisation. Ergo, for a party to change its ideological orientation in response to exogenous pressures, there must be a concomitant change in its internal power relations. I draw on this framework to identify a path dependency in the way in which the Third Way became the institutionalised ideological orientation within left parties in the 1990s and the lack of party change in the 2010s. The Third Way was embedded through electoral professional elites, who gained an almost hegemonic position within left parties in the 1990s. The process by which this occurred has resulted in two reinforcing organisational constraints to subsequent change: on the one hand, the shift in the function of internal party institutions makes it harder for new types of actors with interests distinct from the electoral professional elites that support the Third Way to emerge and co-ordinate to gain internal influence; on the other hand, electoral professional elites have institutionalised veto authority to resist ideational change. As a result, left parties retain an organisational structure that is ill-placed to respond to the questions and conflicts that emerge from social transformation, which explains why these parties have failed to respond to the sources of their own decline.

1.1: Existing explanations for left party decline

Left party decline has attracted extensive research. Existing explanations can be grouped into three broad categories: socio-structural explanations, which focus on demographic and preference shifts in the electorate; party competition explanations, which focus on the actions of the left's competitors in re-aligning party competition; and ideational explanations, which focus on the policies and ideologies that the left have adopted in response to major events.

Socio-structural explanations

Socio-structural explanations of left party decline point to the structural transformation of high-income democracies, with particular emphasis placed on the inter-related processes of technological transformation, the globalisation of trade and the expansion of education (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Kitschelt, 1994). A significant effect has been the dramatic decline in the size of the manual working class, to the point where it has virtually disappeared in some high-income democracies (Oesch, 2006). It has largely been displaced through a combination of technological innovation and the offshoring of swathes of the manufacturing sector (Im et al., 2019). This is not to say that contemporary high-income democracies do not have a "working class", but that it is broadly composed of different types of workers – cleaners, gig economy workers, and hospitality staff – that do not have the same natural affinity with the left as the manual working class. The loss of the working class is therefore interpreted as a reduction in demand for left parties.

These structural shifts have produced new social divisions. Whereas post-war party systems were generally understood to be divided between industrial workers on the left and educated voters on the right, in the knowledge economy a much greater proportion of the population are highly educated and work in a greater array of professional occupations (Iversen & Soskice, 2019; Oesch, 2013). Occupation remains an important influence on the formation of an individual's political preferences and their vote choice as different professions hold unique 'work

logics', but now age, housing and place are seen to be similarly, if not more, influential on an individual's political behaviour (Oesch, 2006). In this context, Thomas Piketty (2020) has famously described contemporary politics as divided by the 'merchant right' and the 'brahmin left', where wealthy elites vote for the right and highly educated elites vote for the left.

It follows that different social groups have had distinct experiences in the structural transformation towards the knowledge economy, which in turn influences their preference formation. The remnants of the working class is likely to have had a negative experience, in the sense that investment in their local communities has declined; they have lost access to secure employment; and the industries they now work in are less likely to be afforded social respect (Bolet, 2021; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). There is compelling research that shows the negative subjective comparisons that older, male manual workers makes with others in society drives their preferences on economic and cultural issues and their support for radical right parties (Gidron & Hall, 2017, 2020; Rooduijn & Burgoon, 2018). Educated groups do not necessarily enjoy substantial economic security. For instance, younger voters are highly educated but are likely to lack access to the housing markets through which most wealth is accrued (Flynn & Schwartz, 2017; Fuller et al., 2020), however, through their education, occupation and the types of places in which they live, they are more likely to have access to inter-personal social networks that encourage more progressive preferences, particularly on socio-cultural issues (Oesch, 2013).

The different experiences between groups also appear to drive divisions in terms of redistributive preferences. Highly-educated socio-cultural professionals are more likely to seek 'investment' oriented reforms, which would facilitate individuals' participation in the market through reforms that favoured growth in human capital; while the traditional working classes favour 'consumptive' welfare policies, namely the redistributive transfers with which the welfare state was commonly associated (Abou-Chadi & Wagner, 2019; Beramendi et al., 2015; Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015).

The way in which voters have updated their preferences to reflect their experiences of this structural transformation has created a particularly acute problem for left parties. As the working class has declined in size, left parties have been forced to turn towards highly educated middle class groups, yet this group is typically too small to provide an electoral majority (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Karreth et al., 2013; Kitschelt, 1994). At the same time, the process by which the left became the party of the highly educated or the brahmins led to its detachment from what remains of the manual working class (Amable & Darcillon, 2021; Benedetto et al., 2020; Evans & Tilley, 2017; Piketty, 2020). At the same time, the left's problem has been compounded by the re-alignment of party systems, which under the socio-structural approach, is seen to be driven by the way in which voters respond to structural change. As voters have become more secure and, in a concomitant process the middle class has expanded in size and influence, political competition is increasingly oriented around a second order issue dimension (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). This has added a layer of complexity that makes it harder for the left to sustain its support base. Put simply, the preference differences between middle class and working-class voters are too complex to produce the requisite demand for the cross-class electoral coalition that the left requires to maintain relevance.

Party competition

The party competition explanation similarly identifies the structural shift from industrial to knowledge societies as critical to the decline of left parties, but places greater emphasis on the emergence of "challenger parties" in re-aligning party systems. De Vries and Hobolt (2020) conceptualise challenger parties as 'issue entrepreneurs' that identify opportunities amidst the structural changes identified by the socio-structural explanation, and whose actions increase the salience of issues like immigration, the EU and the environment. Challenger parties are critical actors as they re-align party systems by introducing new issue dimensions, which in turn has taken support away from establishment parties, including left parties (Emanuele & Chiaramonte, 2019; De Vries & Hobolt, 2020).

It is the challenger party that translates the structural inequalities that have emerged amidst the knowledge economy into the party system. Under the socio-structural explanation we take for granted that manual working class voters respond to the structural transformation that has left them as the 'losers' by adopting authoritarian preferences (Burgoon et al., 2019; Gidron & Hall, 2017). Yet, in effect, this can be quite puzzling. Wouldn't we expect rationally informed voters to be aware of the economic tenets of their status decline and therefore blame the wealthy rather than immigrants? The party competition explanation acknowledges that manual working class voters might feel like they are 'losers', but argues that far-right challenger parties frame immigration in a way that leads voters to link their experiences and material interests to this specific anxiety (Ivarsflaten, 2008). Likewise, in the aftermath of the financial crises that occurred between 2008-12, the anti-system left has been able to gain ground, particularly in Southern Europe, by emphasising economic justice as part of a more inclusionary populist appeal (Font et al., 2021). In a similar vein, Green parties have existed in party systems for some time, however, only rarely have they gained sufficient influence to become mainstream parties. Nevertheless, their long history has allowed them to 'own' the environmental issue, which in turn enables them to frame this in a way to appeal to educated, progressive middle class voters as climate change increases in salience (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Grant & Tilley, 2019). Hence, central to the party competition explanation is the contention that it is the strategic behaviour of challenger parties that has increased the salience of the second issue dimension, to the point that they have re-aligned the structure of party competition with negative consequences for mainstream parties (Hooghe & Marks, 2018).

Under these conditions, left parties have become cross-pressured. They face competition for their working class supporters from far-right challenger parties; competition for their socio-cultural professionals from Green challenger parties; and competition from the anti-system left for both working class and socio-cultural professional supporters (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). The way in which these challenger parties frame their issues makes it hard for left parties to coherently respond in a way that maintains cross-class support. By contrast, their centre-right establishment

counterparts have been relatively more successful at retaining their supporters despite being similarly cross-pressured (Gidron, 2022). In effect, left parties have been outmanoeuvred by challenger parties in responding to structural transformation and as a result have a much narrower space to exist within re-aligned party systems.

What appears to compound the left's problem is that, under the party competition explanation, they lack the agency of challenger parties. Whereas the socio-structural explanation offers a deterministic take on the left's decline, in that there is simply insufficient demand for left parties to retain their electoral standing, the party competition explanation essentially sees left parties as unable to respond to the strategic behaviour of their challengers. Hooghe and Marks (2018, pp. 118–120) argue that all mainstream parties are 'programmatically sticky' and therefore cannot react to the disruption provoked by the re-aligning effects of challengers. This leaves left parties with few options: they can either accommodate their challengers by adopting similar positions and hope that, in doing so, they mitigate their potential losses; or they can adopt a position that is contrary to the position taken by their challenger. There are mixed findings on the left's success following either strategy in response to both far-right and Green parties (Grant & Tilley, 2019; Hjorth & Larsen, 2020; Krause et al., 2022; Spoon & Klüver, 2020). Nevertheless, the electoral competition explanation does not appear to allow for left parties to have a strategic capacity of their own to introduce new issues or new frames into the party system, this is a function that is exclusively reserved for challenger parties.

Ideational explanations

The ideational explanation of left party decline focuses on how these parties have responded to specific events that have emerged amidst the transition to the knowledge economy. There is a particular emphasis on the way in which left parties responded to the 2007-08 financial crisis and the 2009-12 European sovereign debt crisis. Analysis of voting behaviour in the aftermath of the crises indicates that it had a destabilising effect on party systems, as there were significant declines

in the vote shares of both centre-right and left mainstream parties regardless of whether they were in government or opposition when the crises hit (Hernández & Kriesi, 2016).

The ideational approach explains left party decline through the inability of these parties to coherently respond to the crisis. In the wake of the crisis, governments sought to restore order to financial markets by limiting government debt. In doing so, they prioritised the interests of asset holders over wage-earners (Hopkin & Blyth, 2018, p. 214). In very few cases did the left oppose such policy prescriptions as, where the left was in government it tended to implement austerity measures, and where the left was in opposition it tended to support government austerity (Bremer, 2018). This is puzzling as the remnants of their cross-class voter coalitions were more likely to comprise wage-earners than their centre-right counterparts (Hopkin & Blyth, 2018), meaning they held an electoral incentive to implement alternative policies. Moreover, given their historical commitments to full-employment and their association with the welfare state, it is reasonable to expect that left parties would be the mainstream actors to offer a policy agenda that reflected the interests of these voters. Indeed, it was the inability of establishment parties, most prominently the left, to provide an alternative to austerity and improve the circumstances of wage-earners that provided an opening for anti-system challenger parties (Hopkin, 2020).

One plausible explanation for this is that support for fiscal austerity was broadly consistent with Third Way ideas that had come to underpin left economic programmes in the 1990s. The Third Way emphasised supply-side economics and bought into the social investment paradigm, which in turn underpinned the austerity policies of prominent left parties in Europe (Bremer & McDaniel, 2019). Horn (2021) posits that left parties may have believed that they would be rewarded for implementing these 'tough' policies because of a public consensus that it was necessary, however he shows that while centre-right parties may enjoy some benefit to the implementation of fiscal retrenchment reforms, left parties struggle to gain credit, which in turn leads to long-lasting electoral setbacks. Indeed, there is further evidence that the left's rightward

economic position when income inequality is high, as it was in the aftermath of the crisis, is associated with significant declines in their vote shares (Polacko, 2021).

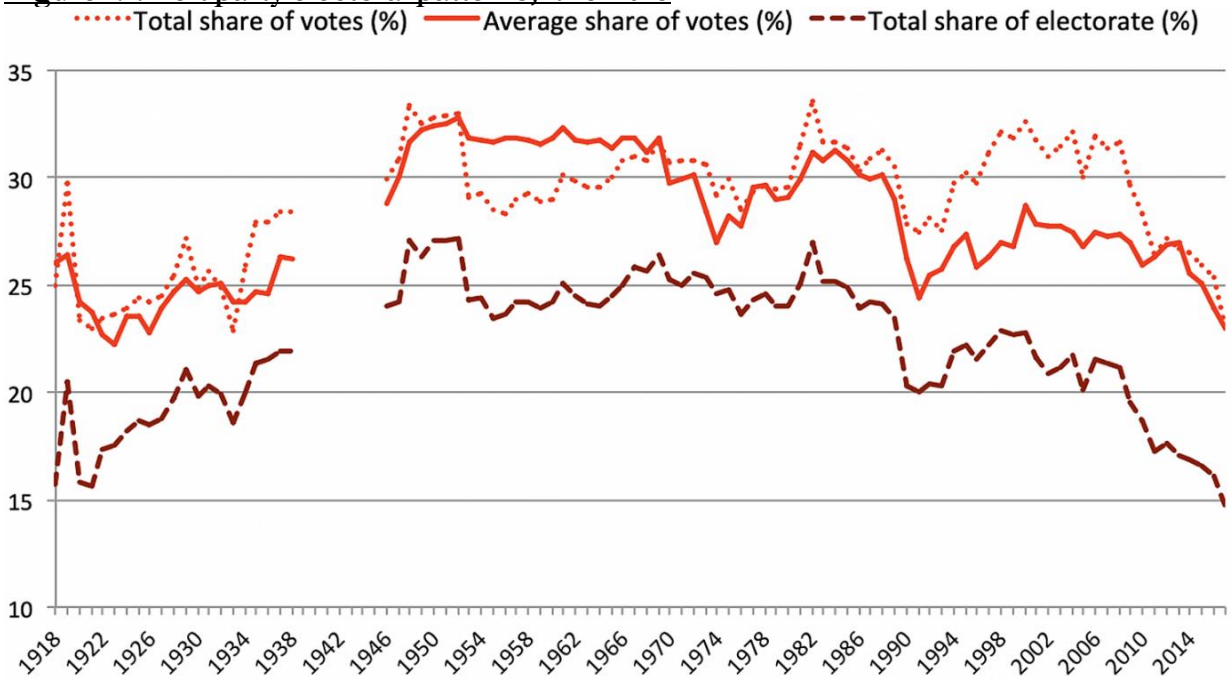
The ideational explanation, then, suggests that the financial crisis represented a significant conjuncture for left parties, and, despite clear normative and electoral pressures, they failed to develop new ideas. It was their particular commitment to austerity policies in the wake of this conjuncture that created the opportunity for challenger parties to emerge and frame its consequences in ways that re-aligned party systems (Hopkin & Blyth, 2018).

1.2 Evaluating existing explanations: how much agency do left parties have?

These three broad explanations are essential in identifying critical factors in the decline of left parties, and while they may not be mutually exclusive, they identify different causal mechanisms that drive party decline. An important point of division that separates these explanations is the extent to which the actions or responsiveness of left parties have contributed to their own decline. Put another way, could the left party response to structural transformation, party competition or the financial crisis have made a difference?

Both the socio-structural and party competition explanations identify factors that are largely beyond the influence of the left party. The socio-structural explanation is particularly deterministic in this regard, as the structural transformation from industrial to knowledge economy has prompted preference changes amongst voters that makes it impossible for left parties to retain their cross-class electoral coalition. The political competition explanation emphasises the role of challenger parties as critical to re-aligning the structure of party systems in such a way that limits the potential space for left parties to function. As such, these explanations only differ as to whether it is voters or opposition parties that have caused the left party's decline; they strongly imply that left parties can do little to prevent their decline. By contrast, the ideational explanation identifies the left party response to the financial crisis, in particular their support for austerity, as a critical driver of their decline.

Figure 1.1: Left party electoral patterns, 1918-2018



Source: (Benedetto et al., 2020)

One could infer from these explanations that left parties had enjoyed unilateral success until the last decade. Yet, as is demonstrated in Figure 1.1, the electoral history of left parties is best described in a series of waves. How can we make sense of the causes of historical fluctuations in support for left parties? As per the mechanisms identified in the dominant socio-structural and party competition explanations, we would expect these to be driven by factors that were exogenous to the party. Both the decline and resurgence of electoral support would have to be tied to external events that either prompt voters to change their preferences and shift their support; or that has re-aligned the structure of support in party systems to increase or decrease the space for left parties. However, an alternative explanation is that the capacity for left parties to adapt to externalities was a critical factor in their development, precisely because endogenous change provided parties with the material and ideational resources to respond to the way in which critical junctures had changed social structures. Put more simply, I argue that the development and progression of left parties was contingent on their capacity to develop new ideas in response to critical junctures, which provided them with the basis to reframe and reconnect with different segments of the electorate (Mudge, 2018).

A general account of left party historical development

The first wave begins prior to WWI, as left parties emerged as 'workers parties' in the late nineteenth century. They were formed, sometimes in collaboration with trade unions, with the express purpose of gaining institutional representation for the millions of newly enfranchised working class voters (Boix, 2011). Many of these workers lacked an overt political identity, so this task required disseminating a class consciousness, often through the organising work of party activists in economic and cultural associations like working men's clubs and liberal worker societies (Hobsbawm, 2012, pp. 124–29). At this early stage, the identities that bound activists and supporters to left parties was typically derived from an orthodox Marxist interpretation of socialism that was 'centred on the polarising and wealth-concentrating effects of capitalism, the inevitability of class struggle, the ownership of the means of production, and the question of a socialist future' (Mudge, 2018, p. 45). This formed the basis for the first wave of left electoral growth, which Figure 1 shows occurred in the period between the end of WWI and the late 1930s and continued after WWII. However as Przeworski (1980) argues, the working classes were either too small or internally divided due to religious affiliations for left parties to secure electoral majorities and to win government in their own right. This may explain why their total share of the electorate appears to be capped below 25% during the first wave of their development.

The end of the first wave was precipitated by the Great Depression, which devastated the working classes. The historical materialism that was at the heart of the socialist ideology that had propelled the left's rise did not allow the parties to advocate for short-term measures that may have alleviated some of their core supporters' distress (Berman, 2006; Mudge, 2018). At the same time, and partly as a consequence of this ideological approach, left parties faced increase electoral competition from, in varying contexts, Fascist and Communist parties. In effect, left parties' dogma prevented them from responding to the material impact of the crisis, which in turn reduced electoral demand for the parties and created space for these challengers. Eventually, left parties did shift their approach towards a more reformist agenda, which enabled them to advocate for

causes and policies that were in the short-term interests of many of their supporters (Berman, 2006). In doing so, left parties also committed to a parliamentary, as opposed to a revolutionary, route to socialism (Przeworski, 1980).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, this reformist ideological orientation, which became tied to Keynesian demand-management in macroeconomic policy, provided the basis for left parties to expand their electoral coalition. This underpinned the second wave of the left's development, occurring largely between 1945 and the 1970s, where left parties captured an unprecedented share of the electorate as they supplemented their core working class constituency with substantial support from middle class groups, in particular public sector workers and socio-cultural professionals (Benedetto et al., 2020; Przeworski & Sprague, 1986). This coalition was bound together through policy commitments that were derived from a more technocratic approach to the economy than the socialist ideology that had underpinned the left's first wave of development. The expansion of the welfare states allowed these parties to strongly commit to full employment and social insurance, and thereby speak to the interests of their core working-class supporters while also providing for the expanding group of public sector employees (Hancké & Vlandas, 2021; Mudge, 2018, p. 53). The success of this strategy enabled left parties to become dominant actors in post-war party systems, and their electoral success contributed to the advance of the welfare state, labour regulations and national education programmes.

The end of the second wave was more protracted than the first, which as reflected in Figure 1.1, takes place between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. Stagflation created an ideational crisis for the left's commitment to full employment, which had underpinned its post-war electoral coalition (Hay, 1996; Mudge, 2018). Equally, Przeworski and Sprague (1986) argue that welfare commitments facilitated increases in social mobility, which alongside the rise of mass media, helped to erode class boundaries and weaken class-based appeals that tied working class voters to the left. Likewise, Hancke and Vlandas (2021) argue that from the 1970s onwards, the increased affluence afforded to the majority of left voters shifted from commitments to full employment to

the protection of asset values. Inglehart (1977) argues that this period of relative economic security provided the space for new social movements to emerge that increased the salience of non-class based or postmaterialist identities. Left parties were better placed to incorporate these groups' demands into their electoral coalitions but there remained scope for tension with the interests of more traditional materialist working-class voters. Hence, while stagflation may not have produced as obvious a structural rupture as the Great Depression, it was clearly a culmination of changes in the social structure of society and it reduced demand amongst increasingly affluent social groups for the policies that the left had enacted in the post-war period.

The left response to this was the "Third Way", which can be understood as an attempt to position the state as market-supporting in order to facilitate individual aspiration (Blair & Schroeder, 1998; Giddens, 1998). In an economic sense, this involved an emphasis and celebration of individual and business entrepreneurialism; socio-economic problems would not be addressed directly through public spending and welfare, but instead through regulation and improvements in human capital (Hall, 2002; Mudge, 2011, pp. 350–3). At the same time, Third Way left parties also sought to unite their disparate constituencies by depoliticising contentious economic issues and increasing the salience of 'moral issues' around civil liberties and crime (Burnham, 2001; Hall, 2002). While the third wave of left development never reached the heights of the second wave, this ideological response did provide the basis for these parties to stabilise their electoral position across the 1990s and into the 2000s. This was largely achieved through an expansion of support amongst middle class voters, as the working class declined in size as a result of the de-industrialisation that was occurring in many high-income democracies (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Kitschelt, 1994).

The socio-structural and party competition explanations share an understanding that left parties' historical success was underpinned by a cross-class coalition (Kitschelt, 1994). It is either structural shifts, the rise of challenger parties or a combination of these factors that has broken apart this social bloc. As the above historical overview suggests, each wave of left party

development occurred in the aftermath of a crisis that involved, to varying degrees, changes in party competition and social structure. However, rather than these changes leading to declines of a similar scale to the contemporary period, the left enjoyed a resurgence. The above overview suggests that this resurgence was driven by left party responsiveness rather than exogenous factors. Indeed, each of the crises or critical junctures aligns with major periods of left party programmatic re-invention (Mudge, 2018). Left parties shifted their programmes, adopted new mobilisation strategies, and developed new ideas to adapt to the new political realities that had emerged out of these critical junctures. However, it was not the party as a unitary actor that was making the decision to change essential facets of its organisation. In any party, decisions over the party programme, the development ideas and the allocation of resources are the subject of debates and internal party conflict between different types of actors (Mudge, 2018; Ziblatt, 2017). Thus, endogenous factors are as relevant to party development as exogenous factors.

Does party change matter to party decline?

By placing our understanding of left party development in a deeper historical context, we can reframe the motivating puzzle of contemporary left party decline. While exogenous factors around socio-structural change and increased party competition have made it significantly harder for left parties, we must analyse their responsiveness. Historically, left parties have responded to external pressures by adapting their ideologies and strategies, and ultimately their organisations. Yet, when faced with a similar crisis, contemporary parties have been resistant to change. Why?

By the end of the twentieth century, left parties were broadly considered to be dominant actors within their party systems and therefore motivated by office-seeking goals (Helboe Pedersen, 2012). The decline in size of the working class, the fragmentation of the middle class and the emergence of viable challengers have made it harder for left parties to attain office, which should act as a pressure for parties to change so that they are better placed to achieve their goals (Harmel & Janda, 1994). Yet, as is identified in the ideational explanation – these parties have

broadly retained a program and ideological orientation that is similar to that which was constructed in the 1990s (Bremer & McDaniel, 2019). This has proved wholly ineffective in responding to the way in which the financial crises accentuated the long-term inequalities that have emerged out of structural changes associated with de-industrialisation. Moreover, left parties' commitment to this ideology creates openings for anti-system challenger parties (Hopkin, 2020). This is a compelling explanation, and yet when placed within the broader historical development of left parties that did engage in ideational re-invention, we are left to question why they are seemingly incapable of undergoing such change in the contemporary period? Either the external environment makes such a change impossible and therefore irrelevant, or there are endogenous factors that act as constraints on party change. Analysing this second possibility is a major contribution of my thesis.

1.3 What's the point of a party?

If left parties' capacity for change is critical to their historical development and their contemporary decline, we need to specify what it is that a party changes when confronted by a critical juncture. Equally, it is important to question how a party changes? The various explanations of left party decline imply distinct conceptual understandings of what parties actually do within party systems. An essential point of division between these explanations is the extent to which party change is seen to be driven purely by exogenous factors.

Reflective parties

The dominant conception of political parties is tied to the Downsian view that parties are 'reflective' actors (eg. Fieldhouse et al., 2021). At its core, this approach understands party systems to be organised around the preferences of individual voters. Parties are exclusively guided by office-seeking goals in the sense that they 'do not seek to gain office in order to carry out certain preconceived policies or to serve any particular interest groups; rather they formulate policies and service interest groups in order to gain office' (Downs, 1957, p. 137). On this view, rather than influencing preference formation, the central function of parties is to mirror the way in which

voters shift their preferences in response to changes in society. Parties will only adopt a policy if it will reflect the preferences of an electoral majority, rather than based on a pre-conceived ideological agenda. Likewise, parties will only change policies if voters update their preferences. This attributes a very narrow socio-political function to political parties, as their scope for action is limited to identifying optimal positions on issue dimensions over which they have little influence.

This reflective approach to party behaviour underpins the socio-structural explanation of contemporary left decline. In effect, the structural processes associated with the transition to the knowledge economy have made electorates more complex, as indicated by the increased preference heterogeneity within the left voter coalition on a range of issue dimensions (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Kitschelt, 1994; Rueda, 2006). Under the reflective approach, we would expect left parties to change their programmes and to adopt policies that appeal to the widest range of potential supporters. Obviously, preference complexity complicates this capacity and the specific policy approach is likely to vary according to the institutional constraints of the electoral system in their national party system (Iversen & Soskice, 2006). In proportional systems, where voters will be presented with a greater range of potential parties, left parties are more likely to position their programmes to appeal to socio-structural professionals; in majoritarian systems, institutional constraints that limit the emergence of new parties provide a modicum of stability, which means left parties could appeal to a wider number of actors (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015). Regardless, the logic of the reflective approach does expect change in the party programme.

Parties as social organisers

An alternative conceptual approach to the function of political parties is that they organise disparate social groups into coherent political cleavages. According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 5), parties translate latent social conflicts into the party system through a number of different functions: an 'expressive function', where parties 'develop a rhetoric for the translation of contrasts in the social and the cultural structure into demands and pressures for action or inaction'; and 'instrumental and representative functions' that enable parties to 'force the spokesman for the

many contrasting interests and outlooks to strike bargains, to stagger demands, and to aggregate pressures.' By combining these functions parties mould the multiple and, often, conflicting grievances of disparate constituencies into a coherent cleavage.

In a similar vein, in describing politics as 'the socialisation of conflict', Schattschneider (1960, p. 38) argued that a wide range of explicit or latent conflicts could potentially structure a party system, but parties, rather than voters, select which conflict comes to the fore. Party competition is then a 'conflict of conflicts', in which parties seek to ensure that certain conflicts are more prominent than others. Parties do this by mobilising popular support around a given issue, and as they draw in a greater proportion of the masses, this conflict will become socialised and institutionalised within the party system (Mair, 1997, p. 951). In this way, instead of parties responding to individuals' interpretation of social change, as is assumed by the reflective approach, both Schattschneider and Lipset and Rokkan outline a process where parties mobilise voters by ensuring that they identify in prescribed ways with certain issues.

But it is important to note that both Lipset and Rokkan and Schattschneider sought to explain how party systems had become stabilised overtime, rather than how these systems change. This was particularly the case for Lipset & Rokkan whose work traced the differences in national party systems to the specific sequencing of national and industrial revolutions. They famously noted that mid-twentieth century party systems were 'frozen around the cleavages that had become prominent with the expansion of voting rights to universal suffrage, as there were fewer and fewer voters through which new issues could become salient (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967, p. 60). Schattschneider (1960, p. 102) broadly agrees, as he argued that once parties have expanded the scope of a conflict it develops an institutionalised inertia of its own that makes it hard for challenger parties to introduce new conflicts. In this sense, the functional and constructive role that both Lipset and Rokkan and Schattschneider attribute to parties is more significant in the formation of party systems than it is in their continuation. Neither theory provides an account of

how party systems change, nor do they identify how the expressive, instrumental and representative functions of parties develop once cleavages have been established and stabilised.

This identification of different party functions chimes with the logic of the challenger party approach and the party competition explanation of left decline. Under this theory, party systems have "defrosted", largely through the entrepreneurial behaviour of challenger parties (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020).[2] Hooghe and Marks (2018, pp. 112–3) argue that mainstream parties, including those on the left, are too 'programmatically sticky' to respond to the re-alignment provoked by challenger parties. In this sense, parties should respond as predicted by the reflective approach, and yet they are constrained by their institutionalised position within party systems, which squares with the logic of freezing per both Lipset and Rokkan and Schattschneider. The only way that "frozen" party systems re-align is through the introduction of new issues dimensions, which is contingent on the actions of challenger parties.

Parties as articulators

Whereas the previous approaches, at least in their contemporary form, conceive of parties as being limited in their broader socio-political function, articulation theory identifies parties as the critical actors in ordering society. Articulation theory is rooted in Gramsci's (1921) contention that 'the masses don't exist politically, if they are not framed in political parties' as its proponents argue that no 'class, religious community [or] ethnic group… has an internal self-reproducing logic that would automatically bind it's so-called members together' (De Leon et al., 2015, p. 26). Instead, parties articulate this logic by '*integrating disparate interests and identities into coherent socio-political blocs*' (De Leon et al., 2009, p. 2 emphasis in the original).[3]

[2] The entrepreneurial behaviour of challenger parties is intuitively similar to the expressive and instrumental functions as outlined by Lipset and Rokkan.

[3] Articulation theory is similar to concepts developed in political economy. For instance, Amable and Palombarini (2021, p. 85) outline a similar logic: 'a social bloc is always the result of action by political forces. They propose a set of economic and structural policies appropriate to satisfying different social groups. The formation, and indeed the rupturing, of a bloc cannot be analysed independently of the political strategies linked to the blocs in question.'

There is an inherent similarity between articulation theory and Lipset & Rokkan's cleavage theory in that both identify a constitutive role for political parties through the dissemination of political ideas. In some ways, the difference may seem marginal, yet the modern adaptations of cleavage theory has ultimately led to quite a different conception of what a cleavage is and to what extent parties remain involved in their construction. Recent applications of cleavage theory define a cleavage as an aggregate of different types of individual voters that share a political preference (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Rovny & Whitefield, 2019). A reliance on survey-based research has placed an emphasis on methodological individualism front and centre, where voter responsiveness is paramount. As a result, the range of behaviours through which a party can seek to exert influence is effectively limited to that which is tracked by either the Chapel Hill Expert Survey or the Comparative Manifesto Project, which in effect is the way in which a party shifts their policy. As a result, for contemporary political science, the expressive, instrumental and representative party functions that were critical to Lipset & Rokkan (1967) have effectively been superseded by the reflective function.

The development of cleavage theory is representative of the behavioural turn in political science, whereas articulation theory is rooted in sociology. Rather than cleavages, parties construct social blocs, which are comprised of groups that can be understood in electoral terms, in the form of groups that share similar demographic characteristics, and in terms of interest groups such as small-business owners or a religious association. The point is that parties provide the relevant ideas and identities through which either of these types of groups make sense of the world. As Amable and Palombarini (2021, p. 96) argue, parties 'define the terrain of the 'possible' and of the 'reasonable' – constraints that individuals and social groups will gradually integrate into the expression of their expectations.' Successful articulation occurs when, through party action, groups identify, for instance, as workers and therefore attach specific ideas and meanings to this identity, such as a specific class consciousness or policy preferences (De Leon et al., 2015). The process of ideological dissemination and political mobilisation that is inherent to articulation is difficult to

capture through an exclusive reliance on surveys. As such, it offers a more complex, yet richer description of party behaviour.

Whereas the reflective approach identifies a rather fluid process where electorates change at the whims of voters, articulation theory argues that blocs are held together through the viability of the ideas and identities provided by parties. The flipside of this, is that a social bloc is disarticulated 'when there is a deterioration in the ideological linkages between parties and their social base' (De Leon et al., 2015, p. 3). This is most likely to occur in response to critical junctures like structural transformations, economic transitions, war and recession. In effect, events become critical junctures when they create a political crisis, when parties lack a strategy 'to guarantee the viability of a dominant social bloc within the existing institutional framework' (Amable & Palombarini, 2021, pp. 11–12). In response to a critical juncture that disarticulates its social bloc, a party must develop a new ideational strategy to (re)articulate a social bloc, which requires the construction of new ideas and identities, which in turn must be institutionalised (De Leon et al., 2015, p. 29).

This points to a fundamentally different understanding of what a party must change. Under the modern incarnation of cleavage theory, a party updates its programme to strategically respond to the effects of structural change on the electorate. Under articulation theory, where a critical juncture has a disarticulating effect, a party must not only undergo a process of ideological re-invention in order to develop new ideas and identities that are capable of describing the new reality that its supporters experience, but also develop new forms of ideological dissemination. This implies a more fundamental process of change that determines the multi-faceted ways through which a party connects with different types of groups in society.

I argue that articulation theory offers the more convincing theoretical explanation of party change. As has been identified in previous sections, a clear limitation of existing explanations of left party decline is that they fail to fully contextualise the present period within the broader process of party development where, historically, structural processes and increased party competition

have threatened left parties' electoral position. In many ways, this is because these approaches are more attenuated to the stasis and continuity of parties and party systems, rather than the way in which these organisations change. Articulation theory provides a better conceptual link between the development of new political ideas and the mobilisation of different constituencies. Articulation theory therefore offers a convincing conceptual approach to make sense of the various fluctuations in left parties' success over the twentieth century and their more protracted decline in the twenty-first. In the twentieth century, parties responded to critical junctures through the development of new political ideas, which provided the basis for a new articulation project. In the twenty-first century, these parties have been unable to respond to a critical juncture. This means that, while articulation theory offers a broader and more active theory of party change than reflective approaches, we are still left with the potential pitfall as to a failure to explain the dynamics behind the contemporary lack of change.

To overcome this, we need to identify what enables a party to articulate at one point in time, but not at another. De Leon et al. (2015, pp. 4–5) argue that parties can be categorised as either 'integral party', that hold the capacity to articulate, and 'traditional parties' that lack this capacity. The criteria for a party to be coded as an integral party are that it must have 'different capacities for realising their transformational goals'; and 'different orientations to transformational questions' (De Leon et al., 2015, pp. 4–5). Yet these criteria are vague, which leaves articulation theory potentially open to charges of tautology. In helping to overcome such criticism, Eidlin (2016, p. 495) proposes a 'modified articulation model' whereby the prior existence of 'identities, economic relations and institutional arrangements' provide a constraint on the new ideas and identities that a given party can articulate. For example, in Eidlin's study of why a Labor party failed to emerge in the United States, he shows that in the period of the New Deal, the Democrats' incorporated key social groups into their cleavage thus denying the space for a potential Labour party. The Democrats employed policy and discourse to reframe and redefine farmer and labour groupings, but their capacity to do this was constrained by the distinct way in which these

groupings had defined themselves prior to their engagement with the Democratic party in the New Deal period. This is an important modification of articulation theory, as it demonstrates that historical articulation projects will continue to influence a party's capacity to articulate in the future.

However, this is still identified as a problem that is exogenous to political parties. Clearly, exogenous constraints can exist and are likely to influence the variation in a party's capacity for articulation, however the original criteria that emphasise 'capacities' and 'orientation' suggest features that are endogenous to a party (De Leon et al., 2015, pp. 4–5). More fundamentally, these criteria emphasise transformation, in that an 'integral' party that is capable of articulation must simultaneously possess the ideational resources to interpret and respond to the way in which a critical juncture has radically shifted the lived reality for the vast majority of the party's potential supporter groups; while also the material resources to act on these new interpretations through the dissemination of ideas in order to mobilise support and, ultimately, re-articulate a new social bloc.

To further emphasise this point, if there is a rupture in the social structure that breaks the ideological bonds between a party and its social blocs, a party will not be able to engage in (re)articulation if it cannot provide answers to the major questions that emerge from a rupture in the social structure. That is to say, a party must change its underpinning ideological orientation for if it cannot interpret newly emergent social conflicts, how can it articulate them into a social bloc? Presumably then, it is ideology that constitute a party's orientation to transformational questions. Berman (2006, p. 11) identifies parties as 'carriers' of ideologies, where they act as the vehicle for actors to develop and diffuse political projects to a mass audience. Articulation is effectively describing what parties *do* with ideas; it identifies the practical way in which they use ideas to mobilise groups.

A party's orientation to social structure is therefore critical to the outcome of its attempt at articulation. This is a key feature of what a party must change in response to a critical juncture.

We can envisage a scenario in which at time *t,* a critical juncture occurs and, in response, a party successfully articulates a social bloc into being. As this social bloc becomes embedded, and the ideas that were inherent to its success also become institutionalised within broader society, the party no longer needs to retain its "integral" status and instead becomes a "traditional" party. However, at time *t+1*, another critical juncture occurs that disarticulates the social bloc that was constructed at time *t*. To respond, the party must shift back to once again become an "integral" party. But how does a party change between integral and traditional forms?

While Eidlin (2016) is correct to establish that the way in which the previous articulation was embedded and institutionalised in broader society will act as an exogenous constraint on this process of re-articulation, this does not acknowledge the process that a party must undergo to shift its own ideological orientation. Presumably if ideas have become institutionalised within broader society, they have also become institutionalised within the party. To return to an "integral" party that is capable of articulation, a party must therefore overcome both internal and external constraints. In this thesis, I argue that this implies an organisational dimension that is yet undertheorised within articulation theory and party politics more broadly. In effect, the way in which previously popular ideas were institutionalised within a party can, in the future, act as a constraint when those ideas no longer ring true within an external context. This can therefore offer a deeper explanation as to why when the financial crises disarticulated the social blocs that left parties had constructed through the Third Way, these parties maintained an ideological orientation that lacked a proper connection to the way in which its potential supporters were experiencing change. In effect, it is the party organisation that permits or impedes the necessary ideological change. To make this argument, I develop an organisational perspective on party change in order to identify the way in which prevailing ideas become embedded within a party's structure and can constrain or enable a party's ability to shift orientations and therefore re-articulate a social bloc in response to a critical juncture.

1.4: The organisational underpinnings of articulation

Articulation theory can be differentiated from the behaviouralist approaches personified in the socio-structural and party competition explanations because it assumes that the substance of what parties say and do has sociological and electoral consequences. Existing research within articulation theory has established that when a party is confronted with a critical juncture that disarticulates its social bloc, it must change its ideological orientation to enact transformational answers to the questions that the crisis provokes. In this thesis, I argue that a party's orientation is determined by its organisational structure. More specifically, I argue that in order to change its ideological orientation a party must change its organisational structure.

A dominant feature of most political party research, in particular behaviouralist approaches, is that parties are conceptualised as a unitary actor. It is assumed that a party is an actor that is capable of determining its interests and responding by changing its programme. Yet, in reality, a party is not a unitary actor, but is instead comprised of multiple actors that hold diverging interests and preferences as to how a party should behave (Ziblatt, 2017). I argue that the ideas that a party develops and the strategies that it employs to engage with different types of constituencies will depend on the interests of the specific types of actors that hold power within the organisation. Following this logic, I argue that an orientation will reflect the composition of the party's dominant coalition, that is the types of actors that share power within the party structure through control of 'zones of uncertainty' – the institutions and resources through which the party functions (Panebianco, 1988). For a party to change its ideological orientation, there must be a concomitant change in the composition of its dominant coalition. This is likely to be a tumultuous process as the dis-articulating effects of the critical juncture reach inside the party. Yet, for a new orientation to be coherent, the recomposed dominant coalition must enjoy internal stability and recognition to develop and embed new ideas, and to (re)construct the required institutions to build an articulation project around this new orientation. This conceptual approach is outlined in greater detail in the next chapter.

On this basis of this approach, I argue that the prevailing organisational structure of left parties prevents their re-orientation in the face of the present critical juncture. I point to the process through which left parties re-oriented in the 1980s and 1990s, when it articulated a social bloc oriented around the middle classes and business interests. This social bloc was ideologically articulated through perceptions of competency that would not hold back these groups' aspiration. This articulation was contingent on an electoral professional dominant coalition, in which parties functioned with an organisation that was centralised around high-profile politicians and the policy and communications experts that they appointed. The actors in this dominant coalition were integrated into the state and professional social networks (Panebianco 1988, 267). This proved effective in orienting the party to the experiences of middle class and business interest groups that were enjoying the fruits of the economic growth associated with de-industrialisation and globalisation. Moreover, this dominant coalition refashioned party institutions to equip themselves with tools like polling, media spin and policy delegation that underpinned the articulation of the Third Way.

Achieving this re-orientation was contingent on electoral professional actors diminishing the internal influence of trade union leaders and party activists, whose relations with elements of the parties' more traditional social bloc inhibited this re-orientation. However, I argue that the long-term consequences of this party re-organisation has prevented their further re-orientation in the wake of the various crises that have rocked party systems in the 2010s. After constructing cartel party systems, left parties lacked the policy tools to actually respond to the economic crises, which in turn shattered the economic competency that was so pivotal to the articulation of their social bloc. In this way, the Third Way provided a poor ideological framework for these parties to deploy in responding to the disarticulation of their social bloc (Bremer, 2018; Horn, 2021).

Such a critical juncture should have provoked re-orientation. This could have included drawing on the interpretations of actors whose social relations enabled them a fresher perspective and closer connection to the social conflicts that the various crises signified. However, because of

the way in which electoral professionals had institutionalised their grip over party zones of uncertainty, it has proved exceedingly difficult for new actors to (re)emerge and gain influence. Because electoral professional elites enjoy a hegemonic position, internal accountability rests in the parliamentary face of the party, which limits the extent to which new types of actors can emerge to shift the composition of the dominant coalition. This means that any efforts for re-orientation must begin with dissident elements of the parliamentary party, whose success is contingent on either the hegemonic elites voluntarily reducing their power or by bringing in new types of actors institutionalising a new accountability structure. On this basis, I argue that left parties suffer decline because their organisational structures prevent them from re-orienting themselves to the sources of emergent social conflicts, which constrains them from developing the ideas necessary to articulate a new social bloc. This argument will be outlined further in the next chapter.

1.5: The case of British Labour, the left party that attempted re-orientation

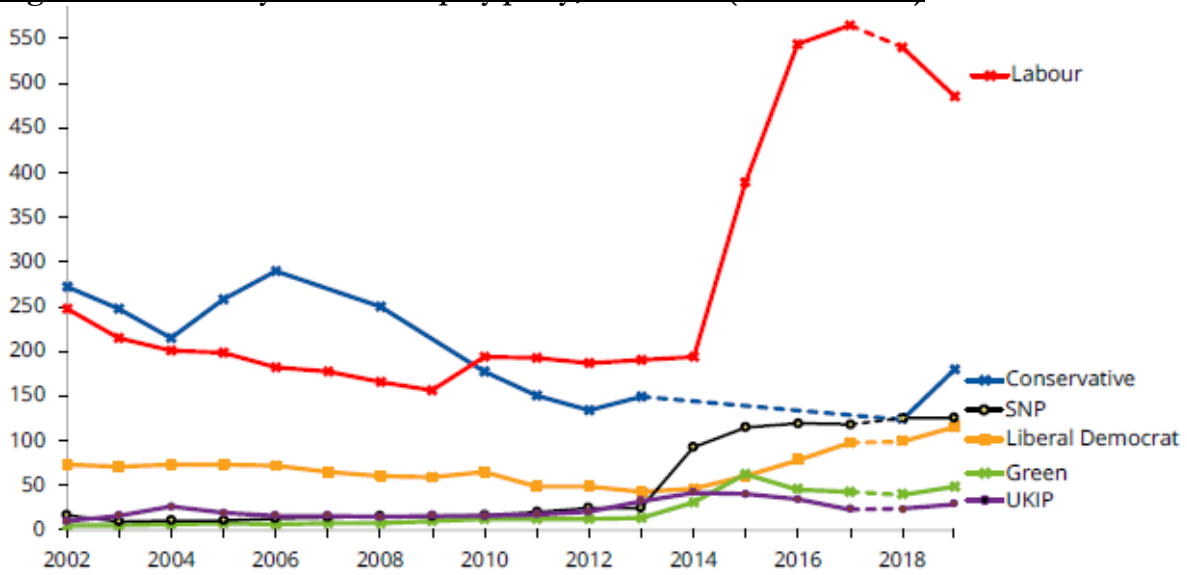
In this introduction I have outlined the dominant explanations of left party decline. One way of synthesising these explanations is to point to a critical juncture that has emerged from the socio-economic effects of the structural transformation associated with the rise of the knowledge economy, which were accentuated by the financial crisis. This critical juncture has disarticulated the social bloc that had underpinned the success of most left parties in the late 20th century. In response, left parties have been unwilling or incapable of developing new ideas and strategies to re-articulate a social bloc and sustain their standing within party systems. In this introductory chapter, I have identified this incapacity as a puzzle in and of itself: to identify why left parties are unable to re-articulate a social bloc, we need to understand why left parties have failed to change in response to clear exogenous pressures. Existing explanations that approach party politics through stasis and continuity do not provide answers to this question.

Across high-income democracies there is one left party that has clearly attempted to change its organisational structure in order to instil new ideas and mobilisation strategies and, ultimately, to re-articulate a new social bloc: the British Labour party. At the 2015 General Election, Labour

recorded its lowest seat share since 1983 and its second lowest since 1935. In the subsequent leadership election, Jeremy Corbyn, a back-bencher known more for his association with social movements like Stop the War! than the Labour party struggled to secure the sufficient nominations to gain a position on the ballot. When he did he was given 100-1 odds of winning the election. Three months later Corbyn was elected leader with 59.5% of the vote. As demonstrated in Figure 1.2, Corbyn's leadership prompted hundreds of thousands of people to join the Labour party. As part of this dynamic, Corbyn promised a 'democratic revolution' that would change Labour's organisational structure away from a cartelised party and towards some sort of neo-mass party: 'it's about being open to the people we seek to represent; giving them a voice through our organisation and policy-making and drawing members into political action. Why not give… our grassroots members and supporters a real say? (Jeremy Corbyn quoted in Wintour, 2015b). Less than two years later, at the 2017 General Election, Corbyn's Labour party would increase its vote share by 9.6% and increase its seat share for the first time since 1997. This election result does appear to have involved the articulation of a social bloc that was primarily comprised of middle class voters though with increased support from younger age cohorts and sufficient numbers of manual working class voters in Northern constituencies (Mellon et al., 2018).

Yet despite this promise, Corbyn's leadership would end in failure. Electorally, at the 2019 General Election, Labour recorded a vote share of just 32.6%, yet its seat share was its worst since 1935. It suffered a loss of "Red Wall" constituencies, the traditionally working class constituencies that stretched across Northern England, the Midlands and parts of Wales, which was broadly interpreted as an inability for "Corbynism" to articulate the experiences of "traditional" Labour voters . At the same time, organisationally, Corbyn failed to fundamentally change the Labour party's organisational structure so that his intended re-orientation would be embedded within the party structure (Bassett, 2020).

Figure 1.2: UK Party membership by party, 2002-2019 (in thousands)



Source: UK House of Commons Library

This was a tumultuous time in both Labour and UK politics. Yet there has been little attempt from political science to take Corbyn's leadership seriously. Within months of Corbyn's election as party leader, one well-respected political scientist published a paper entitled "the loser takes it all: Labour and Jeremy Corbyn" (Bale, 2016). A year later, months prior to Corbyn's relative success at the 2017 General Election, a long-time scholar of the Labour party stated 'Corbyn already looks like being one of the most ineffective and unpopular opposition leaders in the post-war era' (Quinn, 2017). This is indicative of a broader difficulty that political science has had at reflecting on what Corbyn and Corbynism mean for the Labour party, British politics and for left parties more properly. The most notable example of this is interpretations of the membership surge that helped Corbyn win successive leadership elections and, in the process, bucked the decades long trend of cross-national membership erosion to make Labour the biggest party in Western Europe. . A prominent party historian dismissed new members as vanguardist Trotskyists (Fielding, 2018). While an important multi-party research project on the nature of party membership in the UK found that the new members that joined as part of the Corbyn surge were 'plainly not as keen to get stuck in' (Poletti et al., 2016), implying that in the age of social media and the digital transformation of politics that attending branch meetings or canvassing was the

only utility that a party member could hold. This appears a missed opportunity to explore questions around what modern party membership means to different types of members and, even more pertinently, why such a massive increase in party membership failed to overwhelmingly tip the balance of power within the Labour party.

This is not to say that any empirical analysis of Corbyn or Corbynism must end in a glowing endorsement. Despite the relative success of 2017, in both electoral and organisational terms, Corbyn's leadership was a failure. Yet rather than pre-prescribing the causes of this failure, it is worth questioning why he failed. As Maiguashca & Dean (2020, p. 65) argue 'while we do not expect British political scientists to be more positive about Corbyn, we do think they need to be more curious about and rigorous in their engagement with the politics that surrounds him so that when they do decide to label him a "populist" or describe his supporters as 'utterly deluded' they at least have some evidence based reasons to do so.'

To this end, I heed Maiguashca & Dean's (2018) call to take Corbynism seriously. I do this by placing Corbyn as the more radical of two attempts to change the party in response to the critical juncture presented by the effects of the critical juncture that the party faced in the late 2000s, where the long-term erosion of the working class, the financial crisis' impact on middle class insecurity, and the growth of nationalist parties in England and Scotland presented a clear threat to the Labour party's electoral position. This critical juncture presented Labour with a clear need to change, to develop new political ideas that were more relevant to the new political moment and to re-articulate a new social bloc. I begin my analysis with Ed Miliband's more reformist and ultimately timid attempt at re-orientation. This is important as the two attempts at party change are related. The sources of Miliband's failure provided the space for Corbyn's emergence. By approaching Miliband as different sides of the same coin, we can explore the limits to contemporary party change in more detail. While the agenda of the different leaders were different, the actors and institutional environment in which they were operating were broadly the same. It appears that the internal constraints not only opposed Corbyn's radical attempt at party change,

but Miliband's softer and more reformist approach. Ultimately, understanding why Labour failed to change despite repeated attempts to do so offers us an important case study for the organisational constraints on left parties more broadly.

1.6 Thesis outline

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows:

In Chapter 2, I develop an organisational conceptual framework to apply to the puzzle of contemporary left party decline and capacity for change. In the wake of a critical juncture, a party's capacity for articulation is contingent on its capacity to change its ideological orientation, which provides it with the basis to describe the structural changes in society. I draw on Panebianco's (1988) concept of the dominant coalition to theorise that such organisational changes are contingent on a change in the composition of the types of actors that hold power within the party; and the institutionalisation of this new power dynamic. I then provide an overview of the recent party politics literature, with particular attention placed on Katz & Mair's (1995; 2009) cartel party, to argue that the way in which the Third Way ideological orientation was institutionalised within left parties has prevented organisational change in the face of the most recent critical juncture that the left has faced in the aftermath of the financial crisis. The necessary changes in the types of actors in the party's elite structure cannot become institutionalised, which means that left parties retain an organisational structure that is ill-placed to respond to the questions and conflicts that emerge from social transformation. As a result, these parties have failed to respond to the sources of their own decline.

In Chapter 3, I outline the methodological choices that I have made in the thesis, explain the selection of the British Labour party as the primary case for analysis and provide an overview of the party's development in the 20th century. In the second half of the chapter, I place specific attention on the organisational changes made in the New Labour period. This analysis identifies the critical factors that were developed in this period that would constrain future leaders' attempts

at organisational change, re-orientation and, ultimately, the articulation of a new social bloc. These factors include the incompatibility of the Third Way with emergent anti-system politics; the shift in internal accountability away from the extra-parliamentary party and towards the party in public office; the construction of a party machine around the leader's office; and the shift in function of the party membership and the party bureaucracy as sites of elite recruitment and development. I theorise that these organisational changes would act as blockages to the processes of elite turnover in the Miliband and Corbyn leaderships.

In Chapter 4, I analyse the period in which Ed Miliband was leader of the Labour party. I show that Ed Miliband sought to re-articulate a cross-class coalition through a more reformist ideological orientation, however he was constrained by the organisational legacies that were inherited from the New Labour structure. While Ed Miliband emerged to capture the party leadership as a lone voice of dissent within the party in public office, he ultimately proved unable and unwilling to ally with other emergent actors in the trade union movement and outside the party. Without the required shift in the types of elites within the Labour party power structure, Miliband was powerless to stop the incumbent electoral professional elites from de-prioritising his reformist agenda and ensuring that the Third Way interpretation of competency and credibility would underpin Labour's responses to the major issues of the period.

In Chapter 5, I outline the process by which Jeremy Corbyn sought to re-orient the party in the period between 2015 and 2017. This is the period in which Labour achieved unexpected success and it appears that this came on the back of a change in ideological orientation. I demonstrate that Corbyn was initially successful in mobilising an insurgent internal coalition of trade union leaders and grassroots members. At the same time, there was an element of luck in the quasi-success of the 2017 General Election, as it occurred in the period in the aftermath of the failed attempt by the parliamentary party to remove Corbyn as leader. Corbyn did not have organisational control, however the weakened position of the MPs enabled Corbyn to run an

election campaign that was oriented around his more radical program, which in turn connected with a viable bloc of voters motivated by anti-system politics.

In Chapter 6, I explore the second period of Corbyn's leadership. In the aftermath of the 2017 General Election, Corbyn was in the ascendancy inside and outside the party. However, he failed to translate this into organisational reform. I demonstrate that Corbyn's failure is tied to the increasingly conflictual interests of the different elements of his internal coalition. This made it harder for Corbyn to institutionalise a new power dynamic, which in turn created a stalemate. As anti-system politics was increasingly expressed in terms of Brexit, rather than economic insecurity, this internal stalemate made it hard for Labour to coherently orient itself to this exogenous change. This in turn prevented Labour from sustaining the social bloc that it had begun to construct at the 2017 General Election.

In Chapter 7, I conclude by considering the implications of the thesis' argument. I connect my findings to broader questions around the purpose of political parties in contemporary society and whether it is possible for cartel parties to restore their connection with society. I then consider the limitations of my thesis, in particular questions around generalisability. I suggest several avenues through which the conceptual framework that I have developed in the thesis could be applied to alternative cases.

Chapter 2: the organisational underpinnings of party articulation

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that the limitations of the existing explanations of left party decline lie in their inability to conceive of this outcome as the culmination of a lack of adaptation or change from left parties themselves. Party failure is largely explained through exogeneities. I argued that articulation theory provides the best means of conceptualising party behaviour. When a critical juncture, such as a war or recession, forces social transformation, it will disrupt the ideational bonds that tie a party to its social bloc. This disruption occurs because the party's pre-existing ideological orientation, which underpinned the identity around which the party had articulated its social bloc, is unlikely to adequately explain the way in which its different groups of supporters have experienced the broader effects of the transformative event. Over the course of the twentieth century, left parties have had to change in response to critical junctures, like the Great Depression, to develop the new ideas that enable it to re-articulate a social bloc. By adopting an articulation conceptual framework, we can reframe the puzzle of contemporary left party decline: if left parties have historically proved capable of changing and adapting to exogenous developments, why do contemporary left parties lack this capacity? What has changed about left parties?

In this chapter I synthesise organisational and relational concepts of party politics. In doing so, I link a party's worldview or its orientation to the specific interests and interpretations of the types of actors that hold internal power at a specific point in time. Thus, if a critical juncture disarticulates a party's social bloc, it will have to change its orientation, which is in turn contingent on a change in composition of the types of actors that hold power. Any new power dynamic must be institutionalised or legitimised, which allows the new orientation to become embedded across the party organisation. Only at this point will the party have coherent answers to the transformational questions provoked by the critical juncture, which I argue is a necessary condition for the party to re-articulate a social bloc.

I then provide a generalised account of the development of left parties across the twentieth century. This account posits that left party capacity for articulation at different critical junctures was contingent on a change in organisational structure. Specific attention is placed on the organisational changes that left parties made in the 1990s, which enabled them to articulate a social bloc that was primarily composed of middle class social groups and interest groups from the finance sector. I demonstrate that this social bloc was articulated through a Third Way orientation, which itself was a reflection of the interests and interpretations of the electoral professional elites that came to gain hegemonic positions inside left parties. These actors moulded party institutions to provide policy delegation, focus groups, polling and spin as viable means of articulation.

I argue that the Third Way orientation was an active factor in the emergence of anti-system politics after the crisis, as left party social blocs were disarticulated due to the inapplicability of this ideology with the experiences of supporters. Most importantly, I argue that the way in which the Third Way was institutionalised within left parties in the 1990s has prevented the re-orientation that is necessary for left parties to articulate a new social bloc. I identify two reinforcing strands to this organisational constraint: on the one hand, the shift in the function of internal party institutions makes it harder for new types of actors with interests distinct from the Third Way to emerge and co-ordinate to gain internal influence; on the other hand, electoral professional elites have institutionalised veto authority to resist ideational change. As a result, left parties retain an organisational structure that is ill-placed to respond to the questions and conflicts that emerge from social transformation, which explains why these parties have failed to respond to the sources of their own decline.

2.1 Articulation's contingencies: critical junctures, ideology and organisation

I argue that a party's capacity for articulation is contingent on the power relations within its organisation. As was outlined earlier, according to articulation theory, for a party to engage in articulation or re-articulation, it must be sufficiently oriented to transformational questions that

emerge from society; and have the means to translate these orientations into meaningful political actions. While exogenous events become the critical junctures that determine the specific questions that confront a party, I argue that both a party's orientation and its means for action at a specific point in time are ultimately determined inside the party.

In recent years, the study of party organisations has become increasingly disconnected from the study of political behaviour and, to some extent, political sociology. That is to say, the literature on party organisations has focused on the institutional development of political parties without necessarily considering the consequences for electoral outcomes or the development of political ideas (Mair, 2013). Equally, as was discussed in the previous chapter, scholars of political behaviour have often approached parties as unitary actors and have failed to appreciate that parties cannot just simply update their programmes or enact a new electoral strategy without significant internal debate. I seek to move beyond this impasse by directly considering the relationship between structure, party organisation and ideology (Berman, 2006; Blyth, 2002; Hay, 2004).

A party organisation can be analysed formally, by focusing on observable institutions like the party conference as well as the party programme. These institutions enable the party to function, in terms of both the practical arrangements through which the party orders itself as well as the way in which it connects with electoral and interest groups in its social bloc (Gauja & Kosiara-Pedersen, 2020). However, these institutions do not act independently. As Ziblatt (2017, p. 41) argues, 'political parties are not simply unitary actors, and their positions on issues reflect not only the leadership's effort to court the electorate but also the party leadership's relationship to its own activists and supporting interest groups.' The operation of a party's formal institutions is dependent on internal relationships between different types of actors.

Political parties, in particular left parties, are often described as a 'big tent' or a 'broad church' – they are comprised of actors that hold different interests and worldviews. One of the central arguments of my thesis is that a party's orientation to transformational questions will be determined by the interests of the actors that hold power within the party; and that the specific

means that a party has to enact this orientation are determined by the way in which these actors get party institutions to function. Thus, I argue that in response to a critical juncture that has a disarticulating effect on the party, a party will likely have to develop a new orientation in order to engage with the transformational questions that have emerged from the break up of its pre-existing social bloc. Re-orientation will necessarily involve internal party debates, and to understand the outcome of such debates we need to identify the different actors that exist within a party and ascertain their interests. We need to understand the power resources that each actor has at their disposal in order to exert their will within the party. We need to understand how conflicting interests are ultimately co-ordinated through party institutions. And, finally, we need to determine how this co-ordination translates into specific institutional resources that the party uses to engage and ultimately articulate a social bloc.

A relational approach to ideological re-invention

Stephanie Mudge's (2018) refractional approach to party re-invention is pivotal to understanding both the internal dynamics of a party's ideational response to a critical juncture in general, and the specific ideological development of left parties across the twentieth century. Mudge (2018) charts the way in which left parties evolved across three different ideological forms: socialist leftism; economic leftism and neoliberal leftism. The re-invention between each ideological form was contingent on the way in which parties 'refracted' changes in the various 'fields' or arenas that structure the party's external environment (Mudge, 2018, p. 16). Hence Mudge (2018, pp. 25–6) understands parties to be 'more like prisms than pinballs; the social relations that constitute them are determinants of how parties interpret the world and formulate courses of action.' The party is connected to different 'fields' or social arenas through specific actors, that Mudge terms 'party experts', who are both members of the party but whose social relations mean that their worldviews are shaped by their participation in fields outside of the party. Experts are distinguished by their unique capacity for knowledge production and intermediation, which enables them to develop the ideas that 'shape how parties speak, produce parties' means of representation, address the question

of who (or what) is to be represented, and formulate competing logics of government (Mudge, 2018, 22–23).' In effect, 'articulation requires articulators' and experts fulfil this function.

The process of party re-invention is driven by a change in the type of party expert that holds influence within the party. The emergence of new experts can not only produce a shift in the fields to which the party is connected, but also leads to different interpretations of the way in which a significant event has change the structure of the fields in which they participate. Mudge shows that each re-invention of leftism was underpinned by the emergence of a new party expert whose worldview reflects the way in which a critical event has reshaped the fields to which they are connected. The emergence of left parties in the late nineteenth century was underpinned by a specific 'socialist theoretician', typically a radical journalist or activist that lacked formal economic training but had instead developed their historical materialist interpretation of social change through their work in socialist societies and party newspapers. As these experts gained positions of influence within left parties, this interpretation formed the basis for socialist leftism. Yet, as the Great Depression provoked a Polanyian crisis, it created generational tensions in the economics field where many younger economists would follow a Keynesian rethinking of economic ideas. As many of these younger economists were also members of left parties, they developed a stronger connection between these parties and the economics field, which provided a legitimacy to their arguments against the socialist theoreticians' support for orthodox prescriptions like support for balanced budgets and defence of the Gold Standard. The first re-invention to economic leftism was contingent on these 'economist theoreticians' supplanting the position of the incumbent socialist theoretician. Mudge notes that the position of the economist theoretician within left parties provoked the politicisation of the economics discipline. Within the economics field, dissenting economists who themselves were connected to the financial sector and centre-right parties, developed theories around the 'futility of Keynesian demand management'. This led to a change in the type of expert produced by the economics field - transnationalised, finance-oriented economists (TFEs) – who were more market oriented than economist theoreticians, although still

left-aligned. Because left politicians still strongly relied on experts produced by the economics discipline, TFEs retained positions of influence within parties. At the same time, from the 1980s, politics was increasingly professionalised which meant the position of the TFE became more narrowly defined. Left parties also became reliant on the expertise of private political consultants, spin doctors, and policy wonks. Together, these experts drove the re-invention to neoliberal leftism that defined left parties at the end of the twentieth century.

Mudge's refractional approach is significant as it draws attention to the way in which a party's overarching ideology is tied to the interpretations and social relations of internal actors. Yet, it is unclear how each party expert gains their position of influence. Mudge (2018, p. 270) does argue that 'a refraction approach identifies how economic, demographic, and institutional changes are channelled through intraparty, interfactional, interpretive struggles; parties and party factions are internally differentiated and historically specific; and party experts are a key component of party infrastructure because of their variable capacities for intermediation.' This implies that party experts play a key role in determining the outcomes of intraparty interpretive struggles. Yet in Mudge's account, experts are rarely factional leaders but instead provide ideas that act as a resource in intraparty battles. How do we interpret the ideological function of other actors? Clearly union leaders, representatives of the mass membership, MPs, and the party leader have interests of their own, and equally have social relations that extend to the world outside of the party. Their participation in social movements and state bureaucracies influence the formations of their interests and worldviews. Yet all of these actors cannot simultaneously be experts. So how do their interests and their expression of these interests influence the functioning of the party expert? While these actors may lack the capacity for ideological invention that an expert holds, they may have access to levels of material power inside and outside the party that can in turn leverage how a party expert behaves. Put in the most fundamental terms – it is unlikely that a party leader will continue to give an expert space if that expert produces ideas and strategies that run counter to the interest of the party leader.

Placing greater attention on power dynamics can influence the way in which we understand the relations inherent to the process of re-invention identified by Mudge. For instance, the first re-invention was provoked by intraparty debates over the economic orthodoxy promoted by socialist theoreticians. While emerging economists were highly critical of these ideas, so too were the trade union leaders who were concerned about representing their members and the material interests of the working class more broadly. In the 1930s, trade union leaders were more powerful inside parties than young economists (Streeck & Hassel, 2003), and Mudge (2018) acknowledges that it was the unions that provided employment opportunities to economists, which granted them influence within the party. Surely the ideas that were developed by these economists helped to shape this intraparty debate, but they would not necessarily have achieved their position of expertise if not for the intervention of trade union leaders who possessed the internal authority to oppose the actions of socialist theoreticians within the parliamentary leadership. Party experts are significant in that they provide ideas that can influence intraparty debates, however the extent of their influence will be tied to the interests and preferences of other actors inside the party who hold institutional power resources of their own.

This critique has repercussions for how we understand the decline of contemporary left parties. The Great Recession and European sovereign debt crisis will have had profound impacts on the social blocs, the structure of the parties' external environment, and to the internal dynamics of left parties themselves. Without overdoing the comparison, there are similarities between these parties' support for austerity prescriptions and the economic orthodoxy that socialist theoreticians supported in the 1930s. In the latter case, entrenched experts lost their capacity for intermediation, but, through intraparty struggles, junior economists emerged to propel ideological re-invention. Today it appears that the experts that promote austerity are not necessarily attuned to the socio-economic dynamics that impact their supporters. Is there a contemporary equivalent to the economic theoretician who can emerge out of extra-party dynamics and ally with existing actors to re-orient the party? The answer rests in the structure and location of internal party battles. In

contemporary left parties, it is less clear where internal opposition to austerians in left parties could come from. Mudge's approach is hugely important in emphasising the relational dynamic that underpins ideological change within a party, yet we need to more directly consider organisational power dynamics as a factor that enables the relative influence of different types of actors whose interests will go a long way to influencing the ideological orientation of the party.

Identifying the relevant actors and their interests

How can we identify the relevant actors within a party organisation and ascertain their interests? Katz and Mair (1993) identify 'three faces of party organisation': (a) the party in public office, formed of MPs and the party leader; (b) the party central office, essentially the party bureaucracy; and (c) the party on the ground, which is comprised of party activists, members and affiliated organisations. Each face is constituted by the source of its claims to internal authority, which in the case of the party in public office and the party on the ground is tied to institutional loyalties that extend outside of the party. Actors in the party in public office are much more likely than other party actors to be connected to spaces that exist within the state; actors from the party on the ground are likely to simultaneously participate in the political party as well as other organisations and movements that exist outside of the party. In this way, an individual actor's interests are formed through the face that they belong to, which describes their position within the party as well as the types of external institutions and organisations to which they are connected.

In the same way as Mudge's party expert is historically specific so too are the specific interests of other actors. The interests of an MP in 2020 is going to be different from that of an MP in 1975 and in turn from 1945. Equally, the internal power that a trade union leader may wield is likely to change across time based on the fluctuations in power that trade unions have in broader society, which can in turn influence the appetite of other party actors to work with these leaders. In this sense, to understand how a party responds to a transformative critical juncture, we need to identify the power structures that enable different actors to exert their interests within the party and appreciate how this can be institutionalised to produce a distinct ideological orientation. Where

Mudge focuses on the expert, I modify this on the basis that a broader array of internal actors can influence the overarching way in which a party interprets changes in its connected fields. The way in which interpretive debates are resolved and institutionalised will go a long way to determining how it chooses to organise and orient itself to transformational questions.

The dominant coalition

Angelo Panebianco's (1988) 'dominant coalition' offers an effective conceptual tool to identify the location of interpretive debates and to understand how the interests of actors are co-ordinated within a broader power structure. The 'dominant coalition' is an 'alliance of alliances' between the most powerful actors within a party and serves as the 'coalition of internal party forces with which [the party's leader] must at least to a certain degree negotiate' (Panebianco, 1988, p. 38). An actor gains a position in the dominant coalition through control over 'zones of uncertainty', which are the internal institutions and resources through which a party performs essential activities (Panebianco, 1988, p. 33). They can include party financing, bureaucratic management, candidate and leadership selection, party communications, the party conference, the party executive, party rules and membership recruitment (Panebianco, 1988, p. 33). These institutions are 'zones of uncertainty' on the basis that the way in which they function depends on the interests of the actor that controls it. As it is unlikely that any one actor will control all of a party's zones of uncertainty, it is probable that a dominant coalition will be composed of actors that hold conflicting interests. The control of different internal institutions enables these actors to project influence over the party organisation to ensure that it functions according to their interests and works to achieve their desired worldview.

Panebianco was focused purely on the institutional dynamics that produced different types of party organisations and was not interested in the relationship between the structure of the dominant coalition and a party's ideology. I argue that the dominant coalition concept offers a helpful tool to analyse how a party arrives at a given ideological orientation. The dominant coalition sets the terrain for interpretive battles between different actors, the outcome of which will

determine the party's ideological orientation. More specifically, I argue that a party's overall orientation is influenced by the composition and institutionalisation of its dominant coalition. Composition refers to the specific types of actors that hold positions within the dominant coalition, be they technocratic experts, trade union leaders or grassroots representatives. As outlined above, membership is dependent on control of a zone of uncertainty, so the number of different types of actors within the dominant coalition could range from a low to a high number. Institutionalisation describes the extent to which these different actors can align their interests and, ultimately, embed a distinct worldview. If there is substantial internal disagreement and each actor cannot recognise the legitimacy of their counterpart, then it is unlikely that the dominant coalition will be sufficiently institutionalised for its orientation to transformative events to be coherent or stable. Obviously these factors are related. If the composition of the dominant coalition involves a high number of actors or even a small number that have significantly different interests and worldviews, it will be harder to get these actors to co-ordinate and institutionalise an agreed upon orientation. These factors are also clearly influenced by power dynamics. Party institutions function as a power resource, and the specific function or value of an institution will depend on the specific context that influences the interpretive debate. At a given point in time, control of a specific zone of uncertainty may enable distinct types of actors to ultimately wield more power and thereby influence both the composition and institutionalisation of the dominant coalition.

An important feature of my broader argument is that a critical juncture that disarticulates a party's social bloc requires a party to re-orient. Following the above logic, this would require change in the composition of the dominant coalition and for the new structure to be institutionalised. However, this pushes against the longstanding assumption of organisational stasis as outlined in Michels' (2007) iron law of oligarchy: once a party reaches a certain size it will naturally be impelled towards an oligarchic structure as the demand for centralised and competent leadership and the division of tasks within such a large organisation gives rise to an internal elite whose status and skills allow them to dominate the rank-and-file. Even if there is exogenous

demand for ideological change, the extent of such change would have to square with the individual priorities and the worldview of the leaders, which Michels predicts would likely be more moderate. This ultimately limits the extent to which we can expect parties to actually develop a sufficiently transformative orientation to the questions provoked by the disarticulation of the party's social bloc.

Michels' thesis has also served as the basis for considered debates around the role and function of left parties in society. Ralph Miliband (1958, p. 46) argued that in post-war society, left parties in the UK, France and Italy served as political brokers between trade unions and capitalism, which meant that they were not trying to co-ordinate with unions to overthrow capitalism and create the conditions for socialism. This informed his latter study in which he argued that the route to socialism could not be achieved through the Labour party, largely because it was incapable of the changes required to make it a truly socialist party (Miliband, 1972). Central to this argument was the contention that the party leadership had achieved hegemony, which meant that the party would retain a social reformist, rather than socialist orientation (Miliband, 1972, p. 62). For Miliband, even the party's left wing subordinated socialism to parliamentarism, which precluded them from ever gaining power over the reformist leadership. This chimes with Michels' contention that parties tend towards the control of centralised leadership, which precludes change.

For over a century, Michels' thesis has provoked consistent debate within the party politics and political sociology literatures (eg. Duverger, 1954; Leach, 2005; Lipset, 1956; Rohrschneider, 1994). This debate has typically centred on empirically verifying Michels' claims, with substantial criticisms over whether Michels' thesis is falsifiable (Leach, 2005; Rohrschneider, 1994). For our purpose, the more interesting line of enquiry is whether parties that develop oligarchic structures can undergo processes of change. To this end, Voss & Sherman's (2000) study of the revitalisation of the American Labor movement is particularly important as they argue that their work is the first within social movement studies to question whether movements can break the iron law of oligarchy. Voss & Sherman (2000, pp. 303; 310–3) find that while American trade unions often

conformed to Michels' iron law, there were three conditions that enabled a 'local union' to change: a political crisis that provokes new political leaders to gain influence within the union; these leaders have experience outside of the labor movement and interpret their union's decline as a 'mandate for change'; and the national union favouring more innovative approaches.

These factors are ultimately specific to labour and social movement studies, as they speak to organisations that have different goals and federated structures to most political parties. As such, the conditions for change that they identify hint at possibilities for change within parties. Nevertheless, Voss and Sherman (2000) do identify a problem where it is never seen as possible that organisations like trade unions could move away from oligarchy. This is equally true of political parties, as reflected in the difficulty that the party politics literature has had in making sense of whether mainstream parties really were frozen as per Lipset & Rokkan. Parties are generally conceptualised as organisationally static, which in turn only enables narrow changes in policy and programme. Panebianco (1988) was arguably too focused on detailing the internal dynamics of political parties to pay sufficient attention to the way in which externalities can influence processes of party change. To this end, I expand the focus of Mudge's (2018) relational approach beyond experts to include a wider range of internal actors and argue that shifts in the composition of the dominant coalition can drive a party's movement away from oligarchy. Because the actors that hold power within a dominant coalition will formulate their interests through their social relations outside of the party, a critical juncture in a party's external environment should provoke changes to the dominant coalition. This is especially likely when a critical juncture occurs that disarticulates the party's existing social bloc as actors' interests will be formed through their social relations, including their ties to specific interest groups and social constituencies along with their participation in social movements, organisations and the state itself. As the specific form of these relations will not only differ across time and context, but also between different types of actors, each actor will have different interests and interpretations as to how the party should orient itself to such a dramatic change. In such circumstances, it is likely that a party would face renewed

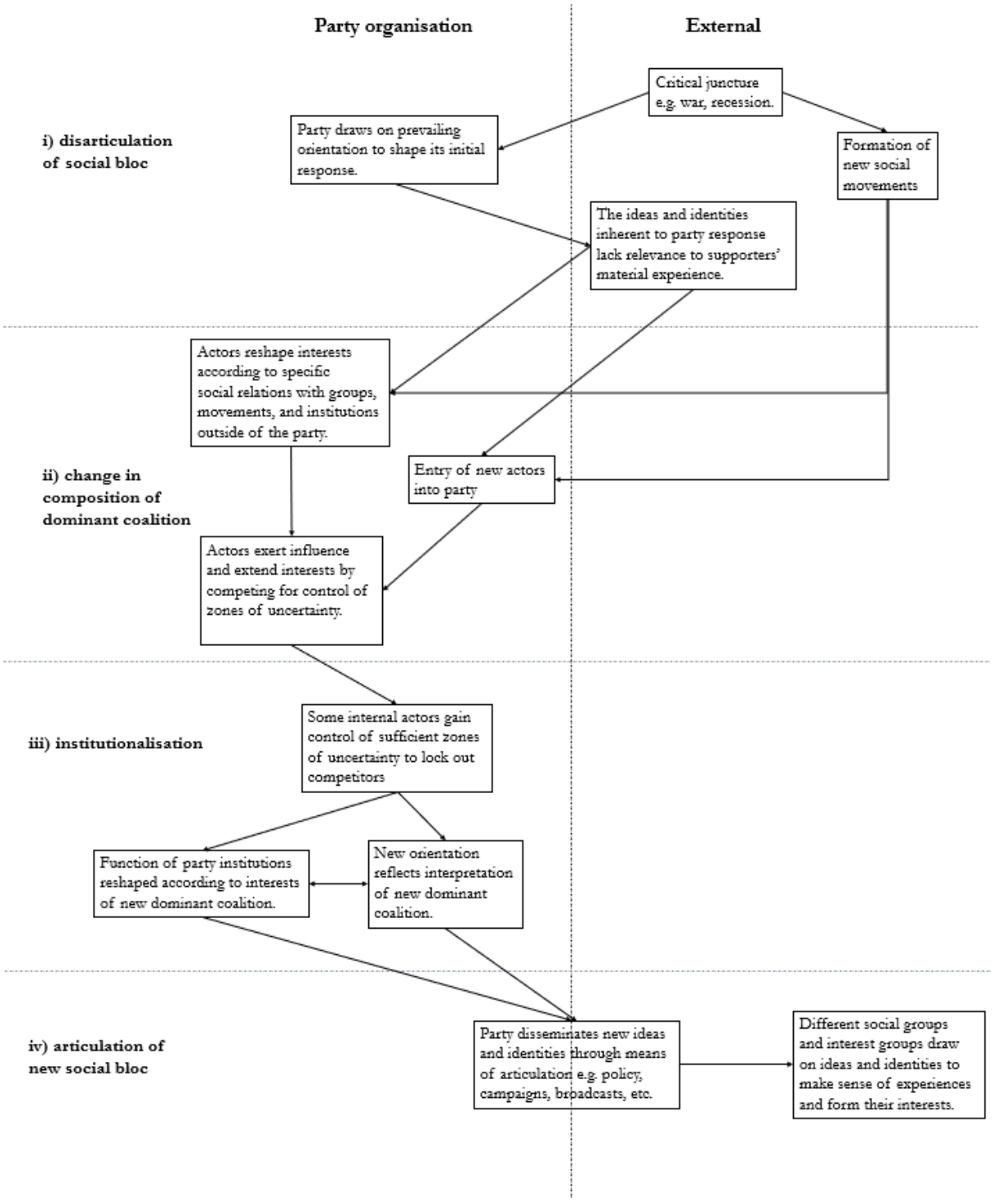
intraparty debates that would threaten the stability of the dominant coalition. This divergence between pre-existing actors within the dominant coalition is likely to be compounded by increased competition for control over zones of uncertainty. New actors, dissatisfied with the party's response to the critical juncture, may seek to gain increased influence within a party structure by gaining influence over a number of zones of uncertainty. This could occur in leadership and candidate selection processes, by shifting the balance of the party conference, executive committee or changes to staffing at the party bureaucracy.

By shifting the composition of the dominant coalition a critical juncture is likely to impact its institutionalisation, as the way in which different actors within the dominant coalition respond to external change could de-align previous internal loyalties, which could be compounded by the entry of new actors or the withdrawal of others into the dominant coalition. This will therefore influence both the orientation to transformation, in that it will provoke new ideational debates inside the party, but also the way in which the party develops the means to enact political change outside of the party and thereby articulate a new social bloc.

As visualised in Figure 2.1, I identify the following process as necessary for a party to re-orient:

i) **Disarticulation of the party's social bloc:** as per articulation theory, parties articulate in the face of critical junctures. The problem that established parties will face is that events like a war or a recession will fundamentally change the material circumstances and day to day experiences of large elements of their social bloc. The party will draw on its embedded ideological orientation as the basis its initial response to the critical juncture. In most circumstances, it is unlikely that this orientation will adequately describe the way in which the critical juncture has reshaped the material reality of their supporters, so the party will face a real threat of the disarticulation of its social bloc.

Figure 2.1: The process of party re-orientation and articulation



Source: author's visualisation

ii) **Change in composition of the dominant coalition:** disarticulation reverberates inside the party as it provokes internal debates over how the party should move forward. These debates will occur between actors whose interests and worldview lead to different interpretations of the critical juncture and its effects, and therefore distinct perspectives on how the party should respond. At the same time, the socio-economic effects of the critical juncture may lead civil society organisations and social movements that exist outside the party to create new actors that, in turn, seek influence inside the party by gaining control of zones of uncertainty. Thus the entry of new actors and/or the change in interests of pre-existing actors will result in the breakdown of the previously embedded co-ordination of interests and lead to a shift in composition of the dominant coalition.

iii) **Institutionalisation:** the specific way in which the intra-party debates associated with the shift in composition of the dominant coalition are resolved will have implications for the form and coherence of the party's new orientation. For instance, there could be a small change in composition, where the power dynamics see a redistribution of power as pre-existing actors exchange control of zones of uncertainty; or a more fundamental change as new actors gain control of zones of uncertainty and thereby achieve influence within the dominant coalition. A shake up of the dominant coalition is important in providing the party with the perspectives necessary to understand how society has changed and to refract these perspectives into a new ideological orientation. The new orientation is likely to lack coherence unless it is legitimised, either through domination or negotiation. This is the hardest stage to achieve as it requires actors in the dominant coalition to align their conflicting interests. The way in which actors take control of zones of uncertainty, as party institutions, will have implications for the way in which they function. If the interests of the actors amongst actors within the dominant coalition

cannot be co-ordinated, then it is unlikely that the various zones of uncertainty will function in accordance with the intended orientation. Without this institutionalisation stage, the party's orientation is likely to lack coherence and therefore will not provide the answers to the transformative questions that the critical juncture has provoked.

iv) **Articulation of a new social bloc:** The party will utilise its various zones of uncertainty in seeking to synthesise the strands of its new ideological orientation into specific ideas and identities that form the basis of its articulation. The way in which actor interests have been co-ordinated at the institutionalisation stage will have implications for the specific means of articulation that are available to the party. So long as this orientation is sufficient to express the change in material reality and individual security for members of target social and interest groups, the party will successfully articulate a new social bloc.

It is important to note that this argument is not going so far as to say that any shift in a party's re-orientation will enable the party to articulate a new social bloc. It is clear that a new orientation must also be attuned to the realities of the socio-economic effects of a critical juncture. To that end, the specific principles and implications of a given orientation is hugely important to a party's re-articulation of a social bloc. This argument does imply that a shift in orientation is a necessary condition for re-articulation to occur. A failure for the above conditions to occur will ultimately lead the party to persist with an ideological orientation that is incapable of interpreting socio-structural change and therefore articulating the diverse interests of its constituent groups into a viable social bloc. In such a scenario the party remains disconnected from its social base and will struggle to remain electorally viable into the future. Of course, the specific ideological underpinning of the party's new orientation must chime with the interests and experiences of the target social groups in order for it to be sufficient to articulate a new social bloc.

2.3 Organisational changes in left parties

Having established that a party's capacity for articulation should be underpinned by its organisational structure, we can consider how this applies to left parties. In this section I outline how different left party articulation projects have been contingent on changes in their organisational structure, as shifts in the composition of the dominant coalition provided new ideological orientations and transformed the function of party institutions to provide the requisite means for articulation. I then consider how contemporary left parties are constrained by their prevailing organisational structure.

The mass party and class-based articulation

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, left parties emerged as extra-parliamentary organisations with a party central office that, in conjunction with affiliated trade unions, mobilised and organised the growing working class party membership (van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014, pp. 210–11). These early left parties are the archetypal mass party, characterised by their branch structure through which strong social connections linked party elites with party members, which in turn allowed the former to develop strong ties with broader working class social groups (Duverger, 1954). Party members were typically also members of trade unions and socialist clubs, and these external institutions provided the site for the recruitment of future party elites, for instance Mudge's (2018) socialist theoretician.

This mass party organisation helped to orient the party around an orthodox Marxism that emphasised historical materialism as the transformative answer to the structural transformation associated with the second Industrial Revolution (Berman, 2006; Mudge, 2018). Left parties drew on these ideas to emphasise class confrontation in their articulation of a working class social bloc. This orientation was embedded in the party organisations through the co-ordination of different actors within the dominant coalition. Different zones of uncertainty were controlled by different actors: party financing came from trade unions and, to a lesser extent, member subscriptions

(Allern et al., 2021); the co-ordinating power of the party bureaucracy was dependent on actors from both trade unions and socialist organisations (Hobsbawm, 2012, pp. 124–29; Katz & Mair, 1993); the party leadership and political offices were often held by figures that emerged from socialist societies (Berman, 2006; Mudge, 2018). While these actors shared a common interest in securing political representation for the working class, they had different ideas as to how to achieve it as union figures often lacked the radicalism of their mass party counterparts. Accommodations were worked out according to the power that unions held through party financing, against the practical and ideological knowledge that socialist organisations held through both their positions in the party and their connections to various working class community groups.

Having co-ordinated their interests through the dominant coalition, these actors could ensure that their zones of uncertainty functioned according to the orthodox Marxist orientation, which provided parties with the means to proselytise working class identities in the face of expanded suffrage and a new wave of industrialisation (Hobsbawm, 2012). The branch structure, and the organising activity of paid and unpaid party organisers facilitated the development and strengthening of the party's connections with working class social groups, which in turn enabled the recruitment and promotion of working class individuals to become future party elites in all party faces. The branch structure was co-ordinated by a hierarchical organisational structure: branches recruited new members and promoted them to key positions within the party; this required financing to ensure that the central party bureaucracy had the resources to maintain the organising function of the branches; in turn, the figure of the party leader was important for both administrative and ideological reasons.

As such, left party organisations were pivotal to developing, instilling and diffusing the ideas that enabled these parties to breakthrough in the early twentieth century. Yet, it was the intraparty debates that developed between trade union elites and the representatives of socialist organisations that drove ideological re-invention in the 1930s.

The catch-all party and a cross-class articulation

The Great Depression accentuated internal divisions between advocates of a reformist Social Democracy agenda against those who believed in Marxist orthodoxy (Berman, 2006; Mudge, 2018). The historical materialism that had oriented the party's early approach was increasingly out of step with the experiences of mass unemployment for many of their working class supporter groups. How parties responded to this critical juncture was determined by the way in which different party actors appraised their interests within this broader context. As the number of left parliamentarians increased with electoral success, their internal strength grew (Katz & Mair, 2002; Svåsand, 1994). These politicians had office-seeking ambitions, which often necessitated a more diffuse ideological appeal than the specific class conflict that had underpinned the initial growth of left parties (Katz & Mair, 2002, p. 121; Przeworski & Sprague, 1986). This interest aligned with the leaders of trade unions, who lacked the revolutionary zeal of socialist activists and were primarily concerned with ensuring workers' rights and the material interests of their members (Streeck & Hassel, 2003).

The shift in orientation towards what Mudge (2018) describes as economic leftism was tied to the increased influence of parliamentary actors within the dominant coalition. Policy enactment, rather than in-person organising, became the primary means through which left parties articulated their cross-class coalition. Moreover, party newspapers and the role of working class community organising in diffusing class identity, were replaced by mass broadcasts through radio and then television. This was accompanied by a strategic shift from class-based mobilisation to cross-class persuasion. This "catch-all" organisational model diminished the resources that mass members could provide, and therefore its position within the dominant coalition, while it increased the importance of politicians and the party leader (Katz & Mair, 1995; Poguntke & Webb, 2005). After all, if policy enactment was the major means of articulation, it was incumbent upon politicians and their expert advisors to develop and implement the underpinning ideas. As such, this re-orientation was driven by politicians and technocratic experts gaining control over zones of uncertainty

associated with parties' ideational infrastructure while unions often maintained a strong influence as they supplied the financing for the party to run its campaigns and to function on a day-to-day basis (Allern et al., 2017). This helped to promote an orientation in which left parties became a 'broker' between society and the state rather than serving as the representatives of working class society (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 757).

This orientation enabled parties to expand their social bloc through the articulation of a workerist identity that emphasised full employment and social insurance rather than class confrontation. The social homogenising effect of Keynesian policies made partisan mobilisation of distinct social groups more difficult, so through policy enactment and mass broadcasts, the parties could simultaneously articulate manual working class voters and the more middle class employees of the expanding public sectors as sharing common interests around employment and the state (Benedetto et al., 2020, p. 8).

In this way, left parties' capacity to articulate a cross-class coalition in the middle decades of the twentieth century was underpinned by a shift in the dominant coalition to politicians, policy and communications experts and trade union leaders.

Cartelisation, a Third Way orientation and the articulation of middle class aspiration

In the 1970s two large oil shocks helped to stoke higher inflation and lower economic growth. The ensuing "Stagflation" represented a significant critical juncture for left parties (Hay, 1996; Mudge, 2018). The success of the left's post-war policies had helped to increase the affluence and over-all standard of living for the working and middle classes, such that an ideological orientation that emphasised full employment and welfare expansion no longer described their experiences. (Hancke & Vlandas, 2021). Discourses around Stagflation only further emphasised the disjuncture between left parties' articulation of workerist identities and the prevailing sentiments of their supporter groups. This problem became even more acute in the 1980s when the electoral effects of the numerical decline of the manual class was made increasingly apparent.

The dis-articulation of the left's social bloc provoked intra-party debates over how parties should respond. Right-wing arguments around the causes of stagflation, which often highlighted the power of trade unions, typically prevailed (Hay, 1996). As a result, office-seeking actors within left parties were often concerned that there was reduced public support for the state carrying the costs of policies and public goods that had been at the heart of their prevailing orientation (Blyth & Katz, 2005). Equally, models of party financing that relied on donations from the trade unions were increasingly unviable in systems of party competition that required parties to rely on mass broadcasts and polished PR teams to run effective campaigns during election periods (Blyth & Katz, 2005). In this context, parliamentary elites within left parties increasingly argued that to maintain left parties' office seeking ambitions the party would have to "modernise" their ideology and organisation. This was often framed as part of a need to move beyond ideologies of "left" and "right" and instead position the party as a competent manager that could steer society through the transition into a more globalised world (Giddens, 1994, 1998). The practical steps involved in such a transformation were often not immediately apparent to trade union leaders, who despite declines in trade union density, were typically less likely to be fully committed to the modernising vision promoted by some parliamentarians. In order for parliamentary actors with modernising interests to secure their desired party orientation they had to shift the internal dynamics of their party's dominant coalition.

Parliamentary actors achieved this feat by increasing the influence of the state over critical zones of uncertainty related to party financing and levers of policymaking. With regards to party financing, from the 1960s onwards the state introduced and steadily increased the subsidies that it paid to parties such that by the 1980s they generally accounted for the majority of party financing (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 55; Piccio & van Biezen, 2018). Across the same period, there is a cross-national trend where the state began to pay the salaries of advisors to politicians (Biezen & Kopecký, 2017). This has meant that the proportion of staff employed in party bureaucracies has decreased, while the number of staff employed by parties in public office has increased to more

than 50% (Bardi et al., 2017; Webb et al., 2003). There is more cross-national variation in the extent to which left parties still rely on donations from affiliated trade unions, however research shows that the more a left party relies on state funding the less likely they are to receive financial support from unions (Allern et al., 2021). In response to the right's success at politicising the cost of public policies, left parties often sought to downsize their constituents' expectations, which was partly achieved through the de-politicisation of contentious issues and the delegation of policy making to non-partisan state institutions, most notably independent central banks (Blyth & Katz, 2005; Burnham, 2001, p. 216). In doing so, these parties were ensuring that policymaking, as a zone of uncertainty, would only be tangentially related to decisions made within the party. Likewise, left parties increasingly relied on PR agencies and spin doctors to craft their campaign strategies (Esser et al., 2016; Mudge, 2018; Vliegenthart, 2011). 'Spin doctors' were typically a specialised, professional advisor whose careers were built in media or PR agencies and therefore lacked significant loyalty or history with the party.

The effect of these changes helped to ensure that parliamentary elites gained control over zones of uncertainty and therefore increased their influence within the dominant coalition. For instance, transferring the source of party financing from unions to the state was significant as state subsidies tend to flow directly to the parliamentary party, and only rarely to the party's bureaucratic body and almost never to local parties (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 333). This empowered parliamentary elites to determine how these funds are directed, which facilitated their efforts to exert control over the party bureaucracy (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 55). Once parliamentary elites controlled the party bureaucracy it often declined as a site of significant independent authority vis-à-vis the leader's office (Poguntke & Webb, 2005 Chapter 15). As staff increasingly worked across the party bureaucracy and the leader's office, the party tended to prioritise staff whose skillset could 'sell' the party, like spin doctors, rather than staff who could organise and mobilise members in the branches (Katz & Mair, 2018, pp. 60–1). Likewise, the purpose of the party membership was transformed (Katz & Mair, 2002; Mair, 2013). As was noted previously, within previous

organisational models the membership had served as the basis to recruit and train future party elites, yet in the new structure an ambitious member might join the party to fulfil career ambition, however the practical skills they possessed would be gained through their careers outside of the party (Bruter & Harrison, 2009; Karlsen & Saglie, 2017). This also helps to explain a seeming anomaly of the internal dynamics of modern left parties. As their connections to social constituencies has declined, the membership has often been given increased influence in candidate and leader selection, albeit in election systems where the parliamentary party has some veto over the nomination process (Hopkin, 2001; Pilet & Cross, 2014). If the party membership is largely instrumental then this makes sense, as they are likely to contest the elites to whom they owe patronage.

As parliamentary actors came to dominate the organisational structure, left parties' internal accountability structures were often effectively transferred to the parliamentary wing of the party. In other organisational structures, the party bureaucracy co-ordinated the deployment and allocation of the party's resources, and the party bureaucracy was typically accountable to a party conference. In what Panebianco (1988, pp. 266–7) describes as an 'electoral professional party', the co-ordinating function is typically transferred directly to the parliamentary wing of the party and specifically to the office of the party leader (Bardi et al., 2017; Katz & Mair, 2002). Parliamentarians and their advisers tend to come from elite occupational backgrounds (O'Grady, 2018), and they tend to function as appointed representatives that are only indirectly accountable to the extra-parliamentary party through periodic plebiscites and tightly controlled leadership contests (Katz & Mair, 2006, p. 13; Panebianco, 1988, pp. 266–7). This organisational structure has given parliamentary actors almost hegemonic authority within their party's dominant coalition, which enabled them to secure their desired Third Way orientation.

This orientation, which is synonymous with Mudge's (2018) neoliberal leftism, envisages that the role of a left party in government is to ensure the state did not hinder individuals' 'initiative and adaptability', to equip them with the skills they needed to pursue opportunities through the

market, and to ensure that 'the importance of individual and business enterprise to the creation of wealth' was never again undervalued (Blair & Schroeder, 1998). In practical terms, this entailed an emphasis on the market for resource allocation, approaching unemployment as a supply-side problem rather than through Keynesian demand management, and an 'increasing emphasis on what might be termed "moral issues" of the sort associated with civil liberties, citizenship and crime' (Hall, 2002). For instance, a joint statement from Blair and Schröder (1998) promised their parties would remain committed to 'fairness and social justice, liberty and equality of opportunity, solidarity and responsibility to others', while applying

> a new economic framework, modernised for today, where government does all it can to support enterprise but never believes it is a substitute for enterprise. The essential function of markets must be complemented and improved by political action, not hampered by it. We support a market economy, not a market society.

As their hegemonic position within the dominant coalition allowed parliamentary actors to embed this orientation, they were able to coherently respond to the aforementioned problems that they had been confronted with by Stagflation. For instance, by increasing their reliance on the state for policy-making, left parties had a solution to increased concerns over costs of public policies. Of course, as per cartel theory, left parties were not the only type of party to increase their reliance on the state as other mainstream parties were also the beneficiaries of state financing and similarly delegated policies to non-partisan actors. Indeed, these are trends of interparty co-ordination that characterised the cartel party system, which Katz and Mair (2009, p. 755) say is distinguished by the interpenetration of party and state and by a tendency toward inter-party collusion.'

In many ways, by increasing their reliance on the state, mainstream parties of the left and centre-right decreased their capacity to autonomously articulate a coherent social bloc. While in the catch-all period there had been an increasing overlap in the parties' social blocs, in that parties were competing for a narrowing pool of uncommitted middle-class voters, the composition of their support bases was different. From the 1960s until the 1980s, left parties retained manual

working class voters as their core constituency and sought to build on this by garnering support from, firstly public-sector workers, and then other sectors of middle class support (Benedetto et al., 2020; Evans & Tilley, 2017; Kitschelt, 1994). In contrast, centre-right parties had emerged as representatives of the elite upper strata, but the transition to universal suffrage forced them to expand their social bloc by articulating cross-class appeals by invoking religious and nationalist identities while de-emphasising the economic interests of their more wealthy supporter groups (Gidron & Ziblatt, 2019; Riker, 1986; Tavits & Potter, 2015; Ziblatt, 2017). The cartelisation of party systems enabled these parties to de-articulate their respective class and conservative social blocs and to compete for the same group of, largely, middle-class voters through the same ideological orientations.

In practice, it was the left parties that more fundamentally shifted their policies to match those of the centre-right. Arguably, they were under more immediate pressure due to the erosion of the working class as their core constituency (Kitschelt, 1994). Nevertheless, the Third Way orientation provided the necessary ideas for left parties to articulate a new middle-lass social bloc, which as demonstrated here, was contingent on securing significant organisational changes. The emphasis on governing competence and the incorporation of neoliberal ideology would thread together aspirational working- and middle-class voters with business interest groups (Amable & Palombarini, 2021; Gamble, 2005; Hay, 1994, 1997; Karremans & Damhuis, 2020). In the 1990s and early 2000s this proved a highly successful strategy in driving a left resurgence in many party systems (Benedetto et al., 2020).

The in-built constraints of the electoral professional party[4] for re-orientation in the twenty-first century

The problem for left parties has been that the Third Way orientation has been particularly ineffective in responding to the material and political effects of the financial crises of the late 2000s.

[4] Throughout the thesis I refer to 'electoral professional party' and 'cartel party' interchangeably. These are both important concepts developed by Panebianco (1988) and Katz & Mair(1995; 2009) in the same period, and similarly

In the wake of the crises, governments in almost all high-income democracies prioritised the interests of the financial sector as containing government debt superseded the recovery for wage-earners. While left parties were not alone in invoking austerity responses, it should be noted that this policy solution is consistent with the supply-side ideas that were at the heart of the Third Way (Bremer & McDaniel, 2019). While this policy solution may have satisfied one element of the left party social bloc – financial interests – the middle class wage-earners began to demand alternatives and vote accordingly (Hernández & Kriesi, 2016). The electoral re-alignment in the wake of the crisis should be interpreted as wide ranging social 'demands that government "do something" to address the inequalities and insecurities that are generated' by financialised capitalism (Hopkin & Blyth, 2018, p. 15). Peter Mair (2009, p. 222) presciently identified the strictures that cartelisation placed on policy making: 'policy discretion has become increasingly constrained by the imperatives of globalisation, and, within the much-expanded EU and EFTA area, by the strictures imposed by the Growth and Stability Pact and the financial discipline demanded by the European Central Bank. Even when parties are in government, in other words, the freedom for partisan manoeuvre is severely limited.' Hence, the problem for left parties is that so long as they retain the Third Way orientation and their cartelised organisational structure, they will lack the capacity to "do something". The representative dilemmas that emerge from cartel politics, combined with the effects of the financial crisis have produced the conditions for anti-system politics (Hopkin, 2020; Mair, 2008, 2013).

The central claim that I make in this thesis is that the electoral professional organisational model constrains left parties' ability to re-orient to anti-system politics. Put most simply, this organisational model has seen power institutionalised in such a way that pre-existing elites will remain embedded in positions of power, which means they can resist demands for re-orientation. The way in which the party on the ground and the party bureaucracy had their socio-political

describe a party organisation that is dominated by elites from technocratic and professionalised backgrounds, and which is increasingly disconnected from social groups and society more broadly.

function fundamentally altered means that new types of actors will struggle to emerge within left parties, which means that there are unlikely to be sustained challenges that would shift the composition of left party dominant coalitions. However, there are situations in which such actors could emerge, yet even if this were the case, they will struggle to sustain an internal insurgency as they will have to build alliances with actors that have fundamentally different interests. This means that pre-existing electoral professional elites will retain veto positions to limit efforts at re-orientation. The fundamental effect of this is to ensure that if the Third Way orientation has disappeared, it has done so in name only as economic competence and a commitment to market orthodoxy remain the fundamental ideological principles through which left parties engage with social groups and interest groups. As this orientation is insufficient to engage with the transformative questions that left parties must grapple with, these parties will be unable to articulate a new social bloc. This argument can be outlined more precisely against the conditions for party change that were identified at the end of section 2.1:

i. *A critical juncture disarticulates a party's social bloc*: While left parties successfully responded to the first period of de-industrialisation, the financial crisis has exacerbated long-term trends, fragmenting the middle classes and ultimately disarticulating the left's social bloc (Beramendi et al. 2015; Oesch 2006b). As such, this condition is likely to occur.

ii. *The critical juncture reverberates inside the party by provoking new intra-party debates between actors whose interests and worldviews lead to different interpretations and preferences for how the party should respond:* in the electoral professional party, power is concentrated in the party in public office (Bardi, Calossi, and Pizzimenti 2017; Katz and Mair 2006). As the elites that emerge as the dominant actors from this face are MPs, it is very likely that they will be guided by office-seeking goals. Nevertheless, their understanding of how this goal can be achieved within their transforming external context will be guided by the orientation that is institutionalised within the organisational structure, which in the case of contemporary left parties is the Third Way emphasis on competency and credibility (O'Grady 2018). At the same time, the

process of institutionalisation saw parliamentary elites transform the function of the party bureaucracy and party membership, which means that the greatest opportunity for dissent will come from within the parliamentary party (Bardi, Calossi, and Pizzimenti 2017; Katz and Mair 2006). However, the vast majority of parliamentarians will share the same occupational backgrounds and therefore are likely to share similar worldviews (O'Grady, 2018). The emergence of new actors would require trade union leaders, grassroots activists or other types of elites, potentially through the creation of social movements or civil society organisations emerging in response to the critical juncture, deciding to join the party. However, the prevailing institutional structure is such that for these actors to gain internal influence to shift the nature of interpretive debates, they would have to gain control of a zone of uncertainty. This makes it unlikely, though not impossible, that intra-party interpretive debates would be of a sufficient scale for the party to develop a new ideological orientation. As such, it is likely that interpretive debates will occur inside left parties, however they will do so on a terrain that is fundamentally determined by electoral professional elites. In practice, these debates are most likely to occur inside the parliamentary party and will not include the interpretations, preferences or interests of actors from other sources of authority.

iii. *Intra-party debates must force a re-composition of the dominant coalition:* The relevance of this condition is contingent on the emergence of new types of actors gaining control over zones of uncertainty to force an interpretive debate. Even if this does occur, the location of these intra-party debates will be in the parliamentary wing of the party as this is where internal accountability is held. As such, for a dominant coalition with a new composition of actors to emerge and to be sustained, the party must shift the location of these internal debates outside of the parliamentary party. This would require making the party conference, the party bureaucracy, and the party executive committee relevant zones of uncertainty where control will grant significant authority to the holder over parliamentary actors. In the

electoral professional party, this could only be achieved if dissident parliamentary elites are able to sustain internal alliances with extra-parliamentary elites. Because the chances of powerful new actors emerging that control other zones of uncertainty are relatively low, these alliances are likely to be broad. This makes co-ordination difficult as it cannot be taken as given that the interests of parliamentary dissidents, trade union leaders and grassroots activists will necessarily align. Equally, this condition faces similar problems to condition ii), where it is unclear how these new actors would gain control of zones of uncertainty that would provide them with sufficient power resources to gain influence within this dominant coalition. This would effectively require them to either gain the party leadership or processes of candidate selection. As such, this condition is unlikely to be met within contemporary left parties' cartelised structure.

iv. *The new dominant coalition must be institutionalised:* This condition meets a similar problem to the above, where the entrenched power of electoral professional elites allows them to constrain the attempts at organisational reform that would be required for the institutionalisation of the dominant coalition. Many electoral professional parties would be categorised as plebiscitary rather than delegatory or assembly-based parties, in that their decision-making is made through referenda or mass-votes, which in reality give increased power to political elites (Von Dem Berge and Poguntke 2017; Hopkin 2001; Pilet and Cross 2014). As a result, dissident electoral professional elites that seek to re-orient the party would have to fundamentally shift the institutional structure of the party towards a delegatory model that would allow any extra-parliamentary allies internal influence. Yet, because of electoral professional hegemony, such action would require hegemonic elites to voluntarily reduce their own influence. At the same time, reshaping the institutional structure of the party requires agreement between dissident parliamentarians and extra-parliamentary actors over how decision-making should be structured.

Outlined in these terms, it is clear that left parties' social blocs have been dis-articulated, however the prevailing electoral professional model limits the opportunities for re-orientation by narrowing the types of actors that can participate in intra-party debates; ensuring that any such debate is held within an accountability structure that parliamentary elites have an effective veto over; and constraining the possibility of any new dominant coalition becoming institutionalised. While it is possible that one of these constraints is overcome – for instance the emergence of new actors is not overly unrealistic – the way in which power is structured within the party organisation makes it extremely unlikely that they will be able to gain sufficient internal influence to gain control of the party organisation, re-orient the party, and embed this new orientation. On this basis, I argue that unless these problems are resolved, left parties will fail to re-orient to the transformational questions provoked by the crises that emerge from the knowledge economy and therefore will lack the capacity for articulation.

2.3 Conclusion

Rather than functioning as static entities, parties develop through their response to critical junctures that dis-articulate their underpinning social blocs. This provokes a deeper question of what parties actually change in response to urgent exogenous demands. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that while parties must change their ideological orientation, this is contingent on parties organisational structures: parties must shift the composition of their dominant coalitions, which involves the introduction of new actors that carry unique interests and interpretations into positions of influence, and that this change must be institutionalised. I then outlined the organisational development of left parties across the twentieth century and placed specific attention to the last decades of the twentieth century. In this period, left parties shifted their orientation to the early effects of de-industrialisation, which enabled them to articulate a social bloc around middle class and financial sector interest groups' interests. I note that this orientation – "The Third Way" – was achieved through the consolidation of power in the party in public office (Bardi et al., 2017; Katz & Mair, 2002). It is this power structure that prevents re-orientation, as

the Third Way has been an enabling force in the anti-system politics that have characterised post-crisis party systems: it limits the potential for new types of actors to emerge within parties, it makes it harder for internal opponents to co-ordinate their interests, and it provides pre-existing elites with a veto over substantial ideological or organisational changes.

The implications for this argument are concerning. The organisational changes that left parties made to produce the Third Way orientation has limited what they can actually do as this structure enables parties to run campaigns with short-time horizons that are highly targeted at unattached voters but cannot make deeper representative or social connections with social groups (Katz and Mair 2006, 5). The highly trained professional staff provide parties with the capacity to poll electorates and developed polished communication strategies, yet their engagement with social groups is performative. This was illustrated in the wake of the financial crisis, which provoked widespread demands for governments to actually 'do something' (Hopkin & Blyth, 2018, p. 15). To invoke the language of articulation theory, left parties must become an integral party, however as Panebianco (1988, 269) argues, 'the power relations between parties and other organisations in different political arenas favours the parties when they can use their ability to organise/represent collective arenas. When this trump card is no longer exploitable, their positioned is weakened in every arena.'

What is required is a shift in the organisational structure and the entry of new types of actors. In previous organisational models this was possible because the dominant coalition was controlled by a range of types of actors. The uniformity that exists within electoral professional parties gives way to a hierarchical and hegemonic dominant coalition, yet this is the last thing that the party actually needs in a time of crisis. As a result, left parties are stuck with an orientation that is inapplicable to the experiences of their potential supporters and left parties lack the ideological or organisational means to re-articulate a new social bloc.

We can now apply this explanation to the one clear case in which organisational change and re-orientation was attempted, the British Labour party.

Chapter 3: the organisational development of the Labour party in the twentieth century

In this chapter I discuss my methodology and justify the selection of the British Labour party as the primary case for analysis in this thesis. I then provide a case outline, where I explore the way in which Labour changed as a party throughout the twentieth century. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that the key concepts that were developed in the previous chapter – articulation, orientation and the dominant coalition – are relevant to understanding the Labour party's development. I analyse the period of party change in the 1990s in particular detail. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the validity of the argument posed in Chapter 2, where the shift in ideological orientation that is necessary for the articulation of a new social bloc is contingent on a change in the party's organisational structure. I show that Labour experienced the disarticulation of its social bloc in the 1980s, and it was only able to articulate a new bloc over a decade later, after changes in the composition of the party's dominant coalition were institutionalised and its Third Way orientation was embedded across the party's institutions. This Third Way orientation proved sufficient for the party to articulate a social bloc that was predominantly comprised of middle-class social groups and interest groups that were tied to the finance sector.

Secondly, it is necessary to explore the period of the 1990s in detail because, as I argued at the end of Chapter 2, these organisational changes continue to constrain the Labour party today. This analysis allows me to identify the specific organisational mechanisms that have ensured that electoral professional elites return an effective veto over the attempts of new leaders to re-orient the party in the face of the critical juncture that it has experienced in the aftermath of the financial crisis. To this end there are a number of critical factors: the prevailing Third Way orientation is unsuitable to the articulation of a new social bloc in the wake of the financial crisis; the shift in internal accountability away from the party conference and towards the parliamentary party means

that an orthodox interpretation of electability will constrain a new party leader's attempt at re-orientation; the machine that was constructed by Blair to win internal battles will only function if the party leader holds a Third Way orientation; and the source of potential new types of actors means that they are unlikely to share common grounds on the form of Labour's potential alternative orientation. In providing this outline, this chapter provides the necessary background for us to understand the constraints that Miliband and Corbyn faced in changing the Labour party.

3.1 Methodological considerations

The framework that I developed in the previous chapter argues that for a party to articulate a new social bloc in the aftermath of a critical juncture it must ideologically re-orient to the concomitant effects of structural transformation by changing the composition of its dominant coalition and institutionalising this new power dynamic. The implication of this framework is that to understand why a party has failed to articulate a new social bloc, and therefore suffered decline, we need to identify the relevant actors and institutional constraints that influence internal decision making. To test the validity of this framework we therefore need a methodological approach that allows us to identify the relevant actors, ascertain their interests, study the processes through which they engage with each other and determine whether this yields an ideological orientation that is sufficient to articulate a social bloc.

The dominant 'behavioural turn' in comparative politics does not provide a viable methodological approach. As I argued in the previous chapters, these approaches tend to adopt a unitary approach to parties (Ziblatt, 2017). Behavioural approaches are largely unconcerned with how parties make decisions, in part due to an overemphasise on survey-based research, which means that "party change" is largely conceptualised as voter-led. This means that the primary action available to a party is programmatic change, which has the added benefit of "objective" measurement through text analysis, in the form of the Comparative Manifesto Project, or through expert surveys, in the Chapel Hill Study. Yet these approaches do not allow us to consider the contingencies that are involved when a party does change its policies as different internal interests

seek to ensure that their concerns and objectives have influence. The same is true in the process of selecting the political representatives whose discourse can be influential, and even in the process of formulating a political speech. Ultimately, political parties are organisations that are contested spaces (Cohen et al., 2008; DiSalvo, 2012; Mudge, 2018; Ziblatt, 2017). This means that if the implications of survey-based findings run along the lines of "if only this party adopted *x* policy", we need to understand why it did not. The central claim of my thesis is that to do this, we need to analyse a party from the inside. The conceptual framework that is developed in this thesis places emphasis on the decision making that occurs inside a party in response to a critical juncture, which requires us to identify the various interests of the relevant actors, explore what options were available and explain why the specific decision was made (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, pp. 354–5; Pierson, 2000).

The analysis and comparisons of party organisations has long been a problem that has constrained scholars of party politics. Recent advances, most notably associated with the work on the Political Parties Database (Poguntke et al., 2016), have attempted to systematize and quantify variables intrinsic to a party organisation. The focus of this research, however, has been on the formal rules and institutions that bind a party organisation. This can yield important insights, for instance it has enabled the categorisation of parties into plebiscitary or assembly-based parties, which has important implications for our understanding of the structure of decision-making in contemporary parties (Von Dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017). However, my conceptual approach focuses on how such internal structures can impair or enable shifts in the location of decision-making within a party by influencing the relations between different types of internal actors. Formal rules and structures are only one potential mechanism that could influence the process of party change.

By emphasising the role of external and internal conjunctures and structures influencing the behaviour of different types of actors my conceptual approach lends itself to causal mechanism-based analysis. As such, process tracing offers the most appropriate methodology as,

rather than focusing on whether *x* variable causes *y*, I can explore how social and institutional structures interact with individual agency and decision-making to produce a specific outcome (Bennett & Checkel, 2014, p. 3; Collier, 2011; Hall, 2006). To put this more concretely in terms of the puzzle of left party decline: there is a general scholarly agreement that left parties have failed to adapt to the contingencies that have emerged amidst the transition away from an industrial economy, but to understand *why* they have failed in this regard, we need to take the agency of these parties seriously and therefore study, in a fine-grained manner, the process of decision-making within these parties.

Case selection: the British Labour party

Process tracing does not easily lend itself to wider comparative analysis. The data collection and analysis required for just one case can take a considerable period of time. While this allows for the fine-grained theory building and testing that makes process tracing analytically useful, it limits the capacity for a researcher to test their theory across a large number of cases (Collier, 2011; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Given the puzzle that motivates this thesis is the cause of left party decline, and more specifically the lack of party adaptation to structural change – there are a number of potential case studies.

I have selected the British Labour party as the primary case for analysis as it offers one of the few left parties that clearly attempted to change in the relevant period. Indeed, the Labour party, especially under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, probably made the most serious attempt at moving away from the electoral professional party structure as the grassroots and external social movements were a catalyst for change, which makes it an ideal test case for the conceptual framework that I have developed around internal obstacles to change. The argument that I have developed over the last two chapters establishes that the reason for left party decline is their inability to adapt to changing structural conditions. Therefore, there is significant analytical value from selecting a case in which change was attempted and yet ultimately failed to take hold. By analysing the processes through which Labour did attempt to change, we can explore how

structural context, institutional dynamics and the relationships between actors constraints or enables this outcome.

Nevertheless, it is worth briefly considering potential alternative cases. There is considerable variation in the extent to which contemporary left parties have declined. Some parties – like PASOK, the Parti Socialiste, and the PvDA – have suffered what appears to be a terminal collapse in support. Others, like the New Zealand Labour Party and the Portuguese Socialist Party have recovered to achieve some of the strongest electoral outcomes in their histories. One strategy could have been to select a left party that has either completely collapsed or revived and to inductively explore the reasons for this outcome. Tracing the process of this outcome would be useful in that if the presence or absence or ideological re-orientation explains the outcome then it would confirm or refute my theory (Bennett & Checkel, 2014, p. 25). However, I instead adopted a case selection strategy that centred on what type of case would allow me to collect the most amount of evidence about my stated causal explanation (Collier et al., 2003; Mahoney, 2003; Seawright, 2016). As the British Labour party is one of the few cases to attempt to construct fundamentally different orientations in the last decade – a more reformist form under Ed Miliband, and a more radical attempt under Jeremy Corbyn – this offers a case where I can observe the effect that different causal mechanisms have on the outcome. At the same time, I can inductively analyse whether the behaviour of these mechanisms could yield alternative explanations that better explain the Labour party's lack of change and subsequent decline (George & Bennett, 2005).

A positive finding with regards to the applicability of my theory in explaining the failure of Miliband and Corbyn to adapt the Labour Party to new external realities cannot necessarily be taken as support for the broader generalisability of my theory to the wider class of left party families. Ultimately, case study research is effective when its purpose is to yield insights into a broader class of similar units (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). My case selection emphasises in depth analysis of a single case rather than comparative scope (Fairfield & Charman, 2022; Seawright, 2016). Given there appear to be relatively few cases of left parties that have clearly attempted

organisational and ideological change, the study of the Labour party can yield insights into what is preventing change and revival within other left parties.

Data collection

The conceptual approach to party change that informs my theory as to why the Labour party failed to change focuses heavily on the way different types of actors interpret structural shifts. The analysis of decision making at critical junctures requires the researcher to 'reconstruct, in a systematic and rigorous fashion, each stage of the decision-making process' (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 354). To this end, my data collection was geared towards identifying the principal actors under the Miliband and Corbyn leaderships; understanding how these actors differed in their preferences and ideas for how the Labour party should behave; and how they engaged with other actors within the party.

My data collection principally relied on documentary analysis that included newspaper articles, party reports and internal memos – most of these were publicly available though some were provided to me confidentially – and secondary accounts from the period that were written by either journalists or academics (Robson, 2002). I began with the secondary accounts, as these tended to provide birds-eye perspectives of each leadership. These accounts were particularly helpful in identifying the dominant actors and they often included interviews with high-ranking individuals. These accounts also helped me to identify the key conjunctures in some of the interpretive battles that were fought within the party during both leaderships. This helped me to narrow the scope of my search using newspaper articles, as I could focus on key issues, individuals and events in each period (Hill, 1993). In my original search, I limited my study to articles from *LabourList*, *The Guardian*, and *The New Statesman*. I selected these newspapers as, historically, they have provided the most in-depth reporting and coverage of the Labour party and its intra-party politics. In latter stages, I expanded my search to include a wider range of articles.

At this stage of the process I was able to develop quite a full account of the motivations, ideological preferences and relational behaviour of the key actors in both the Miliband and Corbyn

leaderships. At the same time, in recognising that the iterative nature of simultaneous inductive and deductive process tracing makes it necessary for researchers to avoid confirmation bias by identifying 'additional observable implications' of potential causal explanations. To this end, I conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with party elites from both leadership periods (see appendix for a list). In identifying and contacting respondents, I operated under the belief that high-ranking politicians would be unlikely to provide me with information that they had not already provided in their interviews with existing secondary accounts (Cowley, 2021; Richards, 1996). On this basis, I focused my interview selection on advisors and individuals that would be able to supplement the information and evidence that had been selected from my documentary analysis (Cowley, 2021). Individuals were purposively selected according to their position within the party hierarchy and their relationship with the party leadership in the period of study. My interviewees included advisors who could provide new perspectives and accounts of actor decision-making, as well as backbench MPs who could provide different accounts of political campaigns and insights into meetings of the parliamentary Labour caucus. These interviews also provided me with additional data collection, in particular confidential internal party reports and memos that had not been made publicly available.

3.2 The rise and fall of Labour's trade union – parliamentary dominant coalition

It is necessary to start with a brief overview of the Labour party's development. This provides important background detail to understand the broad structural changes that proceeded the period of focus. It also helps to demonstrate that the composition and institutionalisation of the historically specific dominant coalition was a critical factor in the fluctuations in Labour's success. More to the point, this section demonstrates that Labour did change its organisational structure and its orientation in response to critical junctures, which demonstrates the relevance of the puzzle as to why contemporary efforts at change have failed.

The Labour Party was formed in 1900 as a coalition between trade unions and socialist organisations, most notably the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society, with the express aim of securing parliamentary representation for the working class. The party was distinguished by its federated structure, where each autonomous affiliate organisation was guaranteed delegates to the annual party conference, which served as the peak decision-making body as it determined party policy and elected officials within the party bureaucracy and the National Executive Committee (NEC).

Trade unions controlled the party conference for much of the twentieth century (Minkin, 1978; Quinn, 2016). Until the 1990s, the ratio of trade union delegates versus delegates from Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) was 90:10 (Russell, 2005, p. 192). Trade unions received a bloc of delegates according to the relative size of their financial contributions (Quinn, 2012, p. 212). These delegates voted as a bloc, which centralised significant power in the hands of trade union leaders, enabling them to control the party conference, which in turn gave them significant influence over other zones of uncertainty and secured their place in the dominant coalition.

In theory, the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) was formally subordinated to the party conference as this institution would determine party policy. In practice, because unions could not fully influence early candidate selection processes the PLP retained autonomous power. While the unions did finance the campaigns of individual MPs, it was socialist societies that disproportionately supplied MPs and, by the 1930s, the PLP had grown in size and therefore through its location in parliament gained clear independence from the party conference. Yet rather than this provoking long-standing conflict between parliamentary and union elites, the operation of the bloc vote tended to benefit the parliamentary leadership as it provided an efficient means for union leaders to strike deals between each other and with the party leadership (McKenzie, 1964, p. 407; Quinn, 2012, pp. 212–218). Within the dominant coalition, these actors co-ordinated their interests through an agreement trade unions would hold significant influence over Labour's

industrial policy, while the PLP would have autonomy to develop policy in other areas (Minkin, 1978; Russell, 2005, pp. 12–3).

This organisational structure provided the basis for, arguably, Labour's most successful articulation project. In the aftermath of WWII, Labour won majorities in the 1945 and 1950 elections and enjoyed consistent vote shares around 45%. Labour united the interests of the manual working class, low-skilled service workers, public sector workers and other professionals through the articulation of their interests as wage earners (Coates, 2012, p. 40; Evans & Tilley, 2012, p. 148, 2017, pp. 148–52; Hancké & Vlandas, 2021, p. 16). The administrative controls that parliamentary actors held in the Atlee government allowed it to nationalise the railways, docks and coal, while also shaping the contours of the modern welfare state, most famously through the creation of the National Health Service (NHS) (Krieger, 1991, pp. 49–50). This simultaneously created economic opportunities for the different groups within the party's social bloc, while providing them with resources to face the insecurity that they experience in the aftermath of WWII. At the same time, the trade unions played an important role in incorporating some of these groups into the party's social bloc. After repealing the 1927 Trade Union Act, union participation in wage bargaining and public policy formulation contributed to the growth in trade union density, which increased from 26.9% in 1938 to 41.1% in 1950 (Coates, 2012, p. 39; Mason & Bain, 1993, p. 333). In this way, Labour's dominant coalition functioned cohesively to enable it to articulate its workerist social bloc.

It is well established that the stagflation crisis and the inability of Labour to ensure wage restraint resulted in the discrediting of the Keynesian paradigm, which in turn had the concomitant effect of disarticulating Labour's social bloc. The conflicting interests between trade union leaders and parliamentary elites prevented Labour from re-orienting to this crisis.

The warning signs for disarticulation appeared in the 1960s. Internal surveys found that a majority of Labour's working class supporters identified in middle class terms, which led a party strategist to conclude that 'each year which takes us further not only from the hungry '30s but

from the austere '40s weakens class consciousness… more and more socialist voters turn "don't knows" and then into active Tories' (Richard Crossman quoted in Bogdanor, 2014). In effect, the Keynesian policies through which the party had initially articulated its workerist social bloc had increasingly created social tensions as full employment and social rights became less relevant to the interests of swathes of the middle and working classes that enjoyed increased economic security (Hancké & Vlandas, 2021; Rose, 1968). Under the Wilson governments of the 1960s and 1970s, Labour sought to re-orient through a program that would promote mass consumerism, which would simultaneously appeal to the aspirational middle classes while expanding production and manufacturing (Crines, 2014). In practice, the Wilson governments had to prioritise the interests of markets by targeting inflation, which required an incomes policy that increasingly dissatisfied union leaders. Union membership increased by 2.3 million across the 1960s, which prompted the election of more left-wing union leaders like Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones and a concomitant increase in militancy (Russell, 2005, p. 14; Thorpe, 1999, p. 139). By the late 1970s, when James Callaghan had succeeded Wilson, the government had been forced into a highly public confrontation with the trade unions as the Callaghan government openly disavowed conference motions that were passed opposing the imposition of wage restraint and increasingly relied on communication campaigns aimed at individual union members (Mudge, 2018, p. 337). The effect of this campaign did not prevent increased industrial militancy over the "winter of discontent", and in fact only helped to solidify the public impression that the unions were to blame for the inflation crisis (Hay, 1996; Mudge, 2018, p. 337). The actions of union leaders were widely seen as discrediting the capacity of Labour to govern, as 84% of the public agreed that they had 'become too powerful' (Russell, 2005, p. 26).

As the crises associated with stagflation reached a critical juncture, Labour's prevailing dominant coalition did not allow the party to develop new ideas and frames that may have enabled the re-articulation of its cleavage. Internally, this created the space for the emergence of left-wing groups within the membership, like the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), that were

motivated by the Wilson and Callaghan government's repeated flouting of the party conference, and was supported by left-wing union leaders (Russell, 2005, pp. 239–40). As a result, for the first time in Labour's history, the NEC was controlled by a left grouping of union and constituency delegates. Party activists began to gain influence over zones of uncertainty and thus the composition of the party's dominant coalition began to shift. In the wake of the party's defeat at the 1979 election, this coalition succeeded in passing significant organisational reforms – including mandatory reselection and a new leadership electoral college. It was these reforms, and the more left-wing role of the trade unions in particular, that encouraged the breakaway of moderate MPs to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1981. The disarticulation of Labour's social bloc had broken apart the party's dominant coalition.

In the 1980s it was the Conservative party under Margaret Thatcher's leadership that proved more effective at articulating a social bloc. Thatcher was oriented by a 'consumption-based politics' that sought to 'legitimize an anti-collectivist vision, and to demobilise and discredit production based politics and social solidarities' (Krieger, 1991, p. 63). Through tight monetary policy, drastic reductions in public spending and the liberalisation of Britain's financial markets Thatcher accelerated Britain's de-industrialisation. This hurt Labour's hopes for a swift re-articulation of a social bloc, as the proportion of the workforce classed as manual workers fell from 54.7% in 1971 to 37.7% in 1991 and trade union membership fell by two thirds between 1979 and 1993 (Russell, 2005, p. 27). The labour market was increasingly dominated by white collar jobs that tended to reward individuals on the basis of their educational attainment, which were also less sensitive to sustained economic growth than the industrial working class, which helped to solidify a cleavage of support that underpinned the neoliberal growth model (Hancké & Vlandas, 2021, p. 18). Thatcher's social bloc was articulated as significant elements of the working class came to 'share the concerns of middle England' (Coates, 2005, p. 16). Thatcher had helped to transform the economy such that 'class' was no longer experienced through an individual's status as a worker, but whether consumption items like housing, education, and pensions were

provided by the state or the market (Krieger, 2007, p. 424). The "haves", including a significant minority of former working class voters, could consume these items on private markets; the "have nots" could not.

Throughout the decade Labour struggled to re-orient, primarily due to the composition and lack of institutionalisation of its dominant coalition. In the early period, around the 1983 General Election, the strength of trade union leaders and the grassroots left ensured that the party retained a largely Keynesian orientation. That this orientation was insufficient to re-articulate the party's social bloc was seen in the 'spectacular decline in support for the collectivist trinity of public ownership, trade union power and social welfare' amongst working class cohorts (Crewe, 1982).

It was in the aftermath of this defeat that a small number of young MPs and advisors, including Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson and Gordon Brown, began to call for modernisation. These "modernisers" held little faith that Labour's established conventions 'might embody some accumulated wisdom of past experience' that would be useful in making sense of its conjuncture and instead demanded that Labour adapt to social, economic and technological structural changes by positioning itself in the 'centre ground' of politics (Minkin, 2014, p. 135). While these "modernisers" were a significant minority within the parliamentary party, they did secure positions of influence under the leadership of Neil Kinnock. For instance, Mandelson was appointed Director of Communications and sought to ensure that opinion polling was a resource that the party relied on more heavily as a guide to party policy (Kogan, 2019, pp. 62–3).

After Labour lost the 1987 General Election, Kinnock launched a policy review which resulted in a new program that publicly committed the party to devise policy according to market research rather than ideology and ensure that the trade unions would have minimal influence (Quinn, 2005, pp. 76–9). The result was that 'on almost every major issue – macroeconomic policy, the role of the market, public services, privatisation and the public sector, Europe, trade union democracy and… nuclear defence – Labour… has adopted positions barely a millimetre away from the SDP's of 1987' (Crewe, 1991, p. 43). This review was opposed by elements of the left-

wing of the party that still retained some influence within the dominant coalition through its control of the NEC. This prompted its figurehead, Tony Benn, to launch an ill-fated leadership challenge, the failure of which saw allies in the parliamentary party and trade union movement publicly distance themselves (Smith, 2018). The failure of Benn's challenge legitimated Kinnock's policy shift, and enabled him to engage in organisational reform (Jones, 1994, p. 581).

The most significant of these reforms was a limited introduction of One Member, One Vote (OMOV) to internal elections. Most trade unions opposed this as they were concerned that it would dilute the power of the bloc vote (Kogan, 2019, p. 72; Quinn, 2005). In the aftermath of Kinnock's victory over Benn, its usage was widened to include elections for delegates on the NEC, which saw prominent left-wingers like Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and even Benn lose their NEC seats to insurgent modernisers including Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Over the course of Kinnock's leadership, modernisers increased their control over vital zones of uncertainty, including candidate selection, the NEC and policy-making institutions. Party activists lost control, and therefore any internal influence, which left trade union leaders as the only source of internal opposition within the dominant coalition. This facilitated the ideological re-orientation of the party, as Labour came to support the essential fabric of Thatcher's articulation project. Nevertheless, Labour lost the 1992 General Election. Modernisers interpreted this result as evidence that Kinnock's programmatic turn had not gone far enough. For instance, Labour's 1992 election manifesto included commitments to increase the top rate of income tax to 50% and to significantly increase welfare spending, which Watson and Hay (2003, 297) argue is a reflection of Kinnock's personal 'general scepticism towards market outcomes.' For the modernisers, this was an important example of how Labour's re-orientation was incomplete as it retained the influence of actors socialised in the "old Labour" days.

3.3 The organisational construction of New Labour

It was only after Tony Blair became party leader in 1994 that the modernisers gained complete control of the dominant coalition. The institutionalisation of this dynamic embedded a Third Way

ideological orientation, which proved sufficient for Labour to articulate a social bloc that was primarily comprised of middle-class social groups and finance capital interest groups. In this section I begin by briefly outlining the nature of this orientation and showing how it was sufficient for articulation, before demonstrating the organisational contingencies behind its construction.

The architects of New Labour sought to articulate a social bloc that was primarily composed of the middle classes, which they recognised was contingent on the incorporation of interest groups in the finance sector. To develop an orientation that was sufficient for this task, the modernisers needed to detach the party from the working classes. As Philip Gould (2011, p. 173), who served as a senior advisor and communications strategist in Blair's office, argued, Labour 'need[ed] to reassert their claim to represent the majority of working people. The working middle class needs to figure at least as centrally in the party's identity as the traditional blue-collar imagery.' From his interviews with senior figures in the Blair government, Minkin (2014, 124), concludes that Blair's 'primary target was… white-collar, middle-income voters' who would be articulated into Labour's coalition through a programme that would not 'cap individual aspirations and could not be identified with holding people back.' The predominant identity in this new articulation would be 'hard working people', which 'implicitly drew a distinction with the undeserving' (Minkin, 2014, pp. 124–5). To shift the party's core constituency, Mandelson argued 'we had to reassure the public that we were different, that we were not the 1970s old Labour… that we really were modern, sensible, centrist and united' (in Kogan, 2019, p. 117).

The modernisers believed that by incorporating finance capital into its social bloc that they would provide Labour with the legitimacy to demonstrate that they would act in the middle classes' interests. At the 1992 General Election, business representatives endorsed the Conservatives in *The Times*, which the modernisers saw as important in 'consolidating Tory support from Middle England and in mobilising the wavering Tory voters in marginal constituencies' (Minkin 2014, 125-6). The 'prawn cocktail offensive' in the City prior to the 1992 General Election had been a starting step towards this end as it helped to earn the party the endorsement of the *Financial Times* (Minkin

2014, 125). While this may have improved the networks that connected Labour and financial elites, Blair and Brown sought to solidify this further. According to Minkin (2014, 670), the party leadership 'moved behind the back of the TUC' to work in harmony with business to delay or circumvent union policy. Prior to the 1997 election, the party published a separate manifesto for business, the policy for which came outside traditional party structures (Minkin 2014, 670). Once New Labour entered government, they established 'institutionalised liaison' with business (as well as the unions) through specific managers in No. 10. All together, Eric Shaw (2007, p. 141) argues that the new relationship with business that was established under New Labour was 'a major modification of the role that Labour plays in the political system.'

The Third Way orientation would provide the party with the ideas and framing to articulate this bloc. At its base, this was an ideological project that sought to simultaneously convince 'capital of the fiscal probity and responsibility of their measures… while sustaining a popular political project capable of providing a sufficient electoral base' (Hay, 1997, pp. 235–6). One of the defining principles of the Third Way was a belief that the structural changes associated with globalisation made ideologies that centred on the state redundant, instead it was the role of the state to enable individuals and businesses to take advantage of the opportunities that globalisation presented (Giddens, 1994, 1998). As Brown told the annual conference of the Confederation of British Industry on the eve of the 1997 General Election, 'we understand that in a global market place, traditional national economic policies – corporatism from the old left – no longer have any relevance' (in Watson & Hay, 2003, p. 296). The Third Way orientation allowed Labour to commit to investment in education and skills development, which would support individuals into growing knowledge sectors, while at the same time Labour promised to continue the liberalisation of labour and financial markets (Krieger, 2007, p. 424; Watson & Hay, 2003, pp. 291–2).

The means through which modernisers would draw on this orientation to articulate a new social bloc for Labour were centred on de-politicisation, policy delegation and public relations. The strategy behind de-politicisation and policy delegation was to 'change market expectations

regarding the effectiveness and credibility of policy-making in addition to shielding the government from the consequences of unpopular policies' (Burnham, 2001, pp. 128–9). A notable example of this was the move to grant 'operational independence' to the Bank of England in the immediate aftermath of Labour's victory in 1997. This not only reassured interest groups in the City of London that Labour would act in line with orthodox economic thinking, but it would enable the party to avoid blame for high interest rates (Burnham, 2001, p. 139; Mudge, 2018, p. 348). Other policy moves included support for the Conservatives' spending policies, a vow to not increase the top rate of income tax, and a pledge to not borrow to finance spending. Upon election, in 1997, Labour legislated a number of these moves, which had the effect of publicly committing itself to the what it perceived to be middle class interests (Watson & Hay, 2003, p. 301).

It is worth noting that New Labour did achieve significant reductions in poverty, however this was largely achieved through low profile instruments like increases in means-tested allowances, tax credits and changes in National Insurance contributions. This approach has often been described as 'redistribution by stealth', where an outright articulation of this goal would reduce Labour's commitment to competitiveness (Krieger, 2007, p. 425). New Labour's policy agenda facilitated rises in the standard of living for those at the very bottom, while enabling, and even encouraging, upper middle class groups' greater acquisition of wealth (Glyn & Wood, 2001, p. 221). Inequality grew for a number of the group's articulated into Labour's social bloc, though this was masked by increased private borrowing (Crouch, 2009).

Finally, New Labour's articulation was underpinned by an overt rebranding of the party that included its communications strategy. In all of the party communications, "New" Labour was contrasted with "Old" Labour through its recognition of economic reality, explored in more detail above. On top of this, New Labour were more proactive in their news management. Largely tied to Alastair Campbell, the "party line" was dictated by the leader's office, and the party established a Strategic Communications Unit to co-ordinate announcements across government departments and ensure that all MPs retained a focused policy message that could be distributed to the media

(Quinn, 2012). This media management was combined with a reliance on focus groups in order to both shape the content of party policy, but more specifically to inform the way in which Labour framed its policy to the electorate (Wickham-Jones, 2005, p. 665). On the basis of these focus groups, Labour had a tight process of policy development and announcement, where a document would be followed with a press release, which in turn was followed by a briefing paper (Wickham-Jones, 2005, p. 666). This gave rise to a form of politics in which the figure of Tony Blair, as party leader, came to embody the Labour party. As will discussed in greater depth below, Blair and Brown held control over policy development and in their personal figures sought to signal to the electorate their differences with Old Labour.

The organisational underpinnings of New Labour's re-orientation

The Third Way orientation could only become embedded through what Minkin (2014) describes as a 'rolling coup', where the modernisers supplanted the position of trade union leaders within the dominant coalition, and then institutionalised their position by refashioning the way in which critical zones of uncertainty functioned. In his interviews with senior New Labour figures, Minkin (2014, 134-5) finds that their approach to party management was informed by a view of the party as a 'recalcitrant organisation' that was 'special in its degenerate character'. Many of the key figures, including Blair, Brown and Mandelson, had entered Labour politics in the late 1970s, when the left had controlled the NEC and the party conference and had enacted damage on the parliamentary leadership. This contributed to their view of the party organisation's entrenched rules, processes and structures as 'weaknesses pronounced so severe that they amounted to moral failings which had to be counteracted' (Minkin, 2014, p. 665).

To this end, the modernisers believed that any articulation project was contingent on a power structure that was centralised around the party leadership. They shared an intrinsic belief that the party would benefit from a leadership structure that promoted the 'creative flexibility of informality' without constraints from the party bureaucracy or trade union leaders (Minkin, 2014,

pp. 118–9). Gould (2011, pp. 240–2), a party strategist, describes a memo that he drafted in 1995 that recommended Labour merge

> 'competing existing structures with a single chain of command leading directly to the leader of the party…. only a unitary system of command could give Labour the clarity and flexibility it needed to adapt and change at the pace required by modern politics… Labour's structure had become too diffuse, with power shared between the NEC, the PLP, the conference, the unions and the constituency associations.'

In effect, Gould is describing a dominant coalition that is comprised of too many actors to allow for Labour to coherently respond to its external environment.

To achieve a more amenable structure, Blair built a party machine that enabled the centralisation of power around the leader, while providing the ideological infrastructure that would underpin New Labour's electoral success. This machine was critical to the construction of a party organisation where the zones of uncertainty were controlled by a dominant coalition that was exclusively composed of parliamentary elites – in effect Blair and Brown – and to some extent Mandelson and a select few others at different points in time.

The first step was to gain control over the party General Secretary. Under Labour's constitution, the General Secretary was formally independent from the leader as it was appointed by the NEC. The incumbent when Blair was elected leader, Larry Whitty, had been a strong defender of the party-union link, and therefore was not necessarily fully disposed to all elements of Blair's re-orientation (Minkin, 2014, p. 147). However, a month after Blair became leader Whitty was pressured to resign and was replaced by Blair's preferred candidate, Tom Sawyer (Minkin, 2014, p. 147). Moreover, under Blair, the position of General Secretary changed hands five times, unprecedented in the party's history, which reflects the increased authority that he had over their selection (Minkin, 2014, p. 147).

By gaining such influence over the General Secretary, Blair was able to assemble his machine by interlinking, and effectively subordinating, the party bureaucracy to the leader's office

(Minkin, 2014, p. 153). This was made possible because the General Secretary was effectively the head of the party bureaucracy and could therefore influence staffing decisions. This meant that Blair and his team could control the selection of party staff, which created an unprecedented fluidity in terms of the personnel who worked across these institutions. The control of staff and the construction of the machine was pivotal to both the ideological genesis of the Third Way orientation and to winning internal battles that would allow Blair to embed this orientation. Whereas under the Wilson government policy advisors had either been recruited from trade union research departments or from academia, Blair's vanguard was different. For example, Ed Balls, who had worked at the Harvard Kennedy School and the *Financial Times* (Mudge, 2018, pp. 346–7). This included the increasing importance of public relations professionals or spin doctors, of whom Charlie Whelan and Alastair Campbell are the most famous examples. Whelan and Campbell had atypical backgrounds for Labour experts, in that they had worked for tabloid newspapers, and this expertise would prove critical to shaping Labour's new managed strategy of media engagement and the rapprochement with the Murdoch press (Jones, 2000, pp. 40–2; Mudge, 2018, p. 346). Moreover, a number of think tanks emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s – Demos, the Institute for Public Policy Research, and the New Economics Foundation – that, while 'Labour-inclined' were consciously non-partisan (Mudge 2018, 345). A large number of new party staffers were employed from these think tanks, which signified an 'utterly different' source of intellectual production compared to Labour's previous ideological paradigms (Mudge 2018, 345). Most fundamentally, when compared to previous eras, staff under New Labour were higher educated, more likely to have work experience outside the party, and also more likely to seek non-party employment in the future (Webb & Fisher, 2005, pp. 8–9).

These new experts would serve as a vanguard for the institutionalisation of this orientation. Webb and Fisher's (2005, p. 12) study of the party headquarters under New Labour found that 'changes in organisational structure were accompanied by a growing emphasis on the need for flexibility, competence, commitment and adaptability among party personnel.' The modernisers

had been concerned about a culture of 'obsessive processology', which they believed stemmed from an ardent commitment to the party's rulebook often at the expense of the party's public image (Minkin, 2014, p. 666). Instead, under Blair's leadership, the rulebook was regarded as a 'flexible instrument of power' as its contents were regularly changed and it was less physically accessible for members (Minkin, 2014, p. 666; Russell, 2005, p. 254). Operating under a more partisan function, staff members in both party headquarters and in the leader's office approached party rules as more of a loose framework than an abiding code; their singular focus was to 'deliver for Tony' (Minkin, 2014, pp. 154–5). By gaining unprecedented influence over the General Secretary, Blair was able to construct an internal machine that linked the party headquarters and his office. A decade on, a staff member described how this machine functioned:

> 'There was an informal cross-departmental task-force within the party's head office charged with party management and the delivery of votes within party structures, especially the annual conference. Heavily dominated by young Labour activists and officers, it has cultivated a new culture of cynical management – among other devices, using regional offices to nominate conference delegates and influence them to vote the 'right way' via pre-conference seminars, and giving 'help' with speeches and leaning on delegates during the event itself. This has been an extraordinarily successful operation that has hardly ever been exposed… In contrast with his predecessors, Blair did not lose a conference vote for years – though this was not an organic reflection of his brilliance, but the product of a ruthless political machine (Cruddas & Harris, 2006, p. 12).

This vanguard was therefore critical to Blair's restructure towards what the broader comparative party literature describes as the domination of the party organisation by the party in public office (Bardi et al., 2017; Katz & Mair, 2006; Panebianco, 1988).

The machine was deployed in intra-party battles to relegate trade union leaders out of the dominant coalition through a combination of direct confrontation and reshaping the function of

the zones of uncertainty that the unions retained control. As outlined in greater detail in previous sections, the way in which the unions exercised power within the party was through the bloc vote at the party conference. However, since the 1970s trade unions had become increasingly unpopular with the public and by the late 1980s the unions had come to agree that they held too much power to the point that it damaged the legitimacy of the conference and themselves (Russell, 2005, p. 209). On this basis, prior to the 1992 General Election, they had agreed to reduce their share of conference votes from 90% to 70%. However, polls in the aftermath of the election defeat demonstrated that the party's relationship with the unions continued to damage Labour's reputation (Russell, 2005, p. 196). John Smith succeeded Kinnock as leader and managed to replace the block vote in the selection of parliamentary candidates with OMOV. This was only agreed after lengthy negotiations with the unions in which Smith made a high-profile pro-union speech committing a future Labour government to pursuing full employment. Through interviews with Blair and Mandelson, Kogan (2019, pp. 77–8) concludes that this only entrenched their view that the unions would act as a 'bulwark against the modernisation of the party' while the promise of pursuing full employment was seen as 'inherently dangerous.' That the unions still retained 70% of conference votes and protracted negotiations were necessary to even agree on this reduction, demonstrates that at this point in time they were still influential within Labour's dominant coalition as they controlled resources and zones of uncertainty. This may also have been a factor in why the manifesto taken to the 1992 General Election still retained some aspects of the previous, more traditionally social democratic orientation, such as an increase in top tax rates.

After the 1992 election, the NEC formed a group, with Tony Blair a member, to review the union link. In its report, the group advocated that the party keep the 70:30 split, however with a provision that an increase in the party's membership to over 300,000 would trigger a reduction in the proportion of union delegates at conference to 50%, and an increase in the proportion of CLP delegates to 50% (Minkin, 2014, pp. 128–130). This recommendation was passed by the 1993 party conference. In June 1995 membership surpassed 300,000 and the party conference of that

year agreed to the reduction in the union vote. It was also agreed that delegates from CLPs would be elected by OMOV, which significantly decreased the influence of party activists, and therefore the party's left, to win these positions. These represented the most significant changes to the party conference in Labour's history and increased the influence of the parliamentary leadership over the party as a whole. Blair's machine enabled the modernisers to gain influence over constituency delegates. Prior to a conference, delegates were invited to briefing meetings with high profile MPs and ministers to pressure their vote, and during the conference they would be 'whipped' by leadership advisors (Minkin, 2014, pp. 344–47; Russell, 2005, p. 197). The effect was to reduce the influence of unions over party decision making and for the leadership's control over the party conference, as a zone of uncertainty, to tighten (Russell, 2005, p. 257).

Not content with decreasing the union role at party conference, the modernisers sought to reduce the role of the conference in policymaking. This was a central outcome to Partnership in Power reforms in 1997. The moderniser view of the party conference was revealed in the Labour into Power (1997, 13-4) document:

> 'Party conference is a showpiece… The more controversial or significant the debates and other events at Party Conference, the more they attract sensational press attention. Gladiatorial contests and deeply divisive conflicts particularly capture attention irrespective of their true significance; and the alleged power and influence of key individuals, unions or groups are emphasised.'

Ostensibly in order to generate greater participation in policy making discussions, modernisers sought to build a new policy making structure that existed outside the remit of the annual conference. Essentially, the National Policy Forum (NPF) would follow a workshop format to develop policy documents, which would then be discussed by a Joint Policy Committee and the NEC, before being voted on by the annual conference. In reality, the party conference held little scope to influence the policy documents (Russell, 2005, pp. 202–4; Seyd, 1999, pp. 391–2). Equally, meetings of the NPF were heavily managed affairs in which the interests of the leadership typically

prevailed thanks to the operation of the party machine (Kogan, 2019, p. 84). As Paul Kenny, General Secretary of the GMB, described the process, 'when you got to the National Policy Forum, you would sit there for two days and all the unions would put forward particular areas of policy. You'd get nothing' (in Kogan, 2019, p. 119). This structure prohibited advance pronouncement of party policy and in the name of reacting to developments in the news cycle, the leadership increasingly initiated policy development outside of these structures (Minkin, 2014, p. 329). This was because, in practice, the NEC Policy Committee failed to regularly meet, which made the National Policy Forum advisory to the Joint Policy Committee, which functioned as a 'largely unaccountable leadership-dominated management tool' (Minkin, 2014, p. 672).

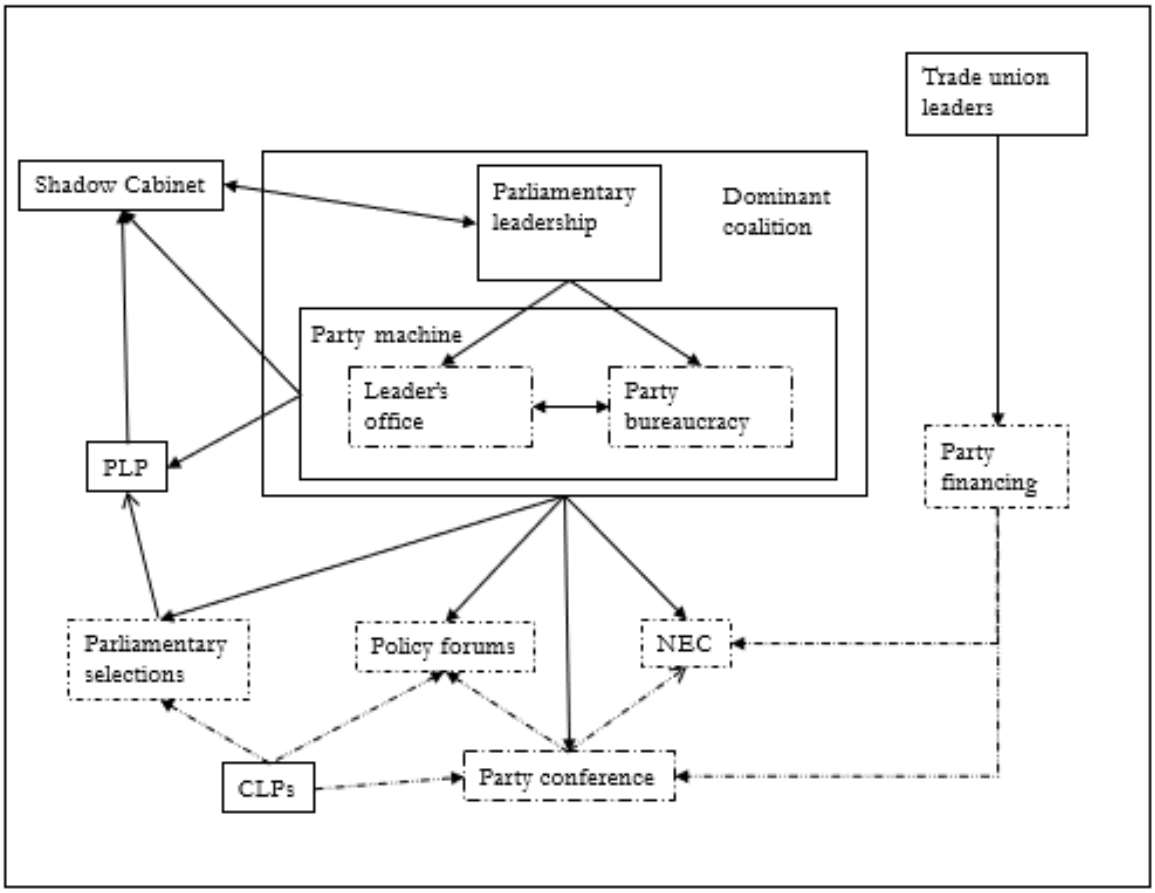
The effect of these internal reforms was to repurpose the party organisation from a delegatory to a plebiscitary structure where the party leadership would make key ideological and operational decisions, which would be affirmed through OMOV votes of the membership. Ballots of the membership were employed to gain approval for major constitutional changes; to endorse the 1997 General Election manifesto and to elect a section of the NEC. Seyd (1999, p. 385) notes three reasons Blair benefited from the use of these ballots: they enabled him to demonstrate party renewal in response to political disaffection; they enabled him to demonstrate to the public that he controlled the party; and they enabled him to frame internal opponents as unrepresentative.

This was particularly evident in the 1995 reform to Clause IV of the party constitution, which was widely seen as embodying Labour's commitment to socialism and therefore served as a symbol of Old Labour. A membership ballot was held in which members were asked whether a new statement should be adopted as 'Labour's Aims and Values'. Ballot forms were returned ahead of a special party conference, and the overwhelming support for its replacement helped to pressure CLP and trade union delegates to pass the reform (Minkin, 2014, p. 668; Russell, 2005, p. 183). In the aftermath of the reform, Blair stated that

> 'I know my Labour party very well now. It may be a strange thing to say but before… Labour often looks as if it is about to engage in class warfare in fact it is

full of basically rather decent and honest people… the importance of changing Clause IV is seminal because it liberates the Labour party from dogma and sets us free to think.'

Figure 3.1: Map of Labour party organisational structure, 1994-2010



Source: Author's visualisation

On the whole, Blair proved largely successful in reforming the party organisation to enable a structure that was more permissive to the policy paradigm that underpinned his new articulation project. The Labour party had long been a centralised political party, in which power was shared between parliamentary and union leaders. By curtailing the power of the latter and limiting the avenues that they could influence, Labour's dominant coalition was effectively a select few parliamentary elites concentrated in the leadership. This analysis is visualised in Figure 3.1, above.

In this figure, the solid boxes indicate an internal actor and the dashed boxes indicate a zone of uncertainty. The arrows symbolise the flow of power, where solid arrows indicate control, and the dashed arrows indicate limited influence. Relative to the earlier model of party organisation, there were a greater number of zones of uncertainty, which reflects a larger and more complex organisation. This figure emphasises the role of the party machine that Blair constructed through his direct control over the Leader's office and the party bureaucracy as critical in ensuring that the small number of individuals in the parliamentary leadership could exert managerial influence over the organisation at large.

Based on the evidence outlined above, this figure shows that even during the New Labour period, and unlike other cartelised parties (Allern et al., 2017), the trade unions were still the primary financiers of the party. As such, they maintained control of an important zone of uncertainty. However, the way that this enabled internal influence was through delegates to the party conference and to the NEC. As these were other zones of uncertainty that the dominant coalition had achieved considerable influence through the managerial tendency of the party machine, this negated the trade unions' power and pushed them out of the dominant coalition. The most revealing indication of this was the ability of the machine to get trade unions to agree to a reduction in their proportion of delegates.

While the party machine enabled centralised control, this did not guarantee party unity but produced an increasingly bitter factional dispute that was not formed along ideological lines but around the conflicting personal agendas of Blair and Brown within the parliamentary leadership. More broadly, while the changes to organisational structure gave far more discretion to the party leader in determining the political agenda there was still a chain of accountability that extended outwards from the dominant coalition. This chain of accountability is shown on the left hand side of Figure 3.1, where instead of the parliamentary leadership being directly accountable to trade unions or to the broader extra-parliamentary party, it is more accountable to the PLP (Russell, 2005, pp. 278–81). The PLP was likely to demonstrate loyalty to the New Labour parliamentary

leadership. In part, this is explained by the managerial influence that the party machine held over both the PLP and the Shadow Cabinet. The only real mechanism that MPs had to hold over the leadership was rebelling on parliamentary votes. As each vote was a managed affair, professionals in the machine could engage in horse trading or strong arming over most MPs to ensure that they voted according to the leadership's line (Benedetto & Hix, 2007). At the same time, the demographic composition of the PLP had undergone significant transformation, in a concomitant process to the changes in party staff explored above. Tom O'Grady's (2018) research shows that by the time New Labour secured governments, Labour MPs were far more likely to come from middle class backgrounds than working class backgrounds. As a result, so long as the leadership was advancing electable policy positions, they were unlikely to rebel. Nevertheless, Blair was only able to pass key elements of his agenda like the invasion of Iraq and the imposition of tuition fees by close margins despite the party's substantial parliamentary majority. Moreover, as Labour's majority decreased through successive parliamentary terms the leader was forced to pay greater heed of the mood within the PLP.

3.4 Evaluating New Labour's articulation project: a fragile social bloc

The organisational changes ensured that the modernisers could gain almost unprecedented control over the entirety of the dominant coalition, which enabled them to institutionalise the Third Way orientation within the party structure. This, in turn, provided Labour with the ideological and material resources that were sufficient to articulate a social bloc within the broader external context of Thatcher's Britain. Thatcher's governments had fundamentally re-aligned British politics, both in terms of the demographic structure of political competition as well as the ideational limits of what was politically possible.

New Labour succeeded as it was able to articulate a social bloc within the constraints of this socio-economic context. It is important to note that the sociological contours of New Labour's new base were not overwhelmingly different from Thatcher's base. By the 2001 General

Election, voters were as likely to see Labour as a middle-class party as a working class party (Evans & Tilley, 2017, p. 161). Evans & Tilley (2017, p. 163) demonstrate that this change in perception was driven by Labour's policy shifts and discourse, which saw far few people perceive Labour to be prioritising the working class over the middle class. Evidence for New Labour's successful articulation is found in its consistent ability to win a plurality over successive elections between 1997 and 2010.

Yet, while Labour's new articulation was successful, it was inherently fragile. Perhaps this is because its new social bloc was constructed through an internal re-orientation that largely re-framed the ideology that had been promoted under the Conservatives. While there were important points of difference between New Labour and Thatcher, there is clear evidence that the Labour party had come to accept middle class aspiration as the predominant identity, and it worked to articulate this social bloc in workerist terms rather than developing a fundamentally new ideological package. This enabled Labour to put the middle class at the core of its new social bloc.

While it may not have been an express wish to disconnect from the working class, this was a foreseeable consequence. Rather than moving to the Conservatives or to a third party, the working class was most likely to abstain (Tilley & Evans, 2017, pp. 171–7). Using panel data from the British Election Study, Evans and Tilley (2017, p. 175) find that 23% of the working class voters that had supported Labour in 1997 abstained at the 2001 General Election, compared to 10% of middle class voters. Likewise, at the 2010 General Election where Labour lost power, just under 10% of the working class voters that had supported Labour in 2005 abstained, compared to 3.5% of Labour's previous middle class support. In this sense, a reasonable interpretation of New Labour's articulation project is that by reducing the salience of class as an identity, the party attracted middle class support but alienated its historical core constituency. As Heath (2018, p. 1061) finds, by 2010 class had become more of a participatory cleavage than an electoral divide, which should be seen as a direct consequence of Labour's articulation.

Given Labour's history, there was a risk to this articulation strategy. Of course, de-industrialisation had eroded the working-class, and the defeat of the miner's strike and anti-union legislation had made it harder to sustain the organisation and concomitant political consciousness of the remnants of this group. However, in the ideological re-orientation and organisational changes that underpinned New Labour, the party chose not to develop new connections with low-skilled employees in the services sector or attempt to articulate this group into its social bloc. Likewise, Labour supported the introduction of tuition fees, which distanced itself from younger voters.

While the middle classes offered a relatively secure basis for re-articulation, if things went awry they lacked the political loyalty that the party had once forged with the working class. This presented a problem given that there was also a fragility to the ideological appeal that had underpinned New Labour's re-articulation. As explored in greater depth above, the party's pursuit of credibility and competency had been tied to a cautious economic policy that tipped the balance between manufacturing and financial industries in favour of the latter (Coates, 2005, pp. 174–84). UK economic growth was tied to ensuring a level of competitiveness that would attract foreign investment, which meant slow wage growth and insufficient investment in social services and infrastructure. While this may have demonstrated a sufficient level of credibility to capital and middle-class interests, it was open to the effects of the financial crisis, which hit parts of Labour's electoral base particularly hard as increases in unemployment, the tightening of credit and cutbacks in welfare provision impacted elements of the middle class that were not used to increased economic insecurity (Coates, 2012). Most fundamentally, the crisis had repudiated the party's claims for credibility and competency that had justified its policy approach and enabled its electoral advance into the middle class (Gamble, 2010).

There was substantial disagreement within the New Labour dominant coalition in how to respond to the crisis. While Brown had succeeded Blair in 2007, the Chancellor, Alasdair Darling, and Mandelson were still influential within the dominant coalition and they disagreed with Brown's

initial Keynesian approach (Gamble, 2012, pp. 499–500). Brown refused to talk about cuts and only investment, which in the long-run has proved justified. However, in the short-term, Blair, Darling and Mandelson believed that it would open up Labour to attacks that its economic policy was not credible, and it was certainly not in line with existing economic orthodoxy. As Darling (2011, 4) said in his biography, 'I believe that we… guided the economy through the storm, but we failed to navigate a political course for the future that would convince the public.'

In the 2010 election, the Conservatives developed a narrative that blamed Labour for the crisis, an allegation to which Labour struggled to construct a response. The fragility of Labour's social bloc was made apparent. 31% of middle-class Labour voters switched to either the Conservatives or Liberal, compared to 22% of working-class Labour voters (Evans & Tilley, 2017, p. 152). Labour's working-class voters tended to be more loyal in that they would not vote for another party, but, as previously discussed, the problem was that they had become de-politicised from politics. When Labour lost, it had a much smaller base to fall back upon.

The sociological effects of the financial crisis would provoke a profound strategic dilemma that would lie at the heart of any new social bloc. In many ways, the financial crisis accelerated the economic effects of long-term trends associated with de-industrialisation. Labour's Third Way social bloc was constructed on the basis that the middle classes' interests could be reconciled with those of interest groups from the finance sector, yet the financial crisis severed this logic. Wage stagnation and the impacts of austerity regimes would mean that many groups within the middle class would experience decreases in their standards of living and face harder material realities. In general terms, Labour's post-crisis renewal would need to come by re-incorporating elements of the working classes into a social bloc with these middle-class groups.

This strategic dilemma arose out of the long-term impacts of de-industrialisation as middle and working class groups had experienced this transition in quite different ways. Firstly, in terms of the nature of work itself – while there is a clear shift from manual to services jobs, new services jobs often pay less in terms of relative median earnings and are more precarious, than

manufacturing or mining jobs had in the industrial economy (Watson, 2018). There were also important geographic divides that arose from where productive jobs were located, That most productive, well-paid jobs are located in cities is compounded by the disproportionate effects of austerity where cuts in terms of education, healthcare and transport infrastructure are felt more in deprived regions. Third – there is debt. The typical means to a secure a stable existence – housing and a tertiary education, have become more expensive and individuals have had to take on more debt. In many ways, the asymmetric impact of the financial crisis only exacerbated these problems, further compounding 'the bifurcation of Britain' (Jennings & Stoker, 2016; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

To re-articulate a social bloc, Labour would have to find a language to speak to groups that had experiences on both sides of these metrics. Young people, who are more likely to be middle-class as measured by their education, have also overwhelmingly had to pay more for their education and housing than older generations and are more likely to have had their early working lives dominated by precarity and wage stagnation (Flynn & Schwartz, 2017; Rahman & Tomlinson, 2018). At the same time, they are less likely to live in regions characterized by relative deprivation when compared to older generations. The people that suffer in the more deprived regions tend to be the remnants of the traditional "left behind" working class. These diverse lend themselves to distinct social experiences and cultural values, they tend to share different perspectives on immigration and Euroscepticism, as well as on economic re-distribution. This is a problem for any re-articulation project because it does not lend itself easily to a common political consciousness. It is clear then, that the combined effects of the financial crisis and de-industrialisation then made Labour's Third Way social bloc unsustainable, and to develop a new political consciousness to disparate groups requires the party to re-orient.

3.5 Conclusion: the organisational limits to re-orientation

In this chapter I have provided a general outline of the Labour party's historical development. In the post-war period, Labour's dominant coalition institutionalised the co-ordination of interest between trade union leaders and parliamentary elites. This provided the party with the means to

articulate a social bloc tied to workerist identities, which underpinned their success. However, the co-ordination of interests could not be sustained during the Stagflation crisis and the early onset of de-industrialisation, and as this critical juncture dis-articulated Labour's workerist social bloc, this internal dynamic proved a constraint on the capacity of actors to push through re-orientation to either the left or the centre.

Labour eventually did articulate a new bloc by embedding a Third Way ideological orientation that was sufficient to tie together the interests of swathes of the middle classes with interest groups in the finance sector. This new ideological orientation was contingent on the capacity of "modernisers" within the parliamentary party to gain control of key zones of uncertainty and then fundamentally restructure the party to institutionalise their grip over the dominant coalition. By gaining influence over the party General Secretary, Blair was able to influence staffing decisions in both the party bureaucracy and the leader's office, which enabled him to assemble a machine that provided the ideological genesis for the Third Way orientation and a resource to win internal contests. The machine was pivotal to pushing trade union leaders out of the dominant coalition, as it employed a flexible application of party rules and direct confrontation to minimise the effect of union influence in the party conference and NEC.

It is possible to make the case that Labour may have achieved this re-orientation without these organisational changes. Such an argument would be premised on the four successive election defeats that the party suffered between 1979 and 1997 creating a permissive internal environment for Blair to carry through the ideological re-invention of the party. Evidence for this largely rests on the fact that it appears trade union leaders were willing to reduce their share of conference delegates, from 90% to 70%, on the basis that their increasing unpopularity was de-legitimising the party. However, it is important to note that this initiative came prior to Blair's leadership, coming on the back of negotiations that forced programmatic concessions – like retaining a commitment to full employment. This demonstrated that, at this stage, the trade unions still possessed a strong position within the dominant coalition. Indeed, there is compelling evidence

that it was this negotiation that only furthered the modernisers' desire to push through more radical reforms. On this basis, the evidence presented in this chapter points to the conclusion that Labour's re-articulation of a viable social bloc was contingent on Blair's organisational re-structuring.

The in-built constraints within the New Labour organisational structure

This outline of the New Labour organisational structure provides us with the basis to identify the factors that could constrain future attempts at re-orientation and thereby prevent Labour from articulating a new social bloc. At the most basic level, this was the first time that Labour's dominant coalition was comprised of only one type of actor – the electoral professional elite. There are a number of factors through which this dynamic constrained re-orientation in the Miliband and Corbyn leaderships.

Firstly, in the face of the disarticulation of Labour's social bloc in the late 2000s, the social relations of the key actors in the New Labour dominant coalition did not lend itself to an orientation that was sufficient for re-articulation. The key staff members in the party machine and the MPs to which the party leader was most accountable tended to come from elite networks that were disconnected from the communities that Labour needed to understand to synthesise their interests into a broader articulation. As was briefly discussed at the end of the last section, the combined effects of the financial crisis and de-industrialisation provoked a strategic dilemma around how Labour could articulate a political consciousness amongst groups that had vastly different social and economic experiences amidst structural transformation. Yet Labour party elites were barely connected to either of these groups as their previous orientation had been constructed through the social networks that connected Labour party elites to the City of London, the major newspapers and other elite arenas, who had proved critical to lending the party the necessary credibility for the middle classes to perceive Labour as aligned with their interests. This dynamic could not be sustained in the wake of the crash. With Labour's claim to economic credibility tarnished, the Third Way orientation that many of Labour's elites maintained did not prove helpful

in the re-articulation of a social bloc. Re-orientation would be contingent on actors with different interests and interpretations, likely forged through more unique social connections, emerging within the party.

This takes us to the second factor, which is the accountability structure within New Labour. The modernisers had transformed the party such that the leadership was accountable to the parliamentary party rather than the party conference, which minimised trade union leaders' opportunity for veto. In theory, the leader was more accountable to members, yet in practice OMOV worked to ensure that the membership provided more of a rubber stamp than a genuine deliberative body. The leader was practically accountable to the PLP (Russell, 2005, pp. 278–81). MPs were clearly motivated by office-seeking goals, which manifested in a paramount concern for electability. As the majority of MPs were a part of the same elite social networks as the advisers in Blair's machine, they shared a similar interpretation of what policies and strategies were 'electable': an emphasis on governing competency and economic credibility through a commitment to orthodoxy and owning the centre ground (O'Grady, 2018). So long as the leader remained primarily accountable to the parliamentary party, any new actors or new leaders that emerged with different interpretations and an intention to re-orient the party would face a problem as their ideas would conflict with the MPs' perceptions of electability. The idea here is not only that the MPs remained powerful within the party, but the Third Way orientation was institutionalised within this accountability structure.

This is directly related to the third factor, where, in order to change the accountability structure, a new leader or coalition of new types of actors pushing re-orientation would have to change the function of zones of uncertainty through victory in internal party battles. In the New Labour organisation, the primary means through which the leader wielded authority was the machine constructed by the control of party staff in the leader's office and, by holding influence over the General Secretary, the party bureaucracy. However, a new leader may lack this authority. They may win a leadership election through their promise of re-orientation and therefore control

the selection of staff in their own office, yet this ideological disposition may lead to a dispute with the incumbent General Secretary and the wider bureaucracy. In such a scenario, because the bureaucracy is no longer linked and subservient to the leader, the machine ceases to function and instead becomes a constraint against re-organisation. In this way, the party machine does not lend itself to a leader that does not share the Third Way orientation. This would make it harder for the leader to enact the organisational reforms required to re-orient, which in turn would only place them at the whims of the parliamentary party motivated by an orthodox conception of electability.

Finally, there is a deeper problem as to where the new types of actors that would push re-orientation would come from. The more obvious potential sources are elements of the PLP that, for a variety of reasons, could deem it within their interests to push the party towards a new ideological orientation. It is unlikely that these dissidents would form close to a majority of the PLP and would therefore have to seek to build alliances with other actors inside and outside the party in public office. The trade unions, particularly their leaders, provide another obvious source. They are less likely to have the social connections with elite networks in the City and more likely to have some connections with the experiences of their members, though the extent to which these members are representative of the broader working class is a relevant factor. Nevertheless, they are likely to support a push away from a Third Way re-orientation. Finally, a more unlikely source for new actors come from the mass membership. As Blair's reforms became embedded the party membership declined in strength. Nevertheless, it does provide a plausible source for new ideas and for dissent with the prevailing orientation, though there is no clear means for it to exert power within the organisational structure. While these disparate actors could provide the genesis for re-orientation because they may be united in their desire to re-orient the party away from the Third Way, there is a lack of common ground over what the party's new orientation would look like. This speaks to the difficulty of sustaining any internal alliance that is sufficient to weaken the grip of pro-Third Way parliamentary elites over the dominant coalition.

In the next three chapters, I will expand on this analysis to demonstrate how these factors constrained Miliband and Corbyn's different attempts at re-orientation.

Chapter 4: Ed Miliband's timid attempt at re-orientation

In this chapter I analyse the period in which Ed Miliband was leader of the Labour party. Miliband became leader in the aftermath of the financial crisis, where the 2010 General Election had confirmed the disarticulation of the New Labour social bloc. The wider political context of Miliband's leadership was shaped by debates around the economic recovery and the Conservative's austerity program. In this chapter, I show that Labour's inability to re-orient away from the Third Way and develop new political ideas under Miliband severely constrained their capacity to articulate a new bloc. There are arguments that Labour was constrained by externalities in the form of widespread public support for the Conservatives' economic agenda; and increased competition for Labour supporters from nationalist parties in UKIP and the SNP. However, in this chapter I demonstrate that organisational dynamics inside the Labour party prevented the emergence and support for new types of actors to shift the composition of the dominant coalition, which ensured that pro-Third Way actors retained their supreme authority. In effect, Miliband emerged as a dissident parliamentary elite and was the sole new type of actor within the dominant coalition. In part, this was because he eschewed the support of potential allies in the trade union movement who were also seeking to regain the influence that they had lost in the New Labour period. However, because their interests could not be co-ordinated, pre-existing elites maintained their hegemonic position, which manifested in an overarching concern that the Labour party demonstrate economic credibility through orthodox economic prescriptions, which include support for significant elements of the Conservative's austerity program. On this basis, I show that the inability to shift the composition of the dominant coalition prevented the party from re-articulating a social bloc, which ensured that Labour continued its electoral decline.

4.1 The financial crisis and disarticulation

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that the institutionalisation of the Third Way ideological orientation within the Labour party provided it with the interpretive and institutional

means to articulate a new social bloc, primarily through the synthesis of middle class interests with those of finance capital interest groups. Over the course of the 2000s this social bloc began to unravel as a result of long-term trends associated with increased inequality, which was accelerated by the Great Financial Crisis.

In the thirteen years between the 1997 and 2010 General Elections, Labour lost just under five million voters. A major finding of Evans & Tilley's (2017) recent study of class voting is that in this period, rather than switch party, the majority of working class Labour voters, measured by education or occupation, Labour voters became non-voters. In effect, the New Labour period was characterised by a narrowing of the electorate such that voting became a largely middle class means of political engagement. Labour's problem in 2010, then, was that it had begun to rapidly lose support amongst the middle class. This was a trend that began with Blair's support for the Iraq War. At the 2005 General Election, Labour suffered a negative swing of 5.5% and lost 48 constituencies though still retained its majority.

When the financial crisis hit, Labour failed to demonstrate sufficient economic credibility to sustain the support of both the middle classes and finance capital. In the lead up to the 2010 General Election, the combination of Gordon Brown's policy response and the Conservative party's framing ensured that the Labour party, rather than the financial sector, was blamed for the crisis. New Labour had embraced a limited regulatory approach to the financial sector, which at the very least was a complicit factor in the subsequent crisis (Gamble, 2010). In the aftermath of the crisis, Brown's government spent millions of pounds in bailing out the banks and then in quantitative easing. As a result, in 2009 the UK's public deficit was 12.6% of GDP. These factors are often cited as the reason that public opinion began to shift against Labour; essentially voters blamed the party, above all other actors, for the financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession (Flynn et al., 2010; Gamble, 2012). By 2009, both internationally and domestically an austerity policy consensus quickly prevailed and provided a logic to the Conservatives' framing of the deficit crisis as a result of unfettered government spending by New Labour governments rather than the

failure of the financial sector. This framing it at the heart of the core Third Way strategy where Labour's increased support amongst all elements of its new social bloc was based on its recognition as a trusted economic manager. This was, in large part, the justification for the party's embrace of a swathe of neoliberal reforms, including the limited regulation of the financial sector that contributed to the financial crisis. Nevertheless, the perception that Labour was to blame for the recession, increase in the public deficit and for the broader financial crisis was a terminal hit to its economic credibility.

At the 2010 General Election, Labour lost 91 constituencies and received a vote share of just 29%. A significant proportion of the lost votes were disenchanted middle class voters and younger voters switching to the Liberal Democrats, while trends of working class abstention continued (Evans & Tilley, 2017). The positive news for Miliband, after becoming leader in 2010, was that the majority of Labour's lost middle-class voters had shifted their support to the Liberal Democrats rather than the Conservatives. The Liberal Democrats' decision to enter the Coalition government with the Conservatives was immediately unpopular and appear to be the reason for Labour's boost in polling in late 2010 (Baston, 2015).

The complicating factor was the socio-economic effects of the financial crisis. The effects of the crisis were to drive increased economic insecurity amongst the middle class, and Jennings and Stoker (2016) demonstrate that the recovery only compounded the uneven economic development that had characterised the UK's transition to the knowledge economy. As a result, there was a growing 'bifurcation' along an urban cosmopolitan versus post-industrial backwater political division, in which the former was characterised by preference demands for economic investment and a global outlook; and the latter was characterised by redistributive demands, negative views of immigration and a nostalgic pride in English identity (Jennings & Stoker, 2016, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). The first-past-the-post electoral system penalises higher concentration of votes in urban areas, which therefore means that there is less space for Labour to win elections within this new structural divide. Under this structural shift, Labour's electoral

base resided in the more cosmopolitan areas and it struggled to form a coalition that sat across this divide.

The financial crisis accelerated long-term trends to disarticulate Labour's social bloc, and when Ed Miliband became leader in 2010 he was faced with a clear dilemma. Labour could seek to articulate a new bloc through an emphasis on reforming capitalism, which would seek to unite middle and working class groups around their sense of lost aspiration and the unfairness of the effects of the crisis, or it could attempt to recover its reputation as a credible economic manger, which would see Labour provide support for the Conservative's austerity program (Goes, 2017, p. 70). In the rest of this chapter, I demonstrate that Labour adopted the latter approach only after significant internal interpretive debates that were resolved through pro-Third Way elites' retention of power within the party's dominant coalition.

4.2 New Labour fights on: Labour's organisational structure 2010-2015

Upon becoming leader in September 2010, Ed Miliband repeatedly expressed an intention to re-orient the party away from the Third Way. In this section I outline the contours of Miliband's intended orientation and identify how it contrasted with the interests of the entrenched actors within Labour's prevailing organisational structure.

Re-orienting from the Third Way to One Nation

The first three years of Miliband's leadership were characterised by his attempt to embed a new ideological orientation, that can broadly be characterised as reformist, within the Labour party. Miliband had worked as a Special Advisor to Gordon Brown, had taught economics at Harvard and had served in Brown's cabinet, which is broadly consistent with the technocratic background of many electoral professional elites in the New Labour era. Nevertheless, in the leadership campaign in the summer of 2010, Miliband positioned himself as an 'outsider' in contrast to his main opponent (and brother) David, who was seen as a continuity New Labour candidate. During the campaign, Ed Miliband criticised New Labour's 'maximum flexibility and hands-off approach

to the rich' (Miliband, 2010c) and acknowledged the 'anger that Labour hadn't changed the old ways in the city of deregulation… anger at a Labour government that claimed it could end boom and bust' (Ed Miliband quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 168). Upon his victory he declared 'the era of New Labour has passed. A new generation has taken over' (Miliband, 2010b).

Distinguishing his leadership from his New Labour predecessors was identified as a strategic necessity in the process of articulating a social bloc around the 'squeezed middle'. Whereas New Labour had appealed to the individual aspiration of the middle class, in the post-crisis context Miliband (2013a) sought to articulate a 'squeezed middle' by mobilising the collective anxieties of the working and middle classes that emanated from the social division between 'high skill, high paying jobs for those at the very top but low skill, low paid jobs for too many people' (Fielding, 2015). While Labour's losses at the 2010 General Election had been significant, the Liberal Democrats' decision to enter government as the junior coalition partner to the Conservatives and their concomitant policy shifts around the economy, taxation and tuition fees, served to immediately improve Labour's polling position (Baston, 2015). Amongst the advisors in Miliband's office, it was envisaged that the addition of progressive middle class voters that had become disenchanted with New Labour and switched to the Liberal Democrats as well as the mobilisation of younger non-voters would help to tip Labour over the edge; however there was also an acknowledgement that Labour would have to win back some support from the working classes that had drifted away towards abstention or the Conservatives (Bale, 2015, p. 133). The squeezed middle was not just envisaged as a return to the cross-class bloc that had underpinned Labour's growth in the post-war years; instead, Miliband's advisors say that it was based on the development of fundamentally different ideas (interviews with Tim Livesey, January 2020; Stewart Wood, February 2020, Jon Cruddas MP, February 2020). As Stewart Wood told me:

> I think there is a slowness to understand the difference between socialism and the working class and other people who are on the left and think that by being on the left we'll get *Guardian* readers in London and more working class voters. Those

days are gone and that's the most difficult thing if you're on the left of the party. You have to build a new coalition from scratch.'

Hence, Miliband and the staff in his leadership office, believed that creating a contrast with New Labour, and more broadly changing the Labour party, was important to this task. In her study of Miliband's ideational development, Eunice Goes (2017, pp. 44–7) identifies two fundamental means by which Miliband differentiated himself from his predecessors. The first was with regards to globalisation, which Miliband argued was 'not an untameable force of nature to which we must adapt or die. We must think anew about how we rebuild economic security in the 21st century' (Miliband, 2010a). Stewart Wood (interview, February 2020), who helped Miliband craft his policy agenda, says that Miliband sought to re-orient Labour as a 'more radical economic reform party' where intervention and reform of markets were key tools to produce fairer economic outcomes. This was a clear point of contrast where, as was identified in the previous chapter, under the Third Way, New Labour had argued that globalisation made state intervention.

The second means of differentiation was slightly more ambiguous, where Miliband described a need for localism and the devolution of power from the hierarchical and managerial state, in order to rebuild local communities (Goes, 2017, p. 121). Miliband (2010b) described 'the good life' as being 'about the things we do in our community and the time we spend with family' rather than about work, which 'is a central party of life. But is not all that matters.' Again, this could be contrasted with New Labour's emphasis as work as the primary means through which an individual would contribute to society. These points of contrast were important in shifting the articulative emphasis from providing for an individual's "aspiration" to their "control"; Miliband sought to demonstrate to the public that he was aware that economic insecurity had become more pervasive in their ways of life.

This emphasis on control and economic security underpinned Miliband's critique of the Coalition government's response to the economic crisis, as he called for a more solidaristic approach to rebuilding around a fairer society. From the outset of his leadership, a fairly constant

theme in Miliband's speeches was that the Coalition government's recovery was focused on those at the top, while the rest of society experienced a recession (Eaton, 2013a; Miliband, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b). Miliband situated growing inequality within a 'predatory capitalism' that the Conservatives, and to some extent New Labour, had constructed. Miliband spoke of a need to create a 'responsible capitalism' where predators would be supplanted by 'producers [who] train, invest, invent, sell' (Miliband, 2011). These critiques culminated in Miliband's vision for "One Nation" where 'responsibility goes all the way to the top of society. The richest in society have the biggest responsibility to show responsibility to the rest of our country. And I've got news for the powerful interests in our country: in One Nation no interest, from Rupert Murdoch to the banks, is too powerful to be held to account (Miliband, 2012a)'.

Between late 2010 and mid-2013, Miliband also outlined a wide range of, predominantly supply-side policies, through which he envisaged this orientation could articulate a social bloc, including caps on utility bills, train prices and rental markets; stricter regulation on the banking sector and corporate takeovers; potential nationalisation of the railway industry; a more active industrial policy that would strategically intervene to restore economic prosperity to former manufacturing regions; increases to the minimum wage; skills investment; an end to zero-hour contracts; and a significant house-building program.

The articulative emphasis on individual control also underpinned Miliband's efforts to reach out to the "working class" groups that he believed the party were losing to UKIP and the Conservatives. In his first speech as Labour leader, Miliband acknowledged that New Labour had failed to 'address concerns about some of the consequences of globalisation, including immigration' (Miliband, 2010b). This was a theme that continued through his leadership, as in 2014, Miliband (2014) said that 'our embrace of openness made some people feel we didn't understand the pressures immigration put on them … Labour was founded on standing up for working people. But for too many that link was lost. That is what UKIP has sought to exploit.' What was notable about this speech was that Miliband consciously blamed New Labour, as he said

that 'our embrace of economic change, on the one hand, and our determination to do right by the very poorest, on the other, led people to believe that we didn't care enough about ordinary working people.' While warning against 'out-UKIP-UKIP', Miliband increasingly advocated for a series of measures to limit immigration, including a visa points system and imposing stronger border controls on illegal immigrants. As such, the way in which Miliband sought to re-incorporate the groups of voters that were motivated by UKIP's promotion of nationalism was to link immigration to a broader problem of flexible labour markets, in that migrant labour was a tool of predatory capitalists to promote economic insecurity.

The New Labour holdouts continue to dominate the party organisation

Despite Miliband's intention to distinguish his leadership from New Labour and to re-orient the party in a more reformist direction, he faced stiff opposition from the major centres of power in the prevailing organisational structure. The 2010 leadership election had been the closest in Labour's history: in the final round, Ed Miliband defeated his brother, David Miliband, 50.7% to 49.3%. These figures were aggregated from an electoral college in which David secured majority support amongst the membership and the PLP, while Ed overwhelmingly won the trade union section. The composition of the electoral college was a problem for Ed Miliband. In effect, he was now the leader of a party in which the majority of party members and, more importantly given the organisational structure that he was inheriting, the majority of the PLP had supported an alternative candidate. The implications of this were made immediately apparent in the election of the Shadow Cabinet. In 2010, party rules dictated that members of the Shadow Cabinet would be elected by the PLP rather than appointed by the leader, though the leader still held discretion of the specific positions they would hold. In the ballot held to determine these places, none of those who were selected in the top ten had given Ed their first preference in the leadership election (Bale, 2015, p. 30).

On the face of it, this would have been fine if Miliband and his Shadow Cabinet were in agreement on how the party should respond to the major issues of the day, like austerity. Miliband

had secured his victory through a commitment to re-orienting the party away from New Labour, however high-profile members of his Shadow Cabinet had served as Cabinet ministers or advisors under Blair and Brown. As Andrew Adonis (interview, February 2020), one such figure, told me, they were highly suspicious that Ed would 'take the party on a dramatic turn to the left' (see also Bale, 2015, pp. 30–2; Watson, 2010). Miliband appointed Ed Balls and Andy Burnham, two of his rivals for the party leadership, to the position of Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Education Secretary respectively. Balls was widely seen as Gordon Brown's right-hand man, working closely with him when he was the Chancellor, and after becoming an MP in 2005 had served as the Economic Secretary for the Treasury and then in Brown's Cabinet. Likewise, Burnham had been the Chief Secretary to the Treasury before several appointments in Brown's cabinet. After losing the leadership contest David Miliband had indicated his intention to resign from Parliament, however high-profile "Blairites" also gained prominent positions in the Shadow Cabinet: Douglas Alexander was briefly Shadow Secretary for Work and Pensions, before becoming Shadow Foreign Secretary from 2011; and Jim Murphy was Shadow Secretary for Defence. Alan Johnson, had served in high profile Cabinet positions in both Blair and Brown governments, was appointed to the position of Shadow Chancellor.

Through my interviews with some of Miliband's key advisors, it is clear that he felt that he lacked allies in the broader PLP could have replaced opponents in the Shadow Cabinet. This was illustrated in June 2011 when Labour agreed to rule changes that would allow the leader to select their own Shadow Cabinet. Miliband did not use this as an opportunity to secure a Shadow Cabinet that was more favourable to his proposed re-orientation. As Stewart Wood (interview, February 2020) explains:

> 'the intellectual resistance of the MPs was pretty strong. Why is that? Partly because after you lose an election you lose MPs. The centre of gravity goes to the incumbent MPs a lot more because you don't get new waves of MPs with new ideas. So the 2010-2015 parliament has a Labour party that is almost exclusively a

Blairite party. A few old veterans but on the whole they think the moral of 2010 is that you go from Blair to Brown and lose then lets go back to Blair.'

This is important evidence that a key constraint on Miliband's capacity to shift the party's ideological orientation, and therefore fulfil a necessary condition for articulation, was tied to the organisational structure of the party that empowered the parliamentary party. At the end of Chapter 3, I argued that key reforms made in the New Labour era would shift the accountability structure away from extra-parliamentary actors towards the parliamentary party, in particular the PLP and the Shadow Cabinet. As MPs are likely to be primarily office-seeking, their chief concern would be the electability of the party. Because, as Wood says above, the majority of Labour MPs in this period were socialised in the New Labour period, their understanding of what is electable is going to be shaped by the ideological principles that were embedded in the party at that time. As a result, the power structure of the party meant that as the PLP was the body that, in between leadership elections, would hold the leader accountable, their representatives in the Shadow Cabinet effectively served as delegates within the dominant coalition. This structure ensured that they were in a powerful position to constrain Miliband. What he was doing was thus quite ambitious: attempting to re-orient the party away from New Labour with a dominant coalition that was largely composed of high profile figures whose careers had been shaped by their political loyalties to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Another source of opposition came from the party bureaucracy. As was outlined in Chapter 3, the primary means through which the leader in the New Labour period secured internal domination was through a party machine that, through control of staffing, interlinked the party bureaucracy with the leader's office. Upon Miliband's victory in the leadership election this machine failed to function cohesively. While Miliband could appoint his own advisors, who largely supported Miliband's ideological agenda, he was not in a position to fundamentally change staffing arrangements at the party bureaucracy. Staffing at the party bureaucracy was under the purview of the General Secretary, a position elected by the NEC. Through the party machine, Blair had been

able to leverage influence over NEC delegates to ensure his desired candidate would serve as General Secretary, which in turn enabled Blair oversight over staffing in the party bureaucracy. When the position came up for election in 2011, Miliband was unable to influence the outcome. His preferred candidate for the position, Chris Lennie, was not selected by the NEC who instead voted to appoint Iain McNicol (Interviews with Anon B., February 2020; Ann Black, March 2020; Bale, 2015, pp. 65–6). As a result, Miliband could not replace key staff in the party bureaucracy the majority of whom had favoured David Miliband on the basis that he represented a continuation of the New Labour era. As one of these staff members told me,

> A lot of the staff remained in post when Ed Miliband was elected leader. They were, traditionally, myself included, very, very supportive of the previous leaderships of Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. We were never political as such but we were political animals so it was always difficult to deliver in a way, because you are expected to deliver what the leadership and the NEC decide are the organisational priorities for the party. Politics always gets in the way (Interview with Anon. B., February 2020).

For instance, Ed's office was unable to appoint a Chief of Staff until early 2012, more than a year after he became leader, largely because of bureaucratic delays and interventions from the party bureaucracy (interviews with Ann Black, March 2020; Alex Smith, September 2019; Tim Livesey, January 2020).

Again, this highlights how an organisational legacy from the New Labour party structure created a clear constraint on Miliband's capacity to re-orient and change the Labour party. Within the prevailing party structure, the operation of the machine was crucial to the leader's capacity to win intra-party battles. Without this institution, it would be harder to enact the organisational reforms that may have limited the influence that the parliamentary party had over the leader. This would, in turn, ensure that high profile figures from the New Labour period would be in a position of authority and therefore influence the extent to which Miliband could re-orient the party.

Trade union leaders seek a return

During the Miliband leadership key trade union leaders sought to restore their position within the dominant coalition. Their support had proved critical in Miliband's victory over his brother and it appears that trade union leaders were motivated by their opposition to the Third Way. Paul Kenny, the General Secretary of the GMB, explained his decision to endorse Ed as 'really simple for people like us… David was just more of the same… and frankly we were sick to the back of the teeth of it'(quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 162). Likewise, Dave Prentis, the General Secretary of UNISON, described David Miliband as 'very much part of the New Labour agenda which did seek on many occasions to beat up the trade unions', making it difficult to support him (quoted in Dorey & Denham, 2011, p. 308).

However, Miliband clearly feared the damage that potential association with the trade unions could have, particularly in terms of his relationship with the actors in the Shadow Cabinet and party bureaucracy, but also in terms of public perception. The fact that Miliband's three biggest union backers – the GMB, UNISON, and UNITE were all public sector unions provide a basis for David Cameron, the Conservative Prime Minister, to portray Miliband as in the hands of the unions and therefore opposing cuts to the public sector. Cameron was supported in this endeavour by the right-wing tabloid press, which frequently depicted Miliband as "Red Ed". Over thirty years after the Winter of Discontent it is unclear whether the public still feared union influence over the Labour party, yet it certainly appears that parliamentary elites, particularly those whose formative careers had been shaped by intra-party debates of the 1980s and early 1990s, feared a potential return of the union leaders to the dominant coalition.

At the same time, after having their position in the dominant coalition drastically reduced in the New Labour years, the trade unions began to re-assert themselves. This was, in part, a result of the election of more left-wing trade union leaders, in particular Len McCluskey who was elected General Secretary of UNITE, the party's biggest donor. McCluskey (2021, p. 137) says that one of his first acts was to 'develop a new political strategy for the union, designed to put working-class

values of collectivism, solidarity and community spirit – all of which had been marginalised by New Labour – back at the heart of the party and ensure they would be voiced in parliament.' This involved organising 'our members, activists and shop stewards to join the Labour Party' and then encouraging them to endorse union candidates in parliamentary pre-selection contests (McCluskey, 2021, p. 137). The unions would also play a role in 'identifying, mentoring and training' their candidates. While UNITE was the most active in this regard, the GMB was also organising, and the Trade Union Liaison Office (TULO) helped to provide an infrastructure as well (Bale, 2015, pp. 117–19; Nunns, 2018, pp. 23–4). This is good evidence that trade union leaders were clearly seeking to regain their function and play a more interventionist role within the party organisation. It appears that they were successful, as some estimates suggest that union-endorsed candidates won candidate selection in up to half of the open constituencies ahead of the 2015 election (Ross, 2013).

Union leaders' attempts at returning to the dominant coalition set up a confrontational dynamic, which would have long lasting implications for the party's organisational structure after Miliband. The first skirmish was over a series of relatively minor organisational reforms that Miliband sought to introduce in 2011 under the banner of "Refounding Labour" (see The Labour Party, 2011). A consistent proposal across Refounding Labour's development was for a tiered membership structure, in which members of the public could become "registered supporters" of the party for a small fee, participate in local campaigns and enjoy some rights over policy-making processes (The Labour Party, 2011, p. 5). The relationship between members and registered supporters was vague, which created a suspicion amongst trade union elites that this was a process designed to further limit their influence over party structures. Ultimately, the party received over 3,500 submissions as part of the consultation phase, which it declined to make public and packaged into a single yes/no motion to be voted on by the conference. Moreover, in order to get this motion passed, the leadership agreed to take out the proposal for registered supporters in exchange for a very limited reform in which individual trade union members would no longer be able to

vote in both the affiliated members and ordinary members sections of the leadership electoral college. This was widely seen as Miliband 'blinking before the unions' (Bale, 2015, p. 67; Watts, 2017, pp. 174–5).

The second skirmish quickly became a full blown public scandal. In February 2012, the sitting MP, Eric Joyce, announced that he would not seek re-election after being arrested for instigating a drunken brawl in a parliamentary bar. Karie Murphy, a friend of UNITE General Secretary, Len McCluskey, announced that she would run for selection. Her campaign was assisted by the UNITE organiser at the local Grangemouth refinery who signed up a number of union members to the party. The local party's membership doubled in size, as large batches of membership applications were posted directly from the local UNITE office and the union also appears to have paid for their membership fees. A number of secondary sources acknowledge that the party's response, which is detailed below, was a result of the increased success that UNITE and the GMB had made in influencing candidate selection processes (Kogan, 2019, pp. 186–7; Watts, 2017).

In early 2013 the NEC commissioned an internal report into the Falkirk selection, and in June put the CLP into 'special measures' which included freezing the membership of anyone that had joined since March 2012, and suspending Murphy. In response, McCluskey accused the party organisation of attempting to smear his union. The public nature of this confrontation became fodder for David Cameron, the Conservative Prime Minister, to exploit, which in turn created pressure on Miliband to respond. On July 5th, Miliband took the extraordinary step of referring the party's internal report to Police Scotland, who concluded that there were insufficient grounds for action. This only increased animosity between the party leadership and the trade unions, as Len McCluskey (2021, p. 142) says in his autobiography, 'the magnitude of this insult is difficult to convey… I will never forgive him for it… None of the other general secretaries could believe it either.'

In a speech on 9 July, Miliband announced he would seek substantial organisational changes to the party's relationship with the trade unions by requiring trade union members to choose to join Labour through the affiliation fee rather than being automatically affiliated. Miliband (2013c) said that these changed had

> huge potential for our party and our politics… genuinely rooting us in the life of more people of our country… where everyone plays their part and a politics in which they can, a politics that is open, transparent and trusted – exactly the opposite of the politics we saw in Falkirk. That was a politics closed, a politics of the machine, a politics hated – and rightly so. What we saw in Falkirk is part of the death throes of the old politics… I want to build a better Labour party.'

The language and framing of this change was notable. Not only was Miliband seeking to limit the tools that trade unions could use to influence party processes, but he was using the language of modernisation to do so. He was directly contrasting his vision of Labour's future with the position of the unions, which garnered praise from Tony Blair but union leaders interpreted as a threat to their position (Watts, 2017, pp. 188–9; Wintour, 2013).

Miliband also announced that the former General Secretary, Ray Collins, would investigate and recommend further changes ahead of a special party conference to be held in 2014. The major areas of contention were around the financial linkage between the unions and the party; and the model for the selection of the party leadership. With regards to the first area, McCluskey (2021, pp. 145–7) believed that the status quo was a 'financially inefficient process' and he saw it as an opportunity to 'slash the amount we paid to subsidise the wages of Labour staff who, as far as I could tell, were being directed to spend much of their time attacking my union.' This not only demonstrates the regard with which the prevailing elites within the dominant coalition were held by union leaders, but demonstrates that McCluskey saw this an opportunity to reduce the influence of the PLP and reform the organisational structure to one in which the organising power of the

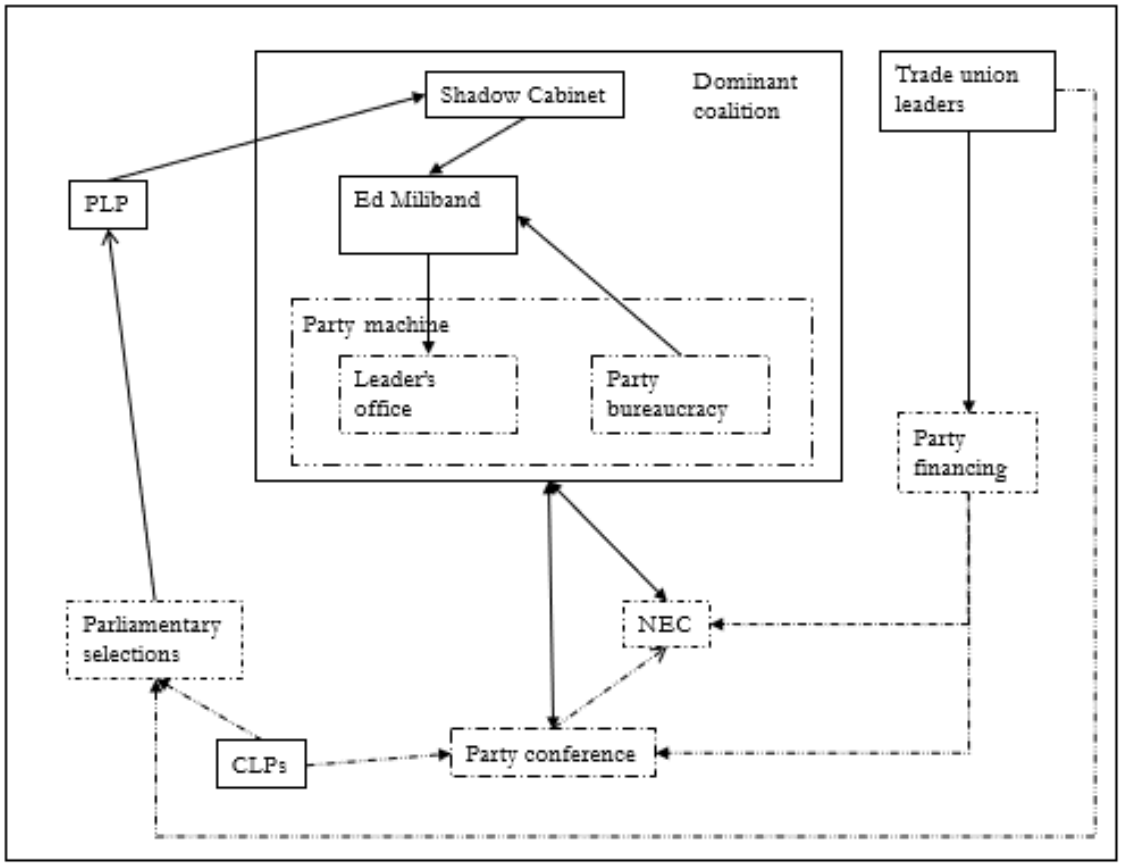
unions would be restored. For his part, Kenny was more suspect, and argued against the reforms on the basis that it would lead to a reduction in the right of the unions to be involved in the party.

Because the unions held 50% of the conference vote, they would need to agree to any measures passed through the Collins Review. The means to resolve such an impasse lay in reform to the leadership selection process. In effect, in order to gain the unions' agreement on the expansion of membership categories to include full members, affiliated members from the unions and a new registers supporters scheme, Miliband agreed to scrap the electoral college for leadership elections and replace it with a OMOV vote (Watts, 2017, pp. 177–8). The notable element of this was that Miliband was agreeing to reduce the PLP's influence over the process of leadership election. It remains unclear as to why the PLP agreed to this measure and it would come back to haunt them in the aftermath of Miliband's defeat at the 2015 General Election. Interviews with some MPs suggest that the speed at which the process unfolded meant that many did not have time to realise that they were agreeing to give up significant influence over a critical zone of uncertainty (Kogan, 2019, pp. 190–5). Declan McHugh (2015), the Director for Strategic Planning & Constitutional Affairs in the party bureaucracy, says that the changes were 'the product of political panic, damage limitation and – ultimately – a deal with the unions.'

In effect then, over the course of Miliband's leadership the unions may not have directly increased their own influence over zones of uncertainty, but they did succeed in reducing the PLP's influence over leadership selections. Nevertheless, this was a signal that the unions were willing to engage more fully in intraparty debates, which marked a change in their role from the New Labour period. The full implications of this were not apparent until the election of Miliband's successor, which will be explored in the next section. But in terms of the implications for the organisational dynamics of the Miliband period, it demonstrates that while unions sought increased influence within the party organisation – every effort was made by prevailing elites to restrict their entry into the dominant coalition. As union leaders had been excluded from the New Labour organisation, they represented an actor that would have a distinct interpretation over the changes in Labour's

external environment that had ultimately dis-articulated the party's social bloc. To this end, the resistance to their entry is indicative of the power that prevailing elites had to prevent different ideological perspectives from gaining currency within the party organisation.

Figure 4.1: Map of Labour's organisational structure, 2010-15



Source: Author's visualisation

The dominant coalition during the leadership of Ed Miliband

On the whole, as is reflected in Figure 4.1, in terms of the structure of its organisation Miliband's Labour party was not fundamentally different from the New Labour period. It is worth, briefly, revisiting the conceptual framework that I developed in Chapter 2, which identified a process where ideological re-orientation is a necessary condition for a party to re-articulate a social bloc in the face of a critical juncture. The key mechanisms in this process were a change in the composition of the party's dominant coalition, through the emergence of new actors who gain control of zones

of uncertainty; and the institutionalisation of this new dynamic, which reflects an in-principle agreement between actors with different interests, which in turn enables the new orientation to be embedded within the organisation.

However the organisational dynamic that prevailed in the Labour party during the Miliband leadership did not allow for this process to unfold. While Miliband represents a new actor, in effect functioning as a dissident electoral professional elite, he lacked support within the dominant coalition as he did not control zones of uncertainty beyond staffing decisions within his own office. His publicly stated intention to re-orient the party did heighten tensions within the organisation and, as will be outlined in the next section, create interpretive debates. However, the party's accountability structure remained fundamentally tied to the parliamentary party, which functioned through the influential position key Shadow Cabinet figures held in the dominant coalition. As will be explored in the next section in substantial detail, key parliamentary elites viewed Miliband's re-orientation as diminishing the party's electability and therefore sought to resist change. At the same time, because the party machine, which had been formed through the interconnection between the party bureaucracy and the leader's office and the leader's control over these institutions, was broken a part as the party bureaucracy took an oppositional stance to Miliband. This made it harder for Miliband to win interpretive battles. Finally, while trade union leaders sought to regain influence, and therefore bring in fresh perspectives that could have potentially supplemented Miliband's intended re-orientation, their presence was feared by incumbent parliamentary elites – including Miliband. Nevertheless, their increased political activity and clear attempt at increasing their influence contributed to the heightening of tensions around interpretive debates.

4.3 Maintaining the Third Way by preserving the dominant coalition

Why did Labour support austerity?

The highpoint for Miliband's leadership, both in terms of opinion polling and the extent of ideological change within the party coincided with his One Nation speech in late 2012. In

deploying 'One Nation' as a rhetorical device Miliband consciously invoked the Victorian era Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and thereby attempted to make the radical elements of his reform agenda fit the centre ground of British politics. As Goes (2017, p. 50) argues, the 'language was quite radical. By using the narrative device of One Nation he was able to talk about the widening gap between rich and power and about the unfairness of the [Conservative] government.' This was the frame by which Miliband's Labour would contrast with New Labour, but more pertinently the Conservative's understanding of the causes and consequences of the financial crisis. Miliband argued that the Conservatives had prioritised the wealthy, provoking a 'recession for everyone else' and pointed to the fact that the spending cuts disproportionately impacted the middle and working classes (Finlayson, 2012, p. 149; Wickham-Jones, 2013, p. 322). This can be therefore be interpreted as a clear rhetorical device through which Miliband was attempting to articulate the squeezed middle social bloc.

However, the inherent problem with this One Nation critique was that Miliband was trying to make it at the same time that he was announcing his support for the Conservatives' public sector cuts and their rigid fiscal spending rules, as well as a cap on welfare benefits (Bale, 2015, p. 116; Goes, 2017, p. 75; Wintour, 2012). Text analysis of newspaper articles from the 2010-2015 period shows that Labour tended to broadly discuss the crisis in the same terms as the Conservatives (English et al., 2016). The support for austerity placed a critical inconsistency at the heart of Miliband's reformist re-orientation. It was immediately difficult to square Labour's commitment to 'balance the books' and produce a budgetary surplus within the lifetime of the 2015 Parliament while at the same time funding the ambitious plans that were required to achieve the 'high wage, high skill' economy and to make capitalism fairer (Bale, 2015, p. 82).

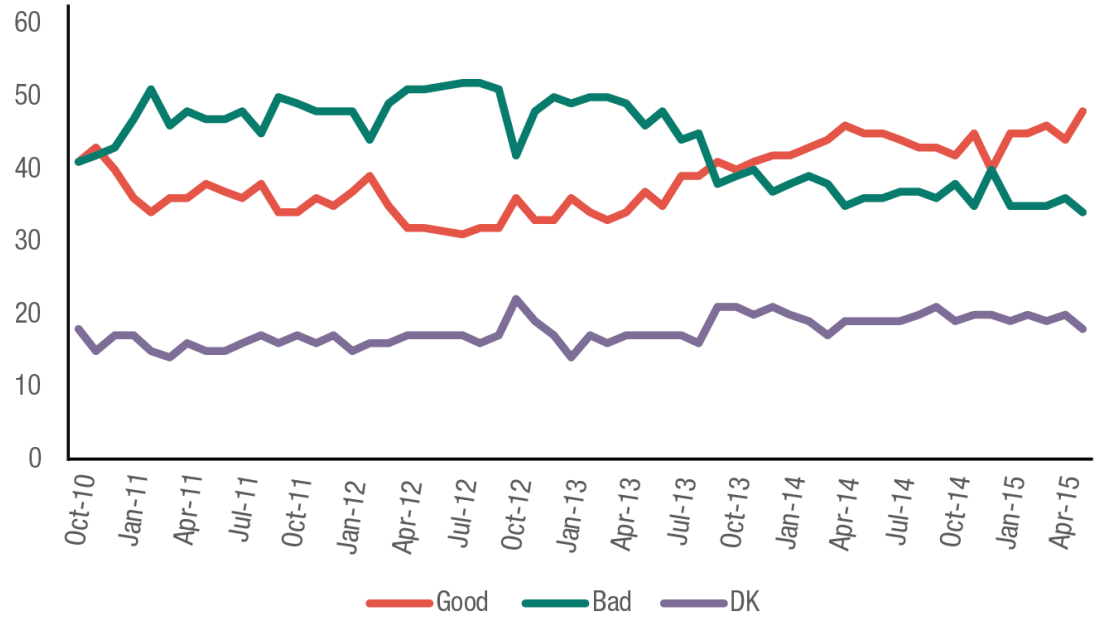
This inconsistency is a puzzle in and of itself. The financial crisis was the pertinent issue of the day. In terms of articulation theory, Labour needed to develop transformational answers to the questions that the crisis had provoked in its disarticulation of the party's social bloc. If we accept that the One Nation re-orientation failed because it could not overcome the inconsistency

of supporting austerity while promising a fairer, 'responsible capitalism' we need to ask why Labour strategists were confronted with this inconsistency at all. If Miliband was so committed to re-orienting the party away from New Labour and articulating a cleavage around fairer economic outcomes for the 'squeezed middle', then why did he support austerity?

The obvious explanation for this is tied to an ideational explanation for Labour's decline. This argument is made by Goes (2017, p. 75), who argues that Labour's lack of economic credibility vis-à-vis the Conservatives meant that they lacked the basis to promote their alternative economic agenda and to specifically oppose the Coalition's cuts to public spending. Yet, at the same time, the perception or strategic value placed on what is economically credible is constructed, it is determined by actors. After all, this was a core principle of the New Labour orientation. Of course, if the electorate at large determines that a party lacks credibility, then this is likely to determine how they will vote. Yet, in Miliband's case, Labour strategists shifted away from economic radicalism two years prior to an election, without fully articulating their case. As Baston (2015, pp. 9–10) notes, Labour's momentum stalled at the end of 2012, which coincided with a resumption of economic growth. This is also the period in which Miliband began to more overtly move away from the One Nation orientation. This could indeed explain why Labour strategists would be concerned that the electorate would then associate this economic growth with Conservative competency. However, this does not appear to have translated to a rise in the Conservative party's poll ratings, which remain stagnant across this period. Instead, it is UKIP that appears to increase its popularity across this period. This is not to say that UKIP's polling increase is associated with perceptions of Labour's economic competency, but it is difficult to conceive of how an increase in support for UKIP could be explained by increased economic optimism. Instead, opinion polling around austerity shows that a majority of people still believed public spending cuts to be unfair, to be occurring too quickly and to be having an impact on voter's lives at the same time that Labour was moving to support the cuts (Stanley, 2015). To this end, we must question why Labour continued to believe that voter's prioritised a perception of economic

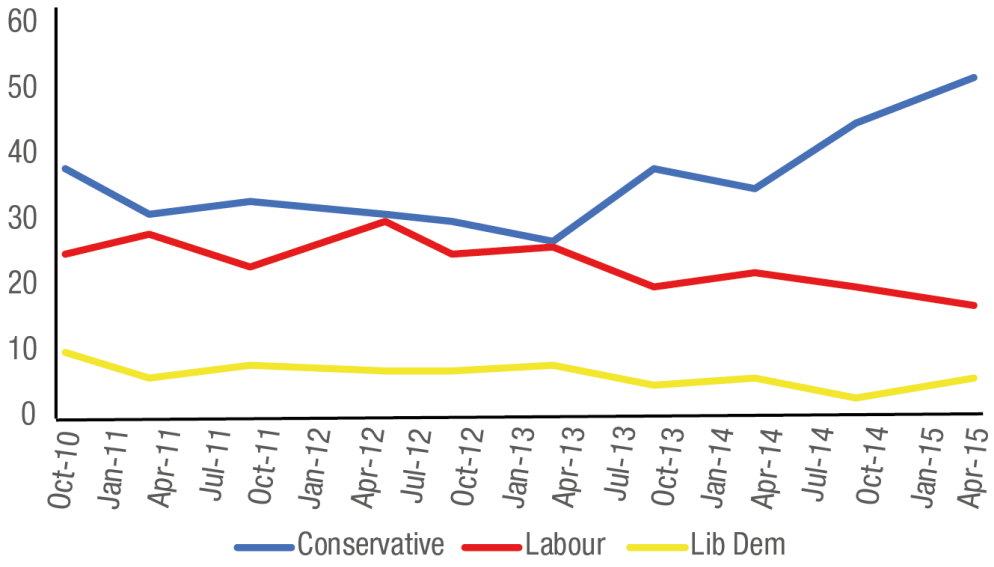
credibility over other factors, such as their experience of austerity. This requires an examination of the intra-party debates and the organisational structure of the party during Miliband's leadership.

Figure 4.2: Cutting spending to reduce the deficit is good or bad for the economy?



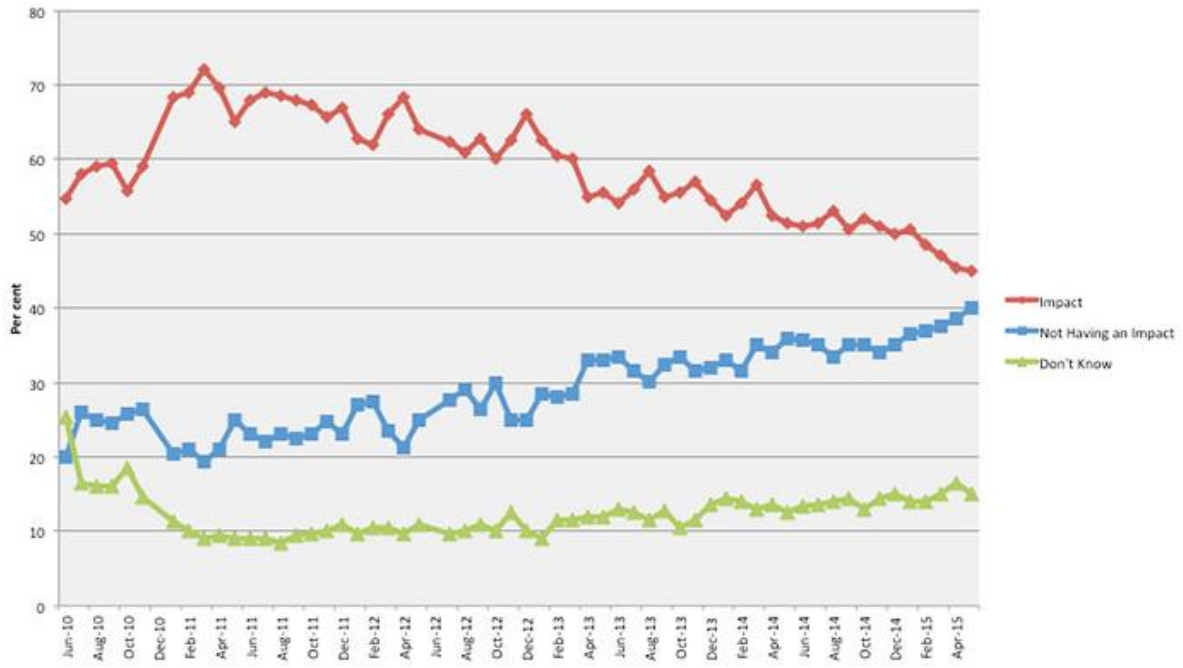
Source: Stanley (2015)/YouGov

Figure 4.3: public opinion on which party is best at managing the economy, 2010-15



Source: Stanley (2015)/ IPSOS Mori

Figure 4.4: Impact of austerity on an individual's life



Source: Stanley (2015)/YouGov

The intra-party debates over how Labour should respond to austerity primarily took place between December 2010 and June 2013, which as Figure 4.2 shows, was the period in which the majority public opinion held that austerity was bad for the economy. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show that this was also the period in which no party had a clear lead in terms of economic competency, and the vast majority of individuals believed that they were impacted by austerity programs. While caution must be exercised in overinterpreting polls, this data can be interpreted as the perfect condition in which Labour could articulate a new logic through an avowed opposition to the government.

As was outlined above, the composition of Miliband's Shadow Cabinet included several figures that were avowed "Blairites", and the vast majority of its members had built their careers in the New Labour period. It is not surprising then that the dominant prescription in the Shadow Cabinet was that Labour should re-commit to the "Darling plan", which was the policy adopted in the last year of the Brown government that committed to £8bn pounds in deficit reduction while defending core policies like SureStart (Bale, 2015, p. 40; Wintour, 2010). This would serve as the basis for the austerity-lite position that Labour would fully commit to from the spring of

2013. It had the hallmarks of a Third Way orientation to structural change: by accepting the need for fiscal consolidation Labour would demonstrate its economic credibility and therefore own the centre ground of politics by arguing that it would do a better job of fairly and competently implementing austerity than the Conservatives. In his outgoing speech, Alastair Darling, who had served as the Chancellor under Brown, said that

> 'one of the lessons that Labour has learned – and learned well – in the past 20 years is that the message to the country has to strike a chord with ordinary people as realistic and credible. We have to be realistic or it just won't wash… (in Elliot & Mulholland, 2010).

Given that Darling's speech was made at the same party conference in which Miliband was pronouncing that New Labour was dead, these comments can be read as a warning to the new leader to not push too hard or too far. It was a call taken up by several of the New Labour figures that retained powerful positions within the Shadow Cabinet. Within a month of his selection as Shadow Chancellor, Alan Johnson publicly challenged Miliband over fiscal policy and a graduate tax, with Johnson describing himself as an 'instinctive cutter' and announcing his support for austerity (Goes, 2017, p. 55). It was only after Johnson resigned in early 2011, due to personal reasons, that Miliband was able to replace him with Balls.

Balls was, initially, the major proponent of an alternative response to the recovery from the financial crisis. He had contested the 2010 leadership election on a pro-Keynesian platform (interviews with Tim Livesey, January 2020; Andrew Adonis, February 2020; Bale, 2015, p. 40). In a speech during the campaign, Balls (2010) cited Keynes in arguing that, in the short-term, instead of spending cuts 'the priority this year and next must be growth and jobs… we need to re-instate vital investments which support jobs and recovery' and outlined policies that included increased investments and a jobs guarantee, while deficit reduction would occur in the 'medium-term… only once growth is fully secured.' After becoming Shadow Chancellor in January 2011, Balls backed these sentiments up by calling for temporary VAT cuts, bringing forward planned large-scale

infrastructure projects, and funding house building initiatives and youth employment through a levy on bank bonuses (Bale 2015, 72).

However, Balls was opposed by a number of high-profile Shadow Cabinet members. The most vocal were Douglas Alexander, who from 2011 was the Shadow Foreign Secretary, and Liam Byrne, who from 2011 was the Shadow Secretary for Work and Pensions. The arguments were framed in terms of credibility and echoed Darling's comments at the previous party conference. As Tim Livesey, Miliband's Chief of Staff, explained, 'people like Alexander and Byrne would always be pressing the fiscal button. They'd always be pressing it. And the finger would be hovering around it. They'd be saying "It's weak, you guys don't get it, this is what the people want."' Likewise, Stewart Wood (interview, February 2020), said that 'somehow very clever people in the Labour party are obsessed with going back to the Blair years. The Shadow Cabinet had that in spades in 2010-2015. They thought that the policies were already there and that you should defend SureStart and defend the Education Maintenance Allowance and defend the Private Finance Initiative.' According to Livesey, the vocal opposition from the Shadow Cabinet set the terms of the debate:

> 'we weren't able to discuss ending austerity, because balancing the books, reducing the deficit, was like a major, immovable non-negotiable point of entry into the difference between credible and uncredible. It wasn't even about – do you end austerity, it was about how far and how fast. And endless wrangling over that. I think that there just probably wasn't a really clear strategy because if you get into endless wrangling it's actually quite difficult to have a clear strategy.'

This presents strong evidence that rather than being an inevitable product of the Conservatives' framing, internal contestation was pivotal to Labour's austerity-lite position. By 2012 Balls had committed to accepting Conservative cuts, while the full acceptance of austerity came in the summer of 2013 with Labour supporting rigid fiscal spending rules and a cap on welfare benefits (Wintour 2012; Bale 2015, 170).

It also appears that the Shadow Cabinet constrained Miliband's attempts at exerting his reformist re-orientation on other policy areas. In the first years of his leadership Miliband announced support for supply-side measures like a mansion tax, an increase in the national minimum wage, a ban on zero-hour contracts and caps on utility bills. However, these policy announcements were rarely met with widespread public endorsement from his party. For instance, at the 2011 party conference Miliband attempted a dose of economic populism by contrasting 'producers [who] train, invest, invent, sell' with the 'asset- stripping predators… [that] are just interested in the fast buck, taking what they can out of the business'(Miliband 2011b). However in follow up speeches, few members of the Shadow Cabinet adopted the producer vs. predator dichotomy and Miliband quickly dropped the rhetoric from his own speeches (Bale, 2015, pp. 79–80). This can be interpreted as a lack of support for what appeared to be a repudiation of the New Labour pro-business approach.

According to his advisors, Miliband ultimately prioritised party unity, which manifested in acquiescence over confrontation with the Shadow Cabinet (interviews with Alex Smith, September 2019; Tim Livesey, January 2020; Stewart Wood, February 2020). Livesey says, that 'tensions were enormous, both on a personal level between people but also on a left-right split. Ed prioritised keeping the party unified, and he succeeded in that.' Likewise, Wood says that '[Ed Miliband] prized unity so highly that all his intellectual overtures were so tentative. That was the real problem.' In his study of the Miliband leadership, Tim Bale (2015, p. 58) finds that Miliband spent his first few months as leader 'worrying less about the impact he would make on the public and more on making sure that the party did not fall apart.'

It is not clear that Miliband had any alternative. As was outlined in the previous section, Miliband was the only "new" actor to gain a position in the party's dominant coalition. Miliband's reformist interests were clearly at odds with the incumbent actors' interpretation of what was electable, which manifested in orthodox economic prescriptions framed in terms of economic credibility. Miliband's eschewal of support of the trade unions ensured that he would lack any allies

in the party to adopt a more confrontational stance. This demonstrates that Labour's orientation to the financial crisis and its aftermath was determined by the composition of its dominant coalition.

Moreover, it is important to note that, in the aftermath of the crisis, there were actors inside and outside the Labour party that had a clear interest in opposing austerity though they lacked any means to gain control of zones of uncertainty that may have provided entrée into the dominant coalition.

Outside the party, the imposition of austerity had created a significant but disjointed anti-austerity movement. In November and December 2010, tens of thousands of students protested the cuts to education and the increase of education fees. A year later, thousands joined in Occupy London. Austerity also provoked hundreds of small, locally oriented campaigns to fight cuts and closures of local services including libraries, hospitals and childcare centres. In 2011, two million public sector workers went on strike over cuts to their pensions (Milmo et al., 2011). In 2013, the People's Assembly Against Austerity formed, in large part in protest to the Labour party's refusal to oppose austerity. Its launch was announced in an open letter in the Guardian, that was signed by a number of figures inside the Labour party, including Len McCluskey, the General Secretaries of a number of major unions including the RMT and CWU, and dissident backbenchers including Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, as well as the research directors of Labour-aligned think tanks like the New Economics Foundation. These various movements were clearly comprised of a range of groups: students and left-wing radicals; but also teachers and nurses. They had different experiences of the financial crisis and were participating in social movements that had no capacity to influence the power structure of the Labour party. This should not be interpreted as a simplistic reading where if these groups had gained a position in the dominant coalition then Labour would have articulated a new social bloc; yet it is to say that these movements presented a change in social dynamics and the creation of ideational infrastructures that produced actors that were largely

disconnected from the decision making processes inside the Labour party, and therefore they had no means of supporting or developing elements of Miliband's intended re-orientation.

These changes in social dynamics appear to have influenced the remnants of the party's grassroots. While Miliband had not won the members section of the electoral college, there was a surge of nearly 40,000 new members after his victory. As these new members seemed to join in the six months after his election, it is likely that they were attracted by his promise of reorientation. In elections for the grassroots positions on the NEC in 2012 and 2014, the anti-austerity slates prevailed by considerable margins (Nunns, 2018, p. 35). A survey of party members conducted prior to the leadership election in 2015 showed that 90% of members thought austerity had gone too far (Bale & Webb, 2015). Given the party membership had support David Miliband's continuity-New Labour campaign in the 2010 leadership election, this suggests a considerable change in the preference base. This preference shift amongst the membership in the Miliband period was largely unremarkable as there were limited means by which this group could exert influence within the party structure. Miliband did not see them as a potential base of support that he could draw on in opposition to elites in the Shadow Cabinet, which is worth noting as Corbyn would take a different approach as Miliband's successor.

Equally, as was explored in more detail, the leaders of trade unions showed a renewed willingness to exert influence inside the party. Prior to developing political strategies in conjunction with TULO, The General Secretaries of the three biggest unions – UNITE, Unison and GMB – each threatened dis-affiliation (LabourList, 2012; McCluskey, 2012; Milmo, 2012). McCluskey attempted to exert public influence in order to impact internal dynamics. In an interview with the *New Statesman* in 2013, he said that 'if [Miliband] is brave enough to go for something radical, he'll be the next prime minister. If he gets seduced by the Jim Murphys and the Douglas Alexanders then the truth is that he'll be defeated and he'll be cast into the dustbin of history' (quoted in Eaton, 2013b). McCluskey (2021, p. 128) says that this intervention was met with a reprimand for 'trying to divide the party' from the leader's office.

Hence, while there was opposition to austerity inside the party, actors and interests that represented this viewpoint had no means to influence the party's position, Miliband made no attempt to mobilise these actors to exert pressure on the actors that held power within the dominant coalition. There could be several potential reasons for this lack of co-ordination. It is somewhat likely that as a "dissident" electoral professional elite, Miliband found it easier to prioritise unity with his electoral professional colleagues. While he had publicly committed to a reformist approach that would re-orientate away from the Third Way, he had also spent a decade prior working in the New Labour organisation. There was clearly a radicalism to the anti-austerity social movements and even the positions of the trade union leaders that Miliband did not share. Similarly, Miliband's background could have led him to view these movements as unrepresentative, and therefore by seeking to integrate them into the party then he would be punished by other elements of his intended social bloc and only further heightened internal tensions inside the party. Given the experiences of his successor, as explored in the next two chapters, these are all dynamics that likely would have unfolded. Nevertheless, it illustrates the power of the organisational legacies that Miliband inherited from New Labour in sustaining the Third Way orientation, despite external opportunities for change. Without shifting the composition of the dominant coalition, it was impossible to re-orient the party.

Stymying efforts at creating new institutions for articulation

A part of Miliband's emphasis on localism was to de-centralise policy making processes by developing new, community level institutions that would enable the party to reconnect with the social groups that had not been included in the New Labour social bloc.

One of the central planks of this intention was Community Organising. Miliband commissioned Arnie Graf, a Chicago based community activist who had links to both Saul Alinsky and Barak Obama, to report on Labour's policy making processes (Davis, 2012). Graf's major findings included: a 'bureaucratic rather than a relational party culture' that limits the potential of members; centralisation of decision-making power from members and towards senior staff in

London; a closed culture that is suspicious of outsiders; and a membership culture that is oriented around meetings, which themselves are dull and uninspiring (see Bolton, 2015; Common Knowledge, 2020; Davis, 2012; Goes, 2017). On the back of this report, Miliband asked Graf to lead a mass community organising programme that would be staffed with 200 paid organisers and over a thousand volunteers that would be work in marginal constituencies (Common Knowledge, 2020, p. 8). The idea was that this programme would help to orient candidates to their local community, by working with local campaigns, such that by the time of the election there would be networks of volunteers situated in their local communities able to mobilise voters (Bale, 2015, p. 140).

At the same time as the community organising programme was being set up, Miliband replaced the former New Labour Cabinet member, Liam Byrne, with Jon Cruddas, as the party's Policy Co-ordinator. While Cruddas had started his political career in Blair's machine, since becoming an MP in 2001 he had developed a more independent streak as he frequently rebelled against the New Labour government (Katwala, 2012). It was envisaged that Cruddas' appointment would dovetail with Graf's work, in that both shared a desire to decentralise policy making processes in order to orient the party around the needs and interests of social groups at the community level. These projects could be interpreted as an attempt at recreating mass level institutions and therefore would have enabled the input of different interpretations into the party structure. At the same time, it was unclear how actors from these institutions would have tangibly achieved influence within the dominant coalition as community level actors would be filtered through Miliband's office. Nevertheless, this would still have reduced the absolute influence that actors from the Shadow Cabinet had over policy making procedures.

In the spring of 2013 – the same time at which Miliband fully committed to his austerity-lite position – there were a series of staffing changes in Miliband's office that saw the community organising programme and the policy review de-emphasised. Douglas Alexander was appointed the Party's Chair of General Election Strategy and Spencer Livermore, a spin doctor from the New

Labour era, was appointed Campaign Director. Alexander and Livermore were trained in the New Labour approach to politics. As, at the time of their hire, Labour held an opinion poll lead, there is an impression that an emphasis on credibility and stability would guide the party through to the election (interviews with Tim Livesey, January 2020; Stewart Wood, February 2020, Anon B., February 2020). Jon Cruddas (interview, February 2020) shares this sentiment:

> [Miliband] became captive to the campaign professionals, the pollsters, the data people in head office who all said that this is yours to lose now, don't rock the boat, don't pick fights, turbulence is not good… I can see the attractiveness of that but at the time we were arguing that that won't work and it's not what you set out to do.

The Community Organising programme suffered a similar fate as Alexander effectively forced Graf to resign as he disagreed with his methods and the programme's financial cost (Goes, 2017, p. 140). Tim Bale (2015, p. 199) found that 'the perception amongst the party [bureaucracy] and leader's office was that Graf had little experience converting movement politics into votes where it really counted, and was both a distraction and a threat to their way of doing things.' Likewise, Goes' (2017, p. 141) research found that Labour Shadow Cabinet members and party staffers were sceptical of Graf's methods because his themes were 'too anti-business.' In a sense, Graf himself shared this view as, in the aftermath of Labour's 2015 election defeat, he said

> The Party's failure in the last election had very little to do with the organisers in the field. The fault lies with their job assignments, expectations, and with the limited regard that too many of the national leadership hold them in. The organisers are not expected or assigned to grow the Party. They have no time to develop meaningful relationships with people in the communities where they are assigned to work; therefore, the Party remains out of touch with the vast majority of people throughout the country.

This demonstrates that by early 2013 the electoral professional elites had gained influence in Miliband's office, which had been the one zone of uncertainty that had enabled Miliband to promote re-orientation. Miliband appears to have welcomed this change, which is consistent with his approach of acquiescence to the other actors in the dominant coalition that had also led him to support the Conservatives' austerity agenda. In the case of the Policy Review and Community Organising, this analysis clearly shows that their functioning would have threatened the Third Way understanding of electability that, as detailed in this chapter, drove the prevailing actors in the dominant coalition's understanding of how to respond to structural change. It was this orientation through which Labour would contest the 2015 General Election.

4.4 The 2015 General Election: Labour's social bloc is further eroded

Opinion polling in the lead up to the 2015 election gave Miliband and his strategists cause for hope. However, on election night the reality was disastrous. Labour lost 26 constituencies and achieved a vote share of just 30.6%. As this analysis in this chapter has demonstrated, the commitment to austerity and, in general, lack of fundamental party change reflected the continuation of the party's Third Way orientation. This election result can be interpreted as the continued disarticulation of Labour's social bloc, which had begun with the financial crisis.

It is possible that Labour's emphasis on electability and credibility may have helped Labour retain the majority of its middle-class supporters, though it is unlikely that it increased its support amongst these groups. The problem that Labour faced by 2015 was UKIP and, to some extent, the SNP had politicised structural divides to generate support from the formerly abstentionist working classes. At the 2015 General Election, the Scottish National Party (SNP) won 56 of 59 constituencies. According to Evans & Tilley (2017, 179), prior to 2010 there was no major difference between working and middle class support for the SNP. However in 2015, 60% of working class Scots supported the SNP, compared to less than 45% of middle class voters. Moreover, only 34% of working-class Scots saw Labour as a party of the working class. As such they conclude that 'the rising tide of Scottish nationalism did affect working class voters more than

middle class voters, but this was more due to changing perceptions of Labour than perceptions of the SNP.' In England and Wales, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) won 15% of the vote, which was an increase of more than 10% from the 2010 election. At the 2005 and 2010 General Elections, just 2% of working-class voters supported UKIP, while at the 2015 General Election this increased to 23%. These working class voters were attracted by UKIP's policies around immigration and Euroscepticism (Ford & Goodwin, 2014). Indeed, Evans & Tilley (2017, p. 6), make the case that by UKIP's capacity to increase the salience of ethnic identity and immigration was a direct result of New Labour's conscious decrease in the salience of class as an identity.

4.5 Conclusion

The period in which Miliband led the Labour party is instructive for our understanding of left decline. While there are socio-structural and political competition arguments that point to exogenous factors in limiting demand for the Labour party, the party's response to these factors is a factor in the party's decline. For instance, while party competition explanations may point to the way in which challenger parties fundamentally re-aligned the structure of party competition in the UK to reduce the space for the Labour party, it also appears that the opening for these parties was created by the continuation of Labour's Third Way orientation, which prevent the party from adapting and changing to better articulate the experiences of the groups that would have constituted Miliband's "squeezed middle". The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that the reason for the perpetuation of this orientation are organisational. Likewise, ideational explanations that point to the Conservatives' success at embedding a pro-austerity narrative neglects the role that Labour played in positioning itself in support of this policy agenda.

The analysis presented in this chapter points to the organisational legacy of New Labour in constraining Miliband's reformist re-orientation. The party's accountability structure remained firmly wedded to the parliamentary party, and it is possible that key New Labour figures even increased their power within the dominant coalition in the absence of more charismatic leaders

like Blair and Brown. These figures were driven by office-seeking interests and held firmly to the view that electability, in the form of economic orthodoxy and credibility, would see Labour through the crisis. Their ability to exert these interests over Miliband created a contradiction that would ensure the party would not be re-oriented. At the same time, Miliband was isolated in the dominant coalition because new actors failed to emerge within the party structure. Trade union leaders did seek to re-assert themselves, but Miliband ultimately sided with the New Labour elites to prevent them from entering the dominant coalition. The failure to fundamentally shift the composition of the dominant coalition ultimately meant that Miliband lacked the support to take a more confrontational stance and drive through re-orientation. The result was that Labour's social bloc was further dis-articulated as nationalist-oriented groups in Scotland and England were incorporated into the blocs of other parties.

Chapter 5: Corbyn's short-lived success

After the Labour party's defeat at the 2015 election, Miliband immediately resigned from the party leadership. He was succeeded by Jeremy Corbyn, who was most famous for his radical, anti-imperialist positions on foreign affairs including his vehement opposition to the Iraq War, support for a united Ireland and his infamous appearances on Iranian state television and RT news. Rather than having the technocratic social networks that connected electoral professional elites to academia or to the City, Corbyn's roots were in various social movements, including Stop the War!, Unite Against Fascism, and the trade union movement. Between 1997 and 2010, when New Labour was in government, Corbyn was the backbencher that rebelled most often (Cowley, 2005, p. 53). Hence, while Corbyn was a long-standing MP it is difficult to characterise him as a 'dissident electoral professional elite' akin to Miliband. Indeed, his widespread popularity clearly stemmed from his identity as an anti-system politician infused with radicalism. Throughout his leadership, opinion polling consistently found him to be regarded as honest, even amongst groups that strongly disliked his leadership. At the same time, this radicalism and the types of activist groups that Corbyn came from would prove to be insurmountable baggage in terms of his relationship with other actors inside the Labour party and the wider electorate.

Corbyn's selection as Labour leader was a shock for figures inside and outside the party. In this chapter, I demonstrate that it should be interpreted as connected to the organisational developments of the Miliband period and the concomitant erosion of Labour's social bloc. Moreover, I argue that Corbyn's Labour party is the closest that a left party came to fundamentally changing its organisational form. Corbyn's leadership was based on a rejection of the accountability structure that had been embedded in the New Labour period as he mobilised a coalition that was almost entirely composed of actors that had been excluded from the dominant coalition: trade union leaders, grassroots activists and external social movements. This almost worked as, at the 2017 General Election, Labour increased its vote share by almost ten percentage points and increased its seat share for the first time since 1997. This result was predicated on an ideological

orientation that spoke to the anti-system politics that was percolating within society, which was only enabled as the internal power of parliamentary elites was diminished. However, Corbyn's leadership ultimately ended in spectacular failure when the Labour party achieved its worst electoral results, in terms of seat share, since 1935.

I divide my analysis of the Corbyn leadership into two chapters. In this chapter, I explore the dynamics of Labour's organisational changes in the period between the 2015 and 2017 elections, and explore the factors that drove Corbyn's relative success. I demonstrate that in this period there was a shift in the Labour party's dominant coalition, as Corbyn, trade union leaders and elite representatives of the grassroots gained control of zones of uncertainty that enabled them to gain significant influence within the party. These new actors did not necessarily share the same ideological or material interests, yet Corbyn's leadership served as an umbrella movement to coordinate the insurgency. The influence of these actors within the dominant coalition provided Corbyn with the capacity to withstand parliamentary elites' attempts to exert their authority and remove him. As a result, for a brief period, Corbyn won the intra-party battles that shifted accountability away from the parliamentary party, which allowed him to re-orient the party. I argue that there was an element of luck in Corbyn's 2017 election campaign in the sense that it occurred during the brief window in which Corbyn did have control of the dominant coalition.

In Chapter six, I demonstrate that this control was short-lived. Corbyn was unable to institutionalise the new party dynamic, in part, because he could not continue to ameliorate the conflicting interests between his different supporters and sustain the insurgency. As a result, Corbyn failed to fundamentally change the power structure within the party, which in turn had implications for the way in which Labour oriented itself as anti-system politics was increasingly expressed in terms of Brexit rather than austerity. As a result, by the 2019 General Election, Corbyn's attempt at orientation fundamentally lacked coherence and was therefore insufficient to provide transformative answers that were necessary to sustain his articulation project.

5.1 Institutional failure and grassroots mobilisation: Corbyn's emergence as party leader

There are two facets to Corbyn's emergence as leader: the failure of MPs to fulfil their role as institutional gatekeepers; and the ability of Corbyn to mobilise an internal coalition of actors, specifically the mass membership and trade unions that had previously been excluded. The specific events of the leadership election established a dynamic in which electoral professional elites did not see Corbyn's election as legitimate, which was a view that became entrenched throughout his leadership.

Firstly, the failure of MPs to fulfil their role as institutional gatekeepers is tied to the apparent inability of a small number of MPs to appreciate the significance of the reforms that Miliband made to the leadership selection process. The new leader would be selected through a simple OMOV process, however the PLP did have some influence as any candidate would have to be nominated by 15% of MPs, which in 2015 was 35 MPs. At the time, this was deemed to be sufficient to prevent any new actors from winning such a vital zone of uncertainty as the leadership, as its occupant was naturally a member of the dominant coalition. As Declan McHugh (2015), who was the party's Director of Strategic Planning at the time of these reforms, says, the nomination threshold 'was judged to be a safe barrier to any outsider – especially from the hard left.'

Corbyn was only able to reach the nomination threshold thanks to a number of MPs, such as Margaret Beckett, Jon Cruddas, Frank Field and Neil Coyle, who 'lent' him their signatures on the basis that they did not expect him to win, and nor did they support his candidature, but believed that he would broaden the debate (BBC News, 2015a; Kogan, 2019, p. 226; interview with Jon Cruddas MP, London, April 2020). Other MPs, like Sadiq Khan and Rushanara Ali, voted for Corbyn as a means of horse-trading, wherein Corbyn and his small number of loyal MPs in turn supported their candidatures for London Mayor and Deputy Leader (Deacon, 2016; Jones, 2020, p. 49; Kogan, 2019, pp. 221–7; Nunns, 2018, pp. 62–3). There is also evidence that a grassroots digital lobbying effort, coordinated by the "Red Labour collective", a Facebook group that was

loosely aligned with the Socialist Campaign Group of left-wing MPs, pressured some MPs into supporting Corbyn's candidature (Nunns, 2018, pp. 79–96; Sellers, 2015). For instance, Chi Onwurah, explained her decision to nominate Corbyn:

> 'I asked members and supporters in my constituency who I should nominate and the overwhelming feedback – including, to be fair, from many who do not live in Newcastle Central – was that Jeremy Corbyn should be on the ballot. That is not to say I believe he should be the next leader of Labour party' (Chi Onwurah quoted in Prince, 2016, pp. 250–1).

The actions of these MPs not only reflect their miscomprehension of the new leadership selection rules, but also their lack of regard and understanding of the mood of the party membership. Corbyn's unabashedly left-wing, anti-system agenda appealed to a membership that had moved to the left under Miliband. Indeed, Corbyn's campaign did not approach the contest with the assumption that the membership was inherently radical, but instead believed that this was a constituency that wanted the party to change. As Richard Burgon, a Corbyn supporting MP, says:

> 'I know plenty of Labour members who don't even consider themselves on the left of the party at all, who back in 2015 voted for Jeremy to be leader. People from a range of political views in the party wanted change. They wanted the party to be anti-austerity and principled. They wanted the party to reject illegal wars and drop the politics that led to the "Controls on Immigration" mugs' (Richard Burgon quoted in Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 95).

Corbyn's opponents – Yvette Cooper, Andy Burnham and Liz Kendall – who had all served in high-profile positions under the leaderships of Brown and Miliband, failed to read the mood of the membership. This was later acknowledged by Ayesha Hazarika, who was the interim leader's Chief of Staff and would go on to become an unabashed Corbyn critic: '[Corbyn] did a brilliant job of tapping into the emotions that people were feeling in our party and we were tone deaf to them… Sadly both Andy and Yvette's teams had the arrogance and the complacency of the

incumbent' (Ayesha Hazarika quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 244). This not only suggests the growing appeal of anti-system politics, but also demonstrates the disconnect between different party faces that can emerge where the same type of actors retain influence for lengthy periods of time.

Indeed, the actions of prevailing party elites at the time further demonstrate this disjuncture. The official report into Labour's defeat in 2015, chaired by Margaret Beckett (who ironically leant Corbyn her nomination), found that the party was too left-leaning (Beckett, 2016, p. 31). The interim leadership believed that the party needed to restore the perception that it was a credible economic actor, as evidenced by the interim Shadow Chancellor's diagnosis that 'the issue we always face on the centre left is the temptation to want to control and run what's going on in a particular market… [which feeds] into the question of whether we understood business and how markets work' (Chris Leslie quoted in Stewart, 2015). The most consequential action appears to have been the way in which these elites structured Labour's response to the Conservative's Welfare Reform and Work bill, that would institute £12 billion worth of cuts to existing welfare benefits. The interim leader, Harriet Harman, was concerned that Labour was seen by the public as 'soft on welfare' and so developed a strategy where the party would introduce a 'reasoned amendment' that would oppose the cuts, and when that was defeated, abstain on the bill (Kogan, 2019, pp. 233–5). Corbyn's opponents for the leadership were all members of the interim Shadow Cabinet and so would have to resign to oppose Harman's strategy. Burnham explained that such an action was 'antithetical' to his preferred approach to 'argue it out on shadow cabinet' and he sent a letter to his colleagues in which he set out that his opposition to the bill but, in a sign of support for 'collective responsibility', would be following the whip (quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 236). Corbyn, by contrast, simply voted against the bill. It is possible that Burnham may have perceived that his action would appeal to his colleagues who, as was demonstrated in the last election, continued to prioritise electability, which itself was constructed around a Third Way orientation of competency and orthodoxy. However, in the context of the leadership campaign

this was a disastrous position to take as it alienated him from the membership and provided a definitive contrast for Corbyn.

Corbyn's election was still contingent on harnessing his contrasting orientation to mobilise an insurgent coalition comprised of actors that had been excluded from the prevailing dominant coalition. Support from the trade unions was critical. As was outlined in the previous chapter, trade union leaders had sought to restore their influence within the party, which created tension with electoral professional elites. In this context, Burnham publicly eschewed their support, stating 'if I take no money from the unions, I am not dependent on them and that will put me in a stronger position to defend unions and to defend the union link in the future' (quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 228). This decision may have been a fair calculation, given that union capacity to influence the outcome of the contest had been reduced under the new leadership election model. Yet it also can be interpreted as a commitment to uphold the internal power dynamics of the prevailing dominant coalition. In contrast, Corbyn solicited the endorsement of six affiliated unions – ASLEF, BFAWU, CWU, TSSA, Unison and UNITE – as well as three unaffiliated unions – the RMT, the FBU and the Prison Officers' Association. Several other affiliated unions, most notably GMB, the third largest union after Unite and Unison, made the decision to abstain from endorsing a candidate, which for many Corbyn advisors was tantamount to a quasi-endorsement (Nunns, 2018, pp. 156–161).

The extent of support that these unions provided to Corbyn's campaign substantially varied. UNITE provided £100,000 in donations and loans, while it estimates that it organised 100,000 of its members to register to vote as affiliated supporters (Nunns, 2018, pp. 161–2). UNITE and the TSSA provided office space, and, along with the CWU, seconded staff to the campaign. The support from these trade unions provided the material resources that enabled Corbyn to pay campaign staff and to organise the activities, like phone banking, that is inherent to a functional campaign. While large unions, like Unison, did not provide financial or material support, Corbyn's campaign staff believe that they provided credibility and a plausibility that gave

confidence to party members that their vote would not be wasted (Kogan, 2019, pp. 237–40; Nunns, 2018, pp. 152–8).

Corbyn also consciously connected his campaign to social movements that existed outside of the party. Between May 2015 and September 2015, the number of members doubled from 250,000 to over 500,000. Survey evidence has found that anti-capitalist values and a disillusionment with 'politics as usual' were a motivating factor for new members to join the party during the leadership election, and for former members to re-join (Whiteley et al., 2019). It is likely that many of these new or re-joining members had participated, even loosely, in the social movements that had proliferated in the preceding decade. These movements included the anti-WTO and anti-Globalisation movements, Stop the War!, Occupy, the 2010 student protests against tuition fees, and the People's Assembly Against Austerity. While it is not expected that such organisations and movements would have institutionalised connections to the Labour party, the concomitant decline in party membership that had occurred during the New Labour period meant that the party's connections to broader social movements had become weak. These movements would provide a source for the new ideas around which Corbyn would seek to re-orient the party.

Despite the fact that members and registered supporters made up the entirety of the electorate, they were treated with suspicion by the parliamentary party and party bureaucracy. The interim leadership and the party bureaucracy repeatedly expressed concerns that Corbyn was serving as a gateway for Trotskyist entryists to take over the party (Wintour, 2015a). The bureaucracy encouraged 'Trot busting', where member applications would be denied for having 'liked' a Facebook page of a rival party or social movement, or, in a number of cases, retweeting the Green Party's post on a particular issue (Abbott, 2015; The Labour Party, 2020, p. 72; Walsh & Perraudin, 2015). Ultimately, the number of voters excluded was miniscule in terms of Corbyn's margin of victory, but this does indicate that key actors within the dominant coalition did not see the membership as a legitimate body to select the leader.

Corbyn won on the first round with 59.5% of the vote. He won 49.6% of full members, 57.6% of affiliated supporters, and 83.8% of registered supporters. It is clear that this can partly be explained by representatives of the dominant coalition failing to understand the dynamics of the selection process that they themselves had established. This is important to recognise, as under the changes to the organisational structures made in the New Labour period, the parliamentary party had increased in internal significance to become the institution to which the party leader was primarily accountable. In 2015, a small number of MPs neglected this function, which created an opportunity for an insurgent actor to gain control of as vital a zone of uncertainty as the party leadership. Moreover, the dynamics of the leadership contest demonstrated the extent to which parliamentary elites were disconnected with the membership. While this had not mattered in the New Labour era, in which a cartelised approach to party competition was pervasive, the disarticulation of Labour's social bloc between 2010 and 2015 had called the sustainability of this organisational structure into question. The disconnect also gave rise to a sense that the membership was not a legitimate actor to select the party leader, which in turn cast Corbyn's selection as illegitimate. By his very identity, Corbyn's election as Labour leader shifted the composition of the dominant coalition. However, the leadership election presented two, mutually exclusive claims for accountability. The question over whether Corbyn was accountable to the parliamentary party, as had been the case under the prevailing party structure, or to the mass membership would underpin the intra-party debates that occurred throughout Corbyn's leadership. As will be seen, in most of these intraparty debates Corbyn would struggle to convert the authority of actors from the party on the ground into internal power to influence outcomes in the dominant coalition.

5.2 Electoral professional elites immediately re-assert themselves

Despite Corbyn's overwhelming victory, electoral professional elites still retained control of most zones of uncertainty which allowed them to exert authority within the dominant coalition.

The opponents: the PLP, Shadow Cabinet and the party bureaucracy

Corbyn's first task as leader was to appoint a Shadow Cabinet. While Miliband had succeeded in changing the party rules so that the leader would appoint their own Shadow Cabinet, Corbyn lacked sufficient support within the PLP to fill positions with MPs that were loyal or ideologically aligned with his cause. While the success of the trade union's political strategy meant that the intake of new MPs from the 2015 election was widely acknowledged as more left-leaning than the 2010 or 2005 intakes, and included Corbyn supporting MPs like Rebecca Long-Bailey, Clive Lewis and Richard Burgon, these MPs were seen by Corbyn's own team to lack the experience to manage Shadow Cabinet portfolios (Jones, 2020, pp. 74–5; Nunns, 2018, pp. 258–61). As such, Corbyn had no alternative but to reach out to his internal opponents. Nevertheless, several high profiles members of Miliband's Shadow Cabinet made public statements that they would not serve under Corbyn, including Rachel Reeves, Emma Reynolds, Tristram Hunt, Chris Leslie along with two of his opponents in the leadership contest, Yvette Cooper and Liz Kendall (Mason, 2015). Corbyn's first Shadow Cabinet contained only four MPs that could be described as loyal supporters of the new leader (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018a, p. 75). Crucially, Corbyn did insist that his old friend and ally, John McDonnell, be appointed Shadow Chancellor. This was the most influential position in terms of influencing the party's economic policies, while it was envisaged that by appointing an ally with similar background experiences to this key position would help to embed an ideological re-orientation. McDonnell's appointment was opposed by many within the PLP and, interestingly, Unite General Secretary, Len McCluskey (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018a, p. 74; Nunns, 2018, pp. 259–261). This latter detail reveals the ongoing difficulty that Corbyn would face in keeping the constituent interests of his insurgent coalition aligned.

Corbyn also lacked the ability to change the composition of the elites who ran the party's bureaucracy. As described in Chapter 3, the purpose of the party bureaucracy had been transformed from a neutral bureaucracy to an effective vanguard of New Labour (Minkin, 2014; Russell, 2005). While the party bureaucracy had opposed Miliband's leadership, this hostility found

a new level when it came to Corbyn. For instance, an advisor to the General Secretary described the relationship between the Leader of the Opposition's Office (LOTO) and the party bureaucracy as 'a whirlwind of increasing tensions' due to the former's failure in 'ordinary professional delivery… they'd just come up with the most stupid decision making by a team that didn't know what it was doing' (Anon B., interview, February 2020). For their part, Matt Zarb-Cousin, who served as Corbyn's media spokesperson in this early period, says that the party bureaucracy's treatment of LOTO provided a key constraint on Corbyn's ability to orient the party:

> '[The party bureaucracy] was incredibly right wing. Not just in the context of Labour but to the right of the Conservative party in many respects… So it was very difficult to do what we wanted to do… But there was probably an underestimation as to how uncooperative and actively resistant they would be' (Matt Zarb-Cousin, interview, February 2020).

This obstruction was revealed in a report into the functioning of the Labour party's governance unit, which was leaked in April 2020.[5] For instance, when Corbyn visited the party headquarters for the first time after being elected leader, the Head of External Relations commented, 'I feel like he should have maybe addressed the massive elephant in the room that we all kind of hate him' (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 41). A few weeks later, the party's Director of Policy and Research, in conversation with the Head of Planning, described Corbyn's victory as 'an entryist thing' that was 'set up by lansman[6] [sic] and backed by Corbyn to sign up to CLP meetings. shameless [sic]' (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 49). He then continued that the party 'have to get rid of him in the next couple of months or the trots [sic] will embed themselves' (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 50). Under the New Labour organisation, the bureaucracy had functioned as one wing of the machine through which Blair moulded the party around the Third Way orientation. As had been demonstrated in

[5] Caution must be taken when drawing on evidence from this leaked report. It is acknowledged that this report was drafted and leaked by supporters of Corbyn, however the specific allegations cited here have not been refuted and have been corroborated by secondary accounts. See for instance (Jones, 2020; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020)

[6] Referring to Jon Lansman, the founder of Momentum and the campaign manager for Corbyn's leadership election in 2015.

the Miliband period, without control over the party bureaucracy it would prove very difficult to win intra-party battles within the prevailing organisational structure.

Because control of the bureaucracy was centralised in the identity of the General Secretary, Corbyn could not change its dynamics without the NEC electing a more favourable figure. For the first two years of his leadership, Corbyn lacked a majority on the NEC. At the time of his election, Corbyn could only really count on the support of some of the delegates from Constituency Labour parties and from select trade unions, namely Unite, the CWU and the TSSA. As a result, the incumbent General Secretary, Iain McNicol, remained in place, as did much of the key staff whose tenure dated back to the New Labour period.

Organising Corbyn's support base: Staffing in the leader's office and the creation of Momentum

Without a way of translating his mass movement into organisational control, Corbyn was isolated and constrained in his attempts at re-orientation.

The Leader Of The Opposition's office (LOTO)

The hostility that Corbyn faced from other core actors within the party's dominant coalition was coupled with significant media criticism and scepticism about his leadership. However, according to secondary accounts of the period, this created a pressure on staff at LOTO that they were ill equipped to deal with. A lot of this can potentially be put down to the inexperience of the staff members. The nature of Corbyn's outsider appeal was that he had brought together volunteers and sympathisers that tended to exist in social movements outside of parliamentary politics. With the exception of Simon Fletcher, who had served as an advisor to Ed Miliband, very few advisors had directly worked in Westminster. This was significant from both policy development and communications strategy standpoints.

With regards to policy development, LOTO struggled to find the space for the ideological work required for re-orientation amidst the more short-term goal of surviving. As Rory Macqueen, who had taken a suspension on his PhD in order to work in economic policy says, 'it was absolute carnage. We didn't make any announcements, didn't advance left-wing policy in any way because

we were literally just trying to be there until tomorrow' (in Jones, 2020, p. 98). This can be attributed to not only the lack of Westminster experience amongst Corbyn's staff, but also the lack of staff who had a background in think tanks. Christine Berry (2017) shows that in the 2015 to 2017 period, only one key policy staff member had previously worked at a think tank, James Meadway at the New Economics Foundation, while Mike Hatchett was headhunted from the civil service. Instead, policy staff tended to be brought in from trade unions, notable examples include Andrew Fisher (Head of Policy) and Mary Robertson (Head of Economic Policy), while McDonnell attempted to establish a Council of Economic Advisors, which included high-profile academics like Thomas Piketty, Danny Blanchflower, Mariana Mazzucato and Ha-Joon Chang. This Council proved short-lived as many of the economists, while radical in their own right, were not natural allies of the Corbyn project and were not well suited to the public ridicule that came with association to Corbyn (Mason, 2016b). More broadly, the composition of policy advisors meant that the staff, at times, lacked the capacity to translate important and cutting-edge academic work into tangible policy proposals, which is the typical work of a think tank. This problem was exacerbated by the pressure and scrutiny that came with running a political party, which many of these advisors were ill-prepared for.

This intersects with the problem of constructing a communications strategy in a hostile news environment. One particular figure who has come in for criticism is Seumus Milne, who prior to working as Corbyn's Director of Communications, was the Comment editor at *the Guardian*. In one secondary account, a former aide is quoted, 'he was not somebody that understood the 24/7 news cycle. He wrote a column on issues he wanted to talk about rather than issues that were present in the new agenda of the day, what was on people's minds' (anonymous aide quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 101). Without the connections or experience to generate positive headlines, LOTO persisted with the grassroots strategies that had worked in the leadership campaign. For instance, each week, on Thursdays and Fridays, Corbyn would head out into the constituencies to hold a rally in a different marginal constituency. The problem with this, according

to a communications advisor, was that they were talking to the converted: 'say you get three hundred people in a room… and of those three hundred, if two hundred become campaigners or regularly go out campaigning, it's worth it. But to me it felt like the boss comes into town, does a speech, does selfies, signs stuff for the raffle, leaves' (Jones, 2020, p. 106). This presents compelling evidence that the specific backgrounds of Corbyn's staff did not provide the required experience for the party to generate ideas or convert movement politics into tangible ideas to re-orient the party.

By January 2016 the disfunction prompted intervention from John McDonnell who brought in former senior Civil Servant, Bob Kerslake, to conduct a review of Corbyn's office. This review found that, within LOTO, there was such disfunction that 'people didn't know, when things didn't happen, whether it was cock-up or conspiracy' (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 17). Following this review there was a restructure of Corbyn's office where Karie Murphy became Executive Director, essentially Chief of Staff, replacing Simon Fletcher who was demoted to director of campaigns. (Bush, 2016; Jones, 2020, p. 121). Murphy's appointment helped to solidify the alliance between Unite and Corbyn's office. Murphy, a nurse who became a UNITE activist and then, in a twist of fate, she was the candidate in the 2013 Falkirk selection that had sparked the conflict leading to the change in rules around leader selection. But most fundamentally, she was regarded as an ally and confidante of Len McCluskey (Eaton, 2016; Edwards, 2016; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 17). In this way, her appointment helped to institutionalise the alliance between UNITE, as the biggest trade union and financier of the Labour party, and Corbyn's office. This was a critical step towards bringing UNITE, and to a lesser extent other left-wing unions like the CWU, back into the dominant coalition, which was necessary to shift the party's orientation. This was an important development in that it was critical to the professionalisation of the operation at LOTO. In a sign of the confrontational approach that Corbyn's office would adopt in intra-party battles, Murphy said that 'unless you're working against our socialist project for the right wing of the Labour Party, you have nothing to fear from me' (Murphy quoted in Jones, 2020, pp. 120–1). The

claim that Murphy stabilised LOTO is corroborated by other staff members, which is important as these statements were made after many of them clashed with her in the latter period of Corbyn's leadership

Momentum

Over the course of 2015, Labour's membership had increased by over 200,000 members to a total of around 552,000. 'Momentum' was established by Jon Lansman, who during the leadership campaign, had registered a company to hold the data that Corbyn's campaign had collected on its supporters (Kogan, 2019, p. 253). The idea was that Momentum would organise the disparate extra-party movements and tendencies that existed within the grassroots and that had unified in their support for Corbyn. It would employ staff to ensure that this base remained mobilised against the backlash that Corbyn would face from inside and outside the party; and, as Corbyn's party democratisation agenda unfolded, Momentum would help to shift the dynamics of the party in public office by influencing candidate selection processes (Jones, 2020, p. 56).

However, Momentum experienced significant teething problems. It was no small feat that Corbyn's leadership campaign had united quite disparate elements of the extra-parliamentary left. In addition to disenchanted members and former members, Corbyn's campaign had drawn together different social movements including Stop the War coalition, participants in the 2010 student-led protests against education fees, parts of Occupy, and older veterans of Trotskyist, Communist and Anarchist groups (Jones, 2020, chaps. 1–2; Nunns, 2018, chap. 7). But outside of their support for Corbyn, members of these groups had substantial political differences, including how and whether to participate in the Labour party: Should it be, in effect, a party faction that, through its membership base, would seek to influence internal party processes? Or, should Momentum be geared towards bringing more and more people into the party by running campaigns in connected environments?

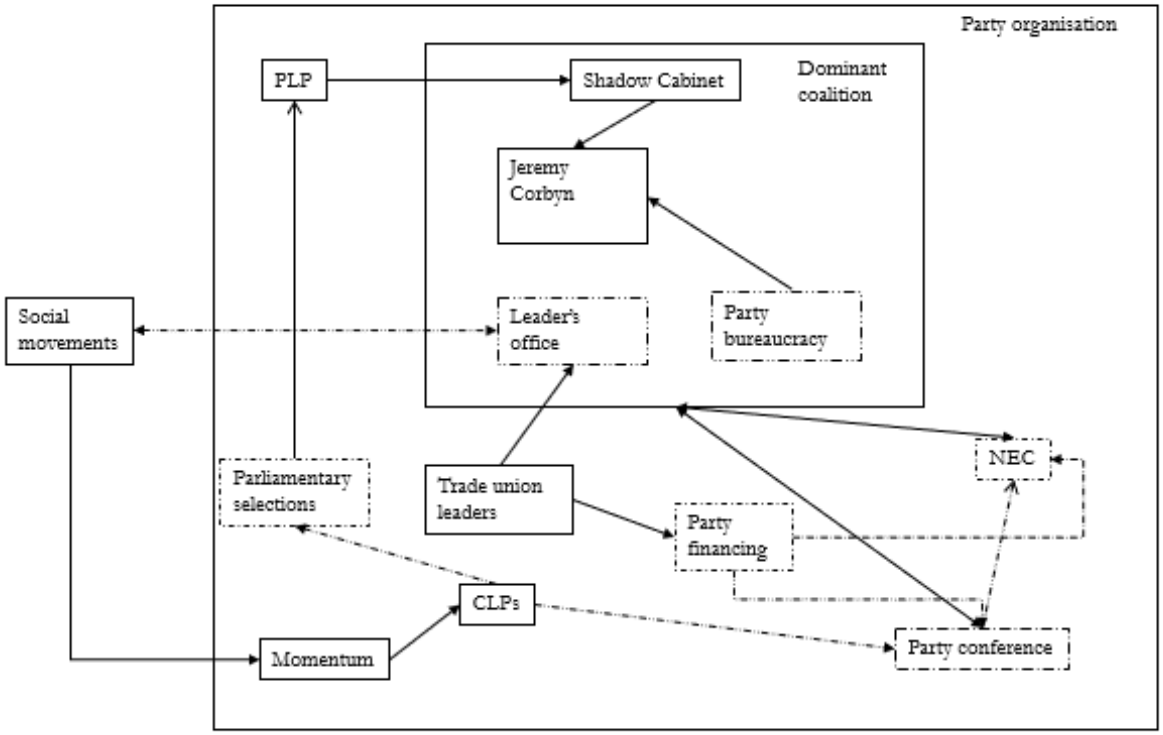
Lansman, the group's founder, was a veteran of internal Labour party dynamics. He had run Tony Benn's campaign for deputy leader in 1981, and had been a key organiser of the

Campaign for Labour Democracy (CLPD), which had been the group behind the left's last grasp on power in the early 1980s. In contrast, other full-time staff members in 2015, journalist James Schneider, and schoolteachers Adam Klug and Emma Rees, were more representative of the grassroots movements that existed outside Labour. In the early days, Momentum lacked a proper governance structure and it was essentially up to these four individuals to set the organisation's direction. As Rees describes this period, 'it was like an arranged marriage or something. You know, put them together, give them no money, just see what happens' (Kogan, 2019, p. 254). In one early meeting, according to Schneider 'the first proper meeting was going through Jon's paper and we thought it was terrible. Jon was carrying on with souped up CLPD plus souped up Left Futures… - not very good' (Kogan, 2019, p. 255). Lansman admits that he was 'completely wrong', but also applies this to the others' ideas, 'they wanted a complete open-door policy. They wanted it to be a totally horizontal organisation, totally anarchic. They had no experience of left-wing sectarianism… it was a kind of continuous battle over a period of many months, developed with increasingly shared understanding' (Kogan, 2019, pp. 258–9).

The analysis in this section is visualised in Figure 5.1. This map is not overtly different from the organisational structure of Miliband's party as the dominant coalition is similarly composed of the Shadow Cabinet, party bureaucracy and the leader's office. Corbyn and his office are obviously new types of actors within the dominant coalition, however they are constrained by the other actors who hold more powerful zones of uncertainty. The major points of difference from the Miliband structure lie outside of the dominant coalition. One major contrast is that the sources of influence on Corbyn and his staff come from outside the networks of the electoral professional elite, either the broader social movements outside of the Labour party or the union movement. Another difference is the entry of Momentum as a clear actor within the party organisation. It shows that Momentum sought to achieve influence by influencing the composition of CLPs, and in turn processes of candidate selection and the election of delegates to party conference and the NEC. In the early period, it achieved only a limited capacity to influence these

processes and therefore the broader organisational structure. What this map shows, then, is that in the early period of Corbyn's leadership new types of actors had entered the broader party organisation. However, as these actors could not gain control over zones of uncertainty like the NEC or candidate selection, they could not enter the dominant coalition. As a result, the organisational structure routed accountability firmly in the hands of parliamentary elites who were able to constrain Corbyn's attempts at re-orientation.

Figure 5.1: Labour organisational structure, 2015



Source: author's visualisation

5.3 The parliamentary party constrains re-orientation

While Corbyn faced hostility from the dominant coalition, he did not always help his own cause. In the first week after becoming leader, Corbyn, in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition, attended an event to commemorate the Battle of Britain. At the event, Corbyn failed to sing the national anthem, which became a major news story (see for example BBC News, 2015b; Davies, 2015; Odell, 2015). Given that there was already broader public concern that Corbyn was not a

committed patriot, his actions added fuel to the fire. As Annelise Midgley, who had become the deputy chief of staff noted, 'it kind of symbolized something which never went away' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 94). This was an early marker of a trend that would continue throughout his leadership, where Corbyn failed to act pragmatically in reaction to smaller events while pursuing a broader re-orientation of the party. Yet, the deeper problem that Corbyn faced was that the other elites in the dominant coalition did not recognise his authority and firmly opposed any attempt at ideological re-orientation. This was made immediately clear in the way in which Labour responded to issues that emerged in the first six months of Corbyn's leadership.

The first clash occurred over Labour's response to the Conservatives' cap on welfare benefits. At a speech to the Trades Union Congress on September 15th, Corbyn stated that 'we oppose the benefit cap. We oppose social cleansing' (quoted in Syal & Taylor, 2015). However, this position was publicly rebuked by Owen Smith, the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, who was concerned that Labour would give the impression that it was 'in favour of unfettered spending' (quoted in Perraudin, 2015). Likewise, Kate Green, the Shadow Equalities Minister, said, 'when Jeremy asked me to join the Shadow Cabinet on Sunday, I said to him that the way I approached difficult decisions like this is to look at the evidence. And what the evidence is showing us is that the cap has been a little bit successful in moving people who weren't working and could work into work' (quoted in Perraudin, 2015). Corbyn and his Shadow Cabinet clearly had contrasting interpretations around welfare benefits, and the Shadow Cabinet acted to constrain Corbyn's attempt at moving away from the entrenched party position.

A similar dynamic emerged in determining how Labour would respond to the decision of junior doctors to take strike action in response to proposed new contracts that would increase their work hours whilst cutting pay. In a Shadow Cabinet meeting in January 2016, the Shadow Health Secretary, Heidi Alexander, said that while Labour was sympathetic to the striking junior doctors, Labour would not endorse the strike action due to a concern that it could prompt a political backlash (Carlin, 2016). However, at the end of the meeting, John McDonnell left and

joined a picket line (Watt, 2016). The contrast in approaches between McDonnell and Alexander continued for months, and in April 2016 McDonnell sought to circumvent Labour's policy-making procedures by establishing a policy advisory group, without informing Alexander (Campbell, 2016).

The most public split occurred in this period occurred on the issue of military intervention in Syria. In November 2015, David Cameron announced that the UK would extend its bombing campaign against ISIS. In a Shadow Cabinet meeting to determine how Labour should respond, Corbyn, who was a former Chair of the Stop the War! coalition and had notably opposed the war in Iraq on non-interventionist grounds, firmly argued against Labour supporting these interventions. However, Hilary Benn, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, argued that Labour should support the military intervention. Several MPs and Shadow Cabinet members briefed that they would resign if Corbyn enforced a whip on the issue, effectively forcing a free vote and illustrating Corbyn's lack of internal authority (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018a, p. 75). Clive Lewis, a former soldier and Corbyn-supporting MP, argued that 'Benn and others saw it as an opportunity to prove they were right, that Jeremy was wrong. It was a sense of: "there were things we did right in Iraq, and you can't have history all your own way"… It was about not letting Jeremy have the last word on Iraq' (quoted in Jones, 2020, pp. 76–7).

Momentum, along with the Stop the War Coalition, organised a rally of several thousand people in Parliament Square for the night of the Commons vote. In a move reminiscent of the leadership campaign, Momentum organised a mass letter writing campaign, in which they state that they organised 30,000 people to email Labour MPs to vote against the war (Kogan, 2019, p. 263; for a draft of the letter see LabourList, 2015). At the same time, LOTO commissioned a survey of Labour party members, which found that 75% of members opposed military action in Syria (Wintour, 2015c). Given that the Conservatives held a majority in the Commons, the vote of Labour MPs would not actually influence the policy taken. Yet it became a symbolic battle over Labour's ideological orientation, in a sense whether it had fully abandoned the Third Way

approach, and more specifically, who had the authority to influence policy making in the party organisation. It is unclear to what extent the grassroots mobilisation actually influenced the decision-making of individual MPs, though it appears to be minimal as 67 MPs voted for military intervention, including 11 Shadow Cabinet ministers and, notably, Deputy Leader Tom Watson.

This event is emblematic of Corbyn's first year as leader. The evidence presented here suggests that Corbyn faced significant hostility from the electoral professional actors within his dominant coalition, and so lacked the internal authority to dictate how the party should respond to a range of critical issues. Moreover, this hostility appears consistent with the perception, noted in the previous section, that Corbyn was not really seen as a legitimate leader by parliamentary elites as he had been selected by the members, who had a fundamentally different ideological interest to that of the parliamentary party. At the same time, there is also evidence that elements of Corbyn's grassroots support base attempted to influence internal decision-making processes in innovative ways. In a sense, the efforts of Momentum represent an endeavour to return to the mass party where the membership would exert pressure on MPs to represent their interests. However, Momentum appears to have struggled to constrain MPs that were hostile to Corbyn's orientation to issues like Syria, and thus failed to provide a counter to this organisational constraint on re-orientation. In this sense, the first nine months of Corbyn's leadership demonstrated that despite the election of an outsider to the leadership, the inability to significantly shift the composition or structure of the dominant coalition by bringing new actors into the dominant coalition meant that Labour failed to develop the ideological orientation for articulation of an anti-system social bloc.

5.4 Labour's lack of coherence at the Brexit referendum

Rather than as a 'cultural backlash', where once dominant social groups like the manual working class react to progressive changes in society, in particular the multi-culturalism associated with immigration (Kaufmann & Goodwin, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), Brexit should be approached as the culmination of the unequal effects of Britain's financialised economic growth

model, which were accelerated by the financial crisis, and in turn politicised by anti-liberal, nationalist forces (Gartzou-Katsouyanni et al., 2021; Hopkin, 2017). Interpreting Brexit according to this second understanding allows us to place it as a continuation of the critical juncture that had dis-articulated the social bloc that had underpinned New Labour.

The financialisation of the British economy under both the Conservative and New Labour governments had produced substantial divides in regional productivity. The Conservatives' austerity program, to which Labour under Miliband struggled to orient itself, cut most social transfers, reduced public investment and reduced funding to local authorities. The result of these reforms was to cut the means by which financialised growth in London and the South-East could filter, through public spending programs, into the less productive regions of the UK (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). There is strong evidence that the greater effect of austerity on an individual or an area, the more likely they were to vote Leave (Fetzer, 2019).

During the Brexit campaign, both UKIP and Conservative politicians associated with the different Leave campaigns pushed protectionist ideas to connect the unequal effects of financialisation and austerity to the perceived impact of immigration like unemployment and the functioning of public services (Hopkin, 2017). This was a significant move as it had the potential to further dis-articulate the remnants of Labour's social bloc by solidifying the long-term de-alignment of a subset of working class groups from the party, especially those that were more English in their identity and held negative perceptions about the value of immigration (Jennings & Stoker, 2017). Brexit also accelerated the long-term re-alignment of British party competition as it divided the majority of cosmopolitan voters in urban centres, who increasingly supported Labour, from the rest of the country, including the subset of the working class that increasingly voted Conservative. This was the right-wing anti-system response to cartel politics and should be treated as a significant heightening of the critical juncture that was disarticulating Labour.

During the campaign, while Corbyn and the party elites that held power within the dominant coalition agreed that Labour should adopt a "Remain" position, there were notable differences in how they believed the party should frame the UK's relationship with the EU.

The official Labour campaign, 'Labour in for Britain', was coordinated out of the party bureaucracy and was led by Alan Johnson, the former New Labour Cabinet minister, and Hilary Benn, the Shadow Foreign Secretary that had opposed Corbyn's position on Syria. The campaign's strategy was to work closely with 'Britain Stronger in Europe', which was the official Remain campaign. Britain Stronger in Europe's organisational board included Peter Mandelson, the former New Labour spin doctor, who was also the campaign's strategic director and managed its 180 staff. The campaign was funded by multimillionaires including Roland Rudd, Karren Brady, Richard Branson and Alan Sugar. Britain Stronger in Europe was effectively led by David Cameron. Its messaging was oriented around a negative campaign that was commonly referred to as 'Project Fear', emphasising the economic disasters that would ensue if the UK withdrew from the EU. As such, the position of the Labour campaign was a wholehearted endorsement of the EU while adopting the tenets of Project Fear.

Corbyn approached the issue differently. He refused to campaign at the same events as David Cameron, and he adopted a 'Remain and Reform' position in which his support for the EU was more qualified (Mason, 2016a). In policy terms, this position sort to connect the 'neoliberal' EU with a left-wing agenda on the environment and workers' protection. As Corbyn said in a speech:

> 'Labour is convinced that a vote to remain is in the best interests of the people of this country… but we also need to make the case for reform in Europe – the reform David Cameron's Government has no interest in, but plenty of others across Europe do. That means democratic reform to make the EU more accountable to its people. Economic reform to end self-defeating austerity and put jobs and sustainable growth at the centre of European policy, labour market

> reform to strengthen and extend workers' rights in a real social Europe' (Corbyn, 2016).

In this way, the 'Remain and Reform' position attempted to achieve the difficult task of leaning into the political disaffection that Corbyn had identified and mobilised in his rise to the Labour leadership, whilst supporting an institution that, through the work of UKIP, was identified by several of Labour's target social groups as the pillar of the political establishment.

Nevertheless, several of Corbyn's advisors have described a general ambivalence that permeated within LOTO during the Brexit campaign. In an interview, Corbyn infamously described his 'passion' for remaining in the EU as 'seven, or seven and a half out of 10' (BBC News 2016a). Joss MacDonald, Corbyn's speechwriter at the time, says that 'most people in LOTO did not take it seriously at all. Most thought if we left [the EU], it wouldn't really cause us any political difficulties' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 175). Corbyn's economics policy advisor, Mike Hatchett, said that most in the office were convinced Remain would win, and that the focus was 'on landing in the right place politically' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 175). Mark Simpson, who was a 'non-Corbynite in the Corbyn camp' and had background as a political officer for Labour MEPs in Brussels, says that Corbyn and his top advisors, like Milne, believed that either referendum outcome would create more divisions and problems for the Conservatives than for Labour, and hence they could remain at a distance (quoted in Jones, 2020, pp. 173–4).

Despite most Labour MPs campaigning in favour of Remain and over 70% of Labour supporters voting to Remain, the majority of Labour constituencies voted to Leave. There is clearly an argument that this created a strategic dilemma that was impossible for Corbyn's project to overcome. Yet, when this dilemma is considered alongside evidence that points to a disjuncture between the campaign strategies of LOTO and the party's official campaign run by Alan Johnson, Hilary Benn and the party bureaucracy reflects the effects of instability within the dominant coalition on the party's capacity for articulation. If Corbyn had the authority to re-orient the party, he would have imposed his 'Remain and Reform' message as part of his anti-system articulation

strategy, however a combination of internal conflicts and a lack of motivation appears to have constrained such an orientation. Whether this orientation would have been sufficient to withstand the anti-liberal, nationalist messaging and to re-articulate Labour's social bloc is another question. Regardless, it was a missed opportunity because, as will be explored more fully in the next chapter, after the 2017 General Election Brexit would come to dominate UK politics, making Labour's strategic dilemma even more pronounced, and Labour's organisational dynamics would continue to constrain its capacity to orientate itself accordingly. A narrow Remain victory at the Brexit referendum is an important counterfactual for the prospects of Corbyn's project and UK politics more generally.

5.5 The 'Chicken Coup': New Labour strikes back

In the aftermath of the referendum, the shock result was used as a pretext to launch a 'coup' against Corbyn. Over the weekend of the 25th and 26th of June, 2016, Hillary Benn began calling Shadow Cabinet colleagues to canvass opinion on whether there was sufficient appetite for asking Corbyn to stand down and, additionally, in the event that he refused to do so, whether these colleagues would join Benn in resigning from the Shadow Cabinet (Boffey, 2016). When Corbyn got word, he sacked Benn, which in turn prompted over half of the Shadow Cabinet to resign (Boffey et al., 2016). As Jonathan Ashworth, a neutral member of the Shadow Cabinet describes, '[MPs] felt that because of these huge Leave votes in traditional Labour areas, the new Tory prime minister would come in, immediately have a general election and we'd lose fifty seats. Panic set in. They were saying, "We can't go into a general election with Jeremy, we're going to get destroyed"' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 79).

In the PLP meeting on the 28th of June, a motion of no-confidence in Corbyn's leadership was passed by a margin of 172 to 40. This motion had no formal consequence, however party rules do allow for an MP to trigger a new leadership contest, provided they have the support of at least 20% of Labour MPs. It appears that MPs expected Corbyn to resign under weight of pressure, as Margaret Hodge, one of the movers of the no-confidence motion, said 'we just assumed he'd

resign' (quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 287). It is telling that this was a similar tactic, albeit on a smaller scale, that was employed by supporters of Gordon Brown in getting Tony Blair to resign in 2007. It was a move that is more likely to have worked if Corbyn believed that he was accountable to the PLP, rather than the mass membership. This was the first sign that the power that the PLP wielded through the New Labour accountability structure could be checked.

Instead, Corbyn refused to resign and he appointed a new Shadow Cabinet, albeit one that had to be reduced in size from 31 to 25 and was filled by primarily inexperienced MPs from the party's left like Clive Lewis, Angela Rayner, Rebecca Long-Bailey and Richard Burgon. Tom Watson, the Corbyn-sceptic Deputy Leader, met with Len McCluskey to broker a deal. McCluskey proposed that Corbyn stay on as leader and be granted a 'probation period' of two years, after which a committee would meet to decide on where Labour was positioned in the polls and in marginal constituencies, which Watson refused (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018a, p. 84; Jones, 2020, p. 82; McCluskey, 2021, pp. 196–200; Nunns, 2018, pp. 278–9). This is an important event, as it demonstrates that UNITE had fully positioned itself as a core supporter of Corbyn. Likewise, Corbyn also retained the support from the trade unions that were not traditionally aligned with the party's left. In late June, the General Secretaries of the major trade unions, including UNITE, Unison, and GMB, issued two joint statements opposing another leadership selection (McCluskey et al. 2016a; McCluskey et al. 2016b). (LabourList, 2016; UNISON, 2016). One of these directly commented on the unions' interpretation of what MPs were trying to do: 'Jeremy Corbyn is the democratically-elected Leader of our Party who secured such a resounding mandate less than ten months ago under an electoral procedure fully supported by Labour MPs. His position cannot and should not be challenged except through the proper democratic procedures provided for in the Party's constitution. We urge all Labour MPs to abide by those procedures, and to respect the authority of the Party's Leader' (UNISON, 2016).

The support from the trade unions would prove critical to Corbyn remaining in his position. When Corbyn refused to resign, the site of the conflict moved to the NEC. As the arbiter

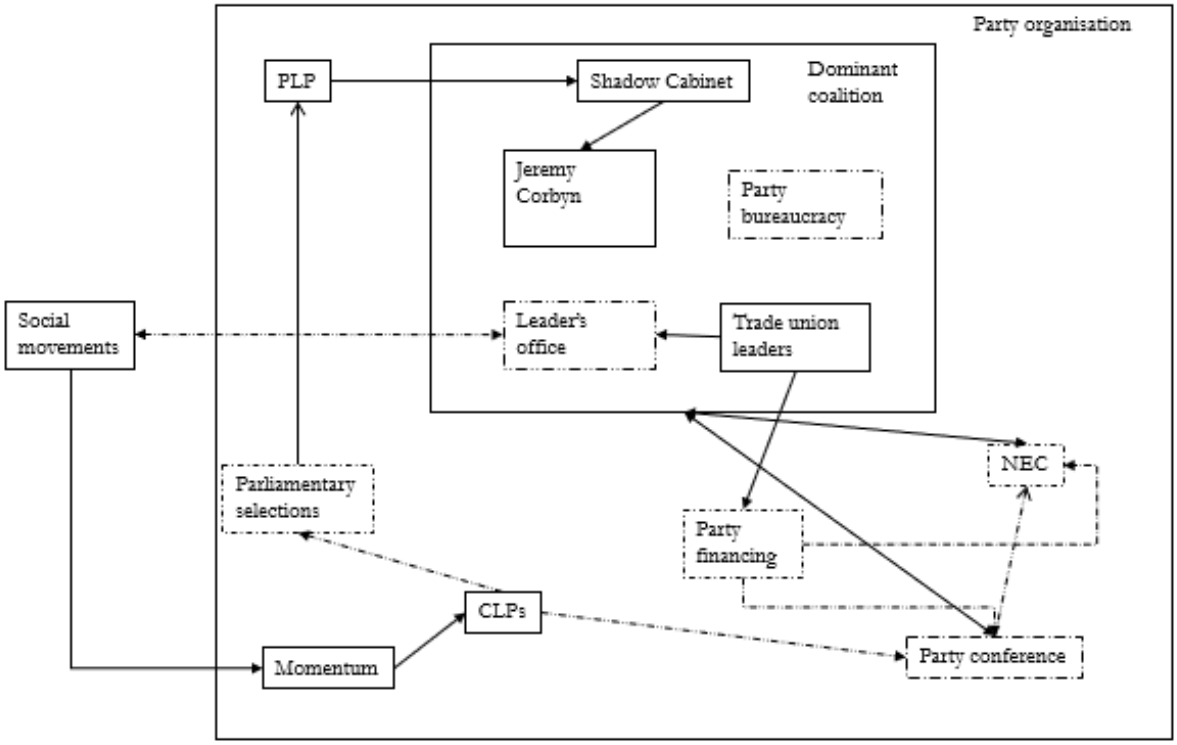
of party rules, the NEC would decide on whether Corbyn would automatically appear on the ballot for the leadership contest that was triggered by the MP's vote. This was the major point of contention, as it was clear that Corbyn could not gain the requisite nominations if the rules required him to do so. At the NEC meeting on the 12th of July, the support of union votes proved critical as Corbyn won the right to automatically appear on the ballot 18-14.

With Corbyn automatically on the ballot, the actual leadership contest would prove to be a foregone conclusion as the electorate remained broadly similar to that of the 2015 contest.[7] Corbyn secured 61.8% of the vote to defeat his challenger, Owen Smith. However, this contest did prove important for Corbyn to reconnect with his grassroots base. Over the course of the campaign, Momentum's membership increased to 20,000. Jon Lansman, Momentum's founder, says that Corbyn's supporters were 'mobilised by threat' (interview with Jon Lansman, April 2019) and that 'after the coup, everybody came back together again, and it was wonderful' (Jon Lansman quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 295). Within Momentum, the 'Chicken Coup' also prompted those who had pushed for a less bureaucratic structure to shift their position. One organiser, Harry Hayball, says that the event made 'loads of us realise the importance of management structures in an organisation. It was really just inefficient and ineffective to have it that chaotic' (quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 299). As a result, Lansman, in agreement with Klug and Rees, effectively imposed a new constitution. In the email communicating this to members, Lansman wrote that the constitution 'would commit [Momentum] to the Labour party, create an internal election and management structure and allow effective campaigning techniques. In short, it [Momentum] would become an effective element within the Labour party and have it as its priority' (Lansman's email to Momentum members quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 304). This effectively resolved Momentum's internal tension in favour of the organisation becoming an embedded institution within Labour's

[7] At the same NEC meeting on the 12th of July, Corbyn and another pro-Corbyn delegate, Jon Trickett, left the meeting to address his supporters outside. In the ensuing period, the NEC voted for stricter rules around eligibility of voters in the election. Registered supporters would have to pay £25 instead of the £3 they paid in 2015, which was passed 15-12, while the cut off date for registered supporters was agreed as the 12th of January 2016. This excluded thousands of potential members from participating in the contest.

organisational structure. In effect, it created an opportunity for Corbyn's base to be expanded through the creation of structures that were not unambiguously a part of the party.

Figure 5.2: Labour organisational structure, 2016-17



Source: author's visualisation

The 2016 'chicken coup' is an important juncture in Corbyn's leadership, as it did result in the brief shift in the composition of the dominant coalition. This is reflected in the visualisation in Figure 5.2. Thanks to the intervention of the union leaders, Corbyn was afforded the opportunity to re-mobilise his base amongst the membership and re-assert this as a source of legitimacy and accountability within the party organisation. In effect, through his alliance with union leaders, in particular Len McCluskey of UNITE, Corbyn was able to reject the accountability structures that had been in place since the New Labour era. While this increased the hostility between elites that remained in control of the parliamentary party, the limits to their influence were illustrated. Moreover, in the aftermath of his re-election as leader, Corbyn only invited a very small number of MPs who had resigned from his Shadow Cabinet back in. He now had a Shadow

Cabinet that was much closer ideologically aligned to his priorities. Not only did this mean that the parliamentary elites lost control of one of the zones of uncertainty through which they held power within the dominant coalition, it provided Corbyn with a zone of uncertainty that had significant utility in terms of developing the ideas behind the new orientation.

The PLP, which was still clearly hostile to Corbyn, had no real means to prevent these changes. It was not politically feasible to mount another challenge, and even if they did, party rules made Corbyn's position unassailable. Their actions left them in a weakened, though no way destroyed, position within the dominant coalition. This was acknowledged by one of the coup's organisers, Lucy Powell:

> 'I always said to colleagues at that time that there was no organisational fix around this. Jeremy actually needed to be beaten and kept off the ballot, but what would that do anyway? It was ridiculous. If that was all you had at that point, then you really had lost the argument. We lost the argument then and in so doing also absolutely toxified ourselves' (quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 293).

The dominant perception within the PLP became one of despair, rather than hostility. There was a general acknowledgement that Corbyn would have to be allowed the space to 'fail on his own terms' (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018a). This should not be interpreted as a newfound support for Corbyn, but instead a qualified pause in hostilities where MPs would, in the short term, not stand in the way of ideological re-orientation because they had so publicly lost such a symbolic intra-party debate.

While Corbyn had secured his position and decreased the influence of parliamentary elites within the dominant coalition, there was still hostility between the pre-existing electoral professional elites and those representatives of Corbyn's insurgency. By virtue of their capacity to act in a relatively unified manner against Corbyn, anti-Corbyn parliamentary elites retained influence within the dominant coalition, albeit diminished through a loss of influence in the Shadow Cabinet. While Corbyn had asserted extra-parliamentary sources of his accountability, this

was contested by the party bureaucracy and the parliamentary elites. So long as this resistance continued, as is explored in the next chapter, it would be difficult for Corbyn to institutionalise the new dynamic and orientation.

5.6 The 2017 General Election: re-orientation without institutionalisation

Between the chicken coup and the 2017 General Election, Labour was polling at around 25%. This made the vote share of 40% that the party won, an increase of 9.6% in just two years, a shock. It was Labour's highest vote share since 2001. For a study of party decline, this result appears anomalous, particularly given that the Brexit referendum had thrown up such a strategic quandary less than a year before.

While Labour's social bloc was articulated around middle class groups, it was distinct from that of the New Labour bloc as it included a significant expansion of support from younger, higher educated voters in their thirties, and to a lesser extent, students (Prosser et al., 2018). Labour enjoyed support from typical middle-class groups, including public sector workers and socio-cultural professionals. At the same time, constituency-level data shows that Labour increased its support in areas with a greater proportion of people employed in routine occupations, and achieved substantially higher votes in constituencies that had high proportions of emergent services workers (Jennings & Stoker, 2017). In this sense, the composition of Labour's social bloc was more complex than the cosmopolitan middle-class that became characterised.

There is an argument that this social bloc was not so much articulated through Corbyn's ideological project but instead through the re-alignment of the British party system around a Remain vs. Leave axis. Evidence for this is found in the British Election Study, which found 2017 to be one of the most volatile elections in history and that 70% of Remain voters supported Labour (Mellon et al., 2018, p. 727). However, again the reality is more complex. The same study notes that while such an alignment may have taken place prior to the beginning of the election campaign, 40% of Labour's support base in 2017 were attracted during the campaign compared to just 14% of Conservative voters (Mellon et al., 2018, p. 724). Moreover, whereas the composition of the

vote that Labour attracted prior to the 2017 campaign was overwhelmingly Remain supporters, the voters that Labour won over during the campaign were close to evenly split between Leave and Remain (Mellon et al., 2018, p. 724). Finally, it appears it was the rapid increase of personal popularity that Corbyn enjoyed during the campaign that reassured voters that had supported Labour in 2015 to remain with the party (Mellon et al., 2018). So how can we explain the surprising articulation of Labour's new social bloc?

An anti-system, anti-austerity orientation

Months prior to Theresa May even calling an election, Corbyn and his team were envisaging what social groups they would have to incorporate into a social bloc in order to achieve electoral success. A strategy paper written by Corbyn's Cabinet Secretary, Jon Trickett, in January 2017 argued that Labour could achieve 40% in a General Election by building 'a coalition of public sector workers, squeezing Greens and disillusioned Liberal Democrats, and attracting former Labour voters who had switched to UKIP, non-voters, the young and those who liked Corbyn'[8] (the paper is cited in Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018b, pp. 91–2). This was not seen as a significant departure from the electoral coalition that Miliband had envisaged in 2015, but Trickett argued that in order to mobilise these groups, Labour would have to 'offer a transformational manifesto rather than a transactional one' (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018b, p. 92). Corbyn and LOTO were under no illusion that the material interests of these types of groups differed. As his Deputy Communications advisor, Steve Howell, explains:

> 'The effects of growing inequality are hitting different people in different ways. The specific austerity policies hit different groups of people. So tuition fees introduction by the Coalition Government hit, probably, disproportionately middle class young people, but equally zero-hours contracts and the general precarious nature of employment that would hit young people in de-

[8] A similar coalition of voters is identified by Seumas Milne in a presentation to the NEC on 19 April 2017, which is copied in full in (Shipman, 2017, pp. 549–52)

> industrialised areas. So everyone is being hit in different ways and it's getting people to see that they share this common factors. They may be experiencing it in a different way but they're on the receiving end of the same battery of austerity promises and the same trends that are taking us towards greater and greater inequality and concentration of wealth' (Steve Howell, interview, August 2019).

Labour's articulation strategy defined austerity as the issue at the centre of all British people's day to day experiences, and relied on the populist insider/outsider dichotomy to leverage this sentiment. This was best expressed through the party's popular slogan 'For the Many, Not the Few'. In his first speech of the campaign, Corbyn drew on this anti-system framing:

> 'if I were Southern Rail or Philip Green… or Mike Ashley or the CEO of a tax-avoiding multinational corporation, I'd want to see a Tory victory. Labour is the party that will put the interests of the majority first… when we win, it's the people – not the powerful – who win. The nurse, the teacher, the small trader, the carer, the builder, the office worker win. We all win' (quoted in Stewart, 2017).

This is an important demonstration of the way in which Corbyn framed the 'worker' identity that underpinned the party's articulation in anti-system terms. The problem was actually developing the ideological substance to underpin this framing. In the six months prior to the election a number of personnel quit LOTO, including: original Chief of Staff, Simon Fletcher; the head of economic policy, Mike Hatchett; the head of media Kevin Slocombe; and Corbyn's press spokesperson, Matt Zarb-Cousin; and at least four others (Jones, 2020, p. 115). This was a significant turnover of staff, which is evidence that Corbyn was struggling to develop the internal infrastructure that was necessary to re-orient the party away from the New Labour playbook.

However, the failure of the chicken coup gave Corbyn this space. The PLP had largely taken the view that they would give Corbyn his desired manifesto, albeit because they expected a massive defeat and they wanted him to take the full force of the blame for such a defeat (Cowley

& Kavanagh, 2018a, p. 91). Somewhat ironically, or even fortuitously, given Corbyn's intention to institute a mass-party with member participation in policymaking, Labour's manifesto was written in two weeks by Andrew Fisher, the Head of Policy at LOTO, with the help of additional staff seconded from the unions. The manifesto itself was a significant and more radicalised move away from the party's past policy agenda. In specific policy terms, Labour promised massive spending increases including £250 billion in infrastructure investments, an increase in the minimum wage, free childcare, the renationalisation of the Royal Mail, rail, energy, and weather companies, the abolition of tuition fees and a freeze to over £12bn in welfare cuts. These spending increases were an overt signal that, under Labour, austerity would be over. The specific commitments that underpinned these increases can be seen as policies that were directed to incorporate different groups into Labour's social bloc (Goes, 2018, p. 66). This shows that the diminished authority of parliamentary elites within the dominant coalition did provide Corbyn the space to develop the ideas to underpin a new anti-system orientation during the election campaign.

This orientation included a new interpretation of economic credibility. The Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, committed Labour to eliminate the deficit on 'current spending', while future 'day-to-day' spending would have to be funded by the amount the government raised through taxation. According to one of McDonnell's advisors, this 'fiscal credibility rule' signalled that Labour no longer interpreted economic credibility or competency as defined by the interests of capital, but instead by making 'credible fiscal commitments to make capitalism fairer' (interview, James Meadway, August 2019). This rule had the added bonus of allowing Labour to frame its policy costings through anti-system frames: Labour would fund free school meals for all primary-aged children by introducing a VAT charge on private school fees. More broadly, Labour promised to fund its spending commitments through a 5% increase in the corporate tax rate, increasing the tax rate of those earning over £80,000 to 45%, and to 50% for those earning above £123,000.

While Brexit was a pertinent issue during the election campaign, there was no significant public pressure – at this point in time – for Labour to support a second referendum or for Labour

to oppose Brexit. At the 2017 General Election, Labour adopted a 'soft-Brexit' position in the sense that it 'accept[ed] the referendum result' (The Labour Party, 2017, p. 24) while stating it would seek to maintain access to the Single Market and Customs Union. This position was contrasted with the 'hard-Brexit' position of the Conservatives and appeared to assist Labour in gaining a significant proportion of Remain voters whilst retaining some support amongst 'Labour Leavers' (Fieldhouse & Prosser, 2017).

The success of Corbyn's anti-system framing was demonstrated in the way in which the party responded to two terrorist attacks that occurred during the campaign, which given Corbyn's background and foreign policy connections had the potential to cause Labour problems. However, while stating a Labour government would not participate in the War on Terror, Corbyn (2017a) invoked austerity to argue that national security could not be disentangled from the provision of public services: 'at home, we will reverse the cuts to our emergency services and police. Once again in Manchester, they have proved to be the best of us. Austerity has to stop at the A&E ward and at the police station door. We cannot be protected and cared for on the cheap.' Corbyn was able to contrast Theresa May's record of cutting the police force, with Labour's manifesto commitment to fund an extra 10,000 new police officers. Polling indicated substantial support for Corbyn's argument that Britain's foreign policy was, at least in part, responsible for terror attacks at home, as well as in favour of more policing (Smith, 2017). As a result, Labour had turned national security into an area of policy dominance (Bale & Webb, 2018). Corbyn managed to invoke the anti-system lens of the worker identity to connect the consequences of these attacks to the day-to-day experiences of the social groups that he was attempting to articulate.

Mass-party mobilisation

Corbyn and his allies changed the function of Labour's campaign machinery to connect with mass movements inside and outside the party, which proved important in articulating an anti-system social bloc. These contrasted with the campaign styles that Miliband, Brown and Blair had employed.

The most visible point of contrast were the mass rallies that attracted thousands of people to hear Corbyn speak. Mass rallies were not part of the New Labour playbook, predominantly because it was seen as a waste of resources to speak to those that were already converted. A briefing document approved by Patrick Heneghan, Head of Strategy in the party bureaucracy since Blair's leadership, stated 'the issues that motivate and inspire Labour party supporters to back the Labour Party are not always the issues which persuade undecided electors that voting Labour is the right choice for them' (report cited in Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018c, p. 306). By contrast, my interviews with several LOTO advisers report that the rallies were part of an overall strategy of 'epicness… creating a sense of scale. To show that this was something big and that the whole country was part of it' (interview with Steve Howell, August 2019). Another advisor says that the large scale of these rallies would lead to them being picked up on regional news and broadcast into marginal seats (interview with anonymous advisor, April 2019). Academic research has indicated that, in the 2017 election, the rallies were successful in improving Labour's vote share (Middleton, 2019). This demonstrates that, in lieu of support from the bureaucracy, Corbyn and his advisors at LOTO implemented elements of a mass party campaign.

Differences in strategy also emerged with regards to the Labour party's digital strategy. Perhaps because of their background in broader social movements, as opposed to party-led campaigns, staff at LOTO sought to direct a larger proportion of the party's budget towards targeted digital advertising. The party bureaucracy instead believed that direct mail was more effective, on the basis that it more directly targeted undecided voters whereas digital media spoke to the already converted (Howell, 2019, p. 141). As Steve Howell (interview, August 2019), the Deputy Communications Director at LOTO explained to me, '[the party bureaucracy] were used to campaigns only moving 2 or 3 percent. This whole theory of this kind of Blairite election campaign is that you have to be way ahead in the polls and then the campaign is about staying ahead… we felt that was out of date.' In the early part of the campaign, the party bureaucracy prevailed. The subsequently leaked report into the conduct of the party bureaucracy found that, in

this period, Heneghan prevented staff members seen as Corbyn supporters from dictating how funds would be directed, as he is quoted as saying 'we need to stop digital campaign budgets going to [redacted] for approval… he can't see what we are doing with digital' (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 88). The effect of this was to force Labour to take an organic digital strategy, which did help in terms of movement building by sharing content to mobilise supporters, but was unlikely to reach undecided voters who exist in different networks. This is where digital targeting was required.

A change in strategy occurred as a result of the secondment of Andrey Murray from UNITE to the party bureaucracy from the 8th of May. It appears that Len McCluskey drew on UNITE's status as the primary financier of the Labour party to engineer this move. As Howell (interview, August 2019) says, 'Because UNITE was the primary financier of the campaign, Murray had an authority behind his decision-making that others did not. According to Cowley and Kavanagh (2018b, p. 170), 'almost all of those involved in the Labour campaign' saw this as significant. This change enabled the party to increase its digital budget, and in the latter half of the campaign Labour spent over £1million on Facebook Ads and Google AdWords, buying the terms 'Dementia Tax', 'Brexit' and 'Shoot-to-kill' on Google Adwords to ensure that anyone who searched these terms would see Labour material (Howell, 2019, p. 170; Ross & McTague, 2017, p. 168). In the three days prior to election day, Labour spent £100,000 on Snapchat, which ensured that over a million young people used a tool that the party had developed to allow users to input their postcode and receive a personalised map to their nearest polling station (Ross & McTague, 2017, p. 170). There was an irony to this as, earlier in the campaign, LOTO had wanted to run an online voter registration campaign that specifically targeted younger people, which was rebuffed by a director at the party bureaucracy on the basis that 'they are called non-voters because they don't vote'(Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018a, p. 94). This provides further evidence that by the 2017 election, UNITE was clearly in the dominant coalition as it had the authority to intervene in Corbyn's favour to win intra-party debates over the party's articulation strategy.

This internal victory was also important in enabling the party to build on the innovations that were made by groups within its mass movement to expand the party's outreach. For instance, #grime4Corbyn, which was endorsed by celebrities like Stormzy, helped Labour expand its reach amongst young BAME people, who were likely to be first-time voters (Duggins, 2017). However, it was Momentum, that was particularly notable in its capacity to both generate online enthusiasm. Momentum proved much more effective at developing viral digital content than either LOTO or the party bureaucracy (interview, Laura Parker, September 2019; interview, Anonymous Community Organising Unit employee, April 2019). Over the course of the campaign, Momentum produced 58 videos that had 13.9 million organic views. This demonstrates that, once intra-party debates had been won in favour of Corbyn's approach, the party could coordinate to allow its connected movements to engage in movement building while the resources of the party bureaucracy could be directed in a more targeted manner.

A similar dynamic occurred in determining how resources should be allocated to marginal constituencies. Once again, there was a clash between LOTO that was more optimistic in its electoral chances, and the bureaucracy which was more conservative. LOTO sought to include offensive marginals in their original list of target constituencies, while the bureaucracy's initial list not only ruled out offensive marginals but also marginals that the party held by small margins (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018b, p. 151; Heneghan, 2020; Interview with Steve Howell, August 2019). Early in the campaign, key party bureaucracy staff like Patrick Heneghan and General Secretary Iain McNicol met with LOTO advisors Karie Murphy and Jon Trickett. An agreement was struck where resources would not be directed to marginal target constituencies that the party did not hold but all marginals the party did hold would still get funding (Ross & McTague, 2017, pp. 119–20). Even when the party's polling began to improve in May, the party's list of target constituencies included only 39 seats that the party did not hold, which would be insufficient for a Labour victory.

This began to change with Andrew Murray's secondment from UNITE. On the 18th of May, Murray intervened to add 50 offensive seats to the target list, which included seats the party

would go on to win including Leeds North West, Croydon Central, Brighton Kemptown and Sheffield Hallam, while Wallasey and Barnsley Central, which Labour held by over 10,000 votes, were taken off the list (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018b, p. 279). It is also notable that at this point in the campaign, senior staff at the party bureaucracy were assigned by Patrick Heneghan to a 'secret key seats team' that was permanently based in a separate building, Ergon House. Correspondence between staff on this team indicated that it was 'all secret to LOTO' (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 92). This team was allocated a budget of £225,842, which it funnelled into the constituencies of MPs that could be seen as 'Corbynsceptic' – including Deputy Leader Tom Watson, Yvette Cooper, Angle Eagle, Chuka Umunna and Rachel Reeves (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 36–7; The Labour Party, 2020, pp. 92–3). While this demonstrates that the allocation of resources in this period was quite clearly factionalised, it does show that the party bureaucracy effectively felt that 'they were a law – and organisation – to themselves' (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 36).

Once again, Momentum proved a critical campaign resource in overcoming the constraints enforced by the party bureaucracy. They developed the app 'MyNearestMarginal' which allowed supporters to enter their postcode, look up the nearest marginal constituency, and potentially carpool with other like-minded activists. More than 100,000 people used this app to campaign in more than 100 seats across the country. Whereas organisers from the official campaign relied on targeted data, Momentum was less directed and would 'bombard' target seats and knock on doors that none of the main parties were bothering with. Momentum also over 3,000 activists were trained in 'listening campaigns' in which, aware of Corbyn's personal unpopularity, canvassers would shift the focus of the conversation onto individual voters' concerns and try to address these with policy solutions (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2018c, p. 297; Ross & McTague, 2017, pp. 131–2).

MPs who won in offensive marginals credit Momentum as playing a decisive role. For instance, in Enfield Southgate in Greater London, Bambos Charalambous (interview, August 2019), was not included on the target seats list. Nevertheless, he says that thanks to Momentum, 'we'd get people turning up and we'd ask where they were from… they'd say that they had come

because we were the nearest marginal. And they said that we should put this on MyNearestMarginal and we did. … They were turning up, emboldened and willing to embrace this new optimism and on the back of that we had people coming out.'

5.7 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has shown that at the 2017 General Election, Corbyn did manage to change the Labour party. The party adopted a clear anti-austerity and anti-system orientation that did have transformative answers to the questions that had been provoked within the critical juncture that had only been accelerated by Brexit; and through the co-ordination of LOTO and Momentum, the party had the means to diffuse this orientation.

The primary reason that Corbyn was able to change the party was through the shift in the composition of the dominant coalition. To be clear, this chapter has shown that at different stages the shift in composition was as much to do with the errors of the prevailing parliamentary elite – during the first leadership campaign and in their misjudgement around the chicken coup – which, in the end limited the authority that they could wield over Corbyn as leader. Unlike Miliband, Corbyn was aided by his ability to bring new actors like trade union leaders and Momentum into more influential positions within the party organisation. However, while Momentum proved a pivotal resource during the election campaign, it was only really the trade union leaders, and more specifically Len McCluskey of Unite, that managed to leverage their control over zones of uncertainty like party financing to gain a firm position within the dominant coalition. Nevertheless, this does show that Corbyn's capacity to change the party's orientation was achieved through a shift in the composition of the dominant coalition.

It is also worth noting the timing of the election campaign. It occurred less than a year after the Brexit referendum and chicken coup, when the authority of parliamentary elites was at a particularly low point. In this sense, there is an element of luck in that Corbyn could not control when the election was called, and it happened to be called at a time in which he could leverage internal authority to direct the party in his intended orientation. More to the point, Corbyn had

not actually institutionalised his power, which in this case would have required a shift in accountability such that the parliamentary party recognised the authority of extra-parliamentary actors. As this was not achieved, it left an opening for their fight back, which is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: The failure to re-orient to Brexit

In the months after the 2017 General Election, Corbyn's anti-system articulation seemed increasingly viable. Less than a week after the election, 72 people tragically died in a fire at Grenfell Tower. This event was widely seen as symbolising the growing inequalities in the UK. Corbyn linked the fire to 'disastrous effects of austerity' noting that there the budget for 11,000 firefighters had been cut, while cuts to local authorities meant there were fewer building inspectors to ensure that large buildings like Grenfell Tower complied with regulations. A week later, Corbyn spoke at a very different event as he took the mainstage at Glastonbury to speak to over 100,000 people. Corbyn (2017b) promised that 'the politics that has come out of the box, is not going back into the box. We are promising and demanding something very different in our society' before quoting the Percy Shelly poem that contains the lines 'We are many, they are few.' The crowd responded with the 'Oh, Jeremy Corbyn' chant that would become iconic. This visceral expression of popularity was unlike much else in modern British politics. In the summer of 2017, it appeared that Corbyn's newfound popularity would allow him to sustain his anti-system articulation, while engaging in an organisational reform to change the structure of internal accountability and build a mass party around his more radical orientation.

In this chapter I detail how everything unravelled. As Corbyn gained ascendancy within the Labour party, it became harder to coordinate the different interests within his internal coalition. As Corbyn increasingly prioritised the interests of the trade unions, in particular UNITE, he squandered an opportunity for reforms that could have increased the authority of the mass membership over the parliamentary party. As a result, this prevented Corbyn from institutionalising the new composition of the dominant coalition, creating space for the re-assertion of power from the parliamentary party. As power within the dominant coalition was increasingly diffuse, it became harder for the Labour party to orient itself to the way in which anti-system politics was increasingly expressed around Brexit. The organisational dynamics prevented

Labour from adopting a coherent position on the issue, which ultimately ensured the dis-articulation of the bloc that Corbyn had articulated in 2017.

6.1 The limits to party re-organisation

Corbyn's effort to consolidate his control over the dominant coalition began in earnest at the party conference in September 2017. Through support from the vast majority of CLP delegates and those of the left-aligned trade unions, notably UNITE, the CWU and the TSSA, Corbyn had a majority at the conference and could thereby enact significant control over this zone of uncertainty. As such, the conference passed changes to the leadership selection rules, which reduced the number of MP nominations a candidate would need from 15% to 10%. This essentially removed the institutional hurdle that Corbyn had only just past in 2015. Yet, while this could reduce the influence of electoral professional elites in future leadership elections, it did not fundamentally alter the internal relations under Corbyn's leadership.

A reform with more immediate significance was the expansion of the number of seats on the NEC. The party conference agreed to increase the NEC's size by four seats. An additional union seat was given to the more moderate union USDAW, while the number of seats elected by the grassroots was expanded from six to nine. In the ensuing ballot for these positions, the left-aligned Grassroots Alliance won all nine positions, six of whom were Momentum candidates. With these changes, Corbyn now had a majority on the NEC, which meant that he could make meaningful staffing changes at the party bureaucracy. In March 2018, Corbyn removed McNicol from the position of General Secretary. At this point, the majority of the party bureaucracy directors that had been around since the New Labour period also resigned. Patrick Heneghan (2020), one of Corbyn's fiercest opponents at the party bureaucracy, acknowledged that '[the 2017 General Election] results would mean the end of my career. There had been ongoing attempts by Corbyn's team to force me out for months leading up to the election – there was no chance of stopping that now.'

As such, the summer of 2017 was clearly the highpoint of Corbyn's leadership. He had majorities on the NEC and at the party conference, which increased his control over these zones of uncertainty and thus solidified his influence within the dominant coalition. His majority on the NEC meant that he was in a position to ensure that McNicol's successor as General Secretary would be a direct ally, and that key staff at the party bureaucracy would be appointed to support the implementation of Corbyn's ideological re-orientation. At the same time, as was explored in greater depth in the last chapter, the combination of the failed chicken coup and Corbyn's relative success at the 2017 General Election meant that it was difficult for parliamentary elites to justifiably constrain him. As such, it was almost expected that Corbyn and his allies would use their control over key zones of uncertainty to engage in organisational reforms, to change the power structure within the party towards that of a modern, mass party and thereby embed a more radical ideological orientation that could sustain the anti-system articulation.

However, once Corbyn achieved this internal power it became harder to sustain the insurgent coalition, in large part because actually implementing change illustrated the different organisational interests between trade union leaders and representatives of the mass membership. This immediately became apparent in choosing the new General Secretary. From the outset the frontrunner was Jennie Formby, who was the Political Director at UNITE. As Karie Murphy, Andrew Murray and Andrew Fisher had all been in positions of influence at UNITE prior to their moves into LOTO, this would secure significant influence for the union over critical party institutions. In effect, they would become one of the principal actors in the dominant coalition. In a sense, this was inevitable as UNITE had been the primary financier for each of Corbyn's leadership campaigns, as well as to the party at large. However, it would result in an imbalance where Momentum, and the broader grassroots, would not really hold any influence within the dominant coalition. Momentum's nine NEC members were the biggest single bloc of delegates within Corbyn's 21 delegate majority and they had demonstrated their innovative resourcefulness

in the 2017 election campaign. Momentum's founder and Chairman, Jon Lansman, sought to leverage their influence and contest the position. He explained:

> 'I was concerned about the process by which the General Secretary was appointed. We actually had on the agenda a proposal for the General Secretary to be elected. I wanted to see a democratic party. We had a mass membership party… I felt at the time that it was being stitched up in the traditional Labour way, with a union putting in its nominee. Wasn't that exactly how every General Secretary of the Labour party has been appointed for years? …The NEC is responsible for the government of the party. I don't want Labour leaders to run the party. I want the NEC on behalf of the membership and the affiliates to run the party… If we replaced a right-wing command and control structure with a left-wing command and control structure, we would piss off and lose the membership' (quoted in Kogan, 2019, pp. 328–9).

The tension between the union leaders on the one hand, and Momentum activists on the other gets to the heart of long-term debates about whether it was possible for Labour to actually function as a mass party. In the above statement, Lansman expresses concern that Corbyn is not going far enough in re-organising the party's power structure where the implication is that in order for Labour to sustain the radical orientation that underpinned its anti-system articulation it would have to sustain the enthusiasm and participation of its new mass membership. Lansman clearly sees the democratisation of the party structures to include members in key party decision-making processes as pivotal to this objective, in part because it would make party elites, including Corbyn's parliamentary opponents, accountable to the members which Lansman saw as his base (interview, Jon Lansman, May 2019). However, he was encouraged to stand down by Corbyn and McDonnell, and Formby was appointed to the position by the NEC.

The implications for the tensions between grassroots and union interests within Corbyn's support base were made clear in the candidate selection process for the Lewisham East by-election,

which occurred in May 2018. This was an ultra-safe London constituency, and was therefore an opportunity for Corbyn to add to his small number of supporters inside the PLP. Under party rules, the NEC determines the shortlist for CLPs to select the final candidate. As Corbyn enjoyed a majority on the NEC, it mandated an all-BAME women shortlist, which was, in part, chosen because the Corbynsceptics in the local party were overwhelmingly white men (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 94–7; Rodgers, 2018). As Matt Pound, the national organiser for the Blairite grassroots group, Labour First, stated: 'the left … [are] not even hiding the fact that they plan to stitch up their first by-election since gaining control of the party's structures' (Matt Pound quoted in Heffer & Allegretti, 2018).

However, Corbyn's supporters failed to unify around a single candidate. Momentum supported local councillor, Sakina Sheikh; LOTO and UNITE supported Claudia Webbe, who was not a local, but was a NEC member and an aide to former London Mayor Ken Livingstone. The NEC also bowed to pressure from the executive of the local Constituency Party to include Janet Daby, who was the Deputy Mayor on the local council. While Daby had supported and campaigned for Corbyn in his leadership elections, she was also an unabashed opponent of Brexit and stated that she would campaign for Labour to support a second referendum, which was not the position of the party leadership at the time (Casalicchio, 2018). The right-wing of the party sensed an opportunity, and Matt Pound became Daby's campaign manager, and instructed canvassers to push the message that Daby was pro-Corbyn but anti-Brexit (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 96). This appears to have been an important factor in Daby's victory, of 288 to 153. While this selection process could be interpreted as a sign that Corbyn had so fundamentally changed the party that Labour Right groups were forced to endorse his own supporters, it was also seen as a clear missed opportunity. Owen Jones, a prominent left-wing media figure who had campaigned for Sheikh, said:

> 'If there's one left-wing candidate, everyone on the left piles in behind them: they get the organisational, financial and grassroots support of both UNITE and

> Momentum, as well as prominent left-wing activists and figures. If there's two left-wing candidates, energy and enthusiasm is dispersed, much of the left simply sit it out, while the right unite and coalesce. Worse, left-wing activists find themselves on opposing sides, with the inevitable resentment that can cause' (Jones, 2018).

This was a minor election that would only have added one supporter to the PLP, which was grossly insufficient to shift the composition of this institution that was the last holdout against Corbyn. Yet, it was still an important juncture as it demonstrated the limits to Corbyn's internal reach. As Pound (2018) argues, the Lewisham East by-election was a major blow for the left as if they had won, 'Momentum would have shown they could bulldoze their way through a selection process to select a Momentum candidate in a CLP where they had no genuinely active base. They would have proved they were invincible. In fact, they have proved the exact opposite.' A left victory in the selection process for the Lewisham By-election could have served as a warning to MPs that were hostile to the Corbyn leadership that they could be replaced if they acted to constrain his re-orientation. This would have been an important victory in an attempt to change the accountability structure within the party, and increase the authority of extra-parliamentary actors over the parliamentary party.

<u>The unions prevent mandatory re-selection</u>

Prior to the Lewisham East by-election, there was a fear that Corbyn would implement mandatory re-selections, which would enable grassroots members to effectively de-select sitting MPs. Given that many of the MPs in the PLP had been selected to their constituencies in the New Labour or Miliband periods, they did not have strong relationships with the CLPs that were quickly gaining new more left-aligned members. Under the prevailing process, once a candidate was elected as an MP, the capacity for their constituency party to remove them was extremely limited. Mandatory selection would then have been a significant step in the institutionalisation of the new power dynamic within the dominant coalition, as it would have increased Momentum's control of

candidate selection as a zone of uncertainty and reduced the authority of parliamentary elites. However, the trade union elements of Corbyn's coalition failed to support the reform.

At the 2017 General Election, 47 new MPs had been elected. However, there is a certain irony in that while this was the first election in more than a generation contested by a left-leader, because it was a snap election, the grassroots did not have a significant opportunity to influence candidate selection processes. When the election was called, the NEC announced an emergency procedure to select candidates within 12 days. Sitting MPs were automatically re-selected, while in open constituencies there were panels comprised of two NEC members and one person from a regional board would appoint candidates. Under this structure, it was much easier for trade unions to influence the outcome while Momentum had little opportunity to secure positions for their candidates (Campbell & Hudson, 2018, p. 390). As one member of the panel appointing candidates for London and the South East said, 'we were sort of a panel where if the desired outcome was not laid out in advance then we had the freedom to choose people. But if you saw a GMB person or a UNITE person you knew that was fixed' (interview with Ann Black, March 2020). Two notable examples are Dan Carden, selected in Liverpool Walton, and Laura Pidcock, Durham North West, who would both join the Shadow Cabinet. Paul Sweeney, Darren Jones, Matt Western, Laura Smith, Marsha de Cordova, Luke Pollard, Mohammad Yasin, Danielle Rowly and Emma Dent Coad were all linked to left-unions like Unite, the TSSA or the CWU. As such, the majority of Corbyn supporting MPs that won seats in 2017 did so through union connections rather than through organisations like Momentum. Mandatory re-selection would have entailed the trade union leaders reducing their influence over candidate selections.

Prior to the 2018 Party Conference, the big-five unions – UNITE, Unison, GMB, CWU and USDAW – negotiated a compromise with LOTO (Bassett, 2020; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 29). While MPs would not face automatic reselection, the threshold by which local constituency parties could 'trigger' a selection process would be lowered from 50% to 33%. Laura Parker (interview, April 2019), the national organiser for Momentum at the time, says that Momentum

was reportedly blindsided and opposed this process because it would still involve a convoluted and 'negative ballot', rather than a more open process associated with mandatory reselection (Laura Parker, interview, 2019). Nevertheless, Momentum delegates ended up voting for the compromise. Lansman explained:

> 'Frankly, I am very unhappy with it… the trade unions blocked [mandatory reselection]. One trade union, in particular, which has a policy in favour of mandatory reselection. UNITE, basically. The truth is the leadership and leader's office were involved in blocking it' (quoted in Elgot, 2018).

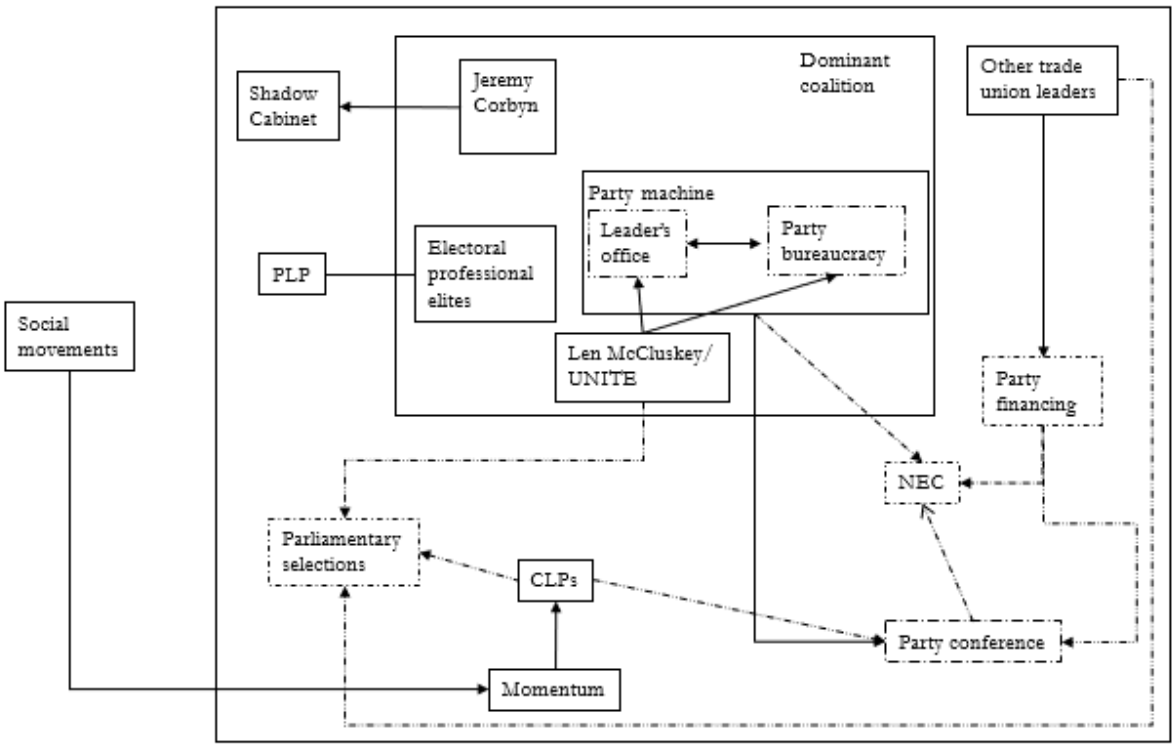
For his part, UNITE General Secretary, Len McCluskey (2018), disputed that the compromise would have a substantial effect. However, in the run up to the 2019 General Election no outspoken critic of Corbyn's was de-selected. In 2020, after Corbyn had resigned the party leadership, he acknowledged the dynamics that had prevented the introduction of mandatory re-selection:

> 'It was extremely difficult to reform the party… There were debates over whether we should have a mandatory reselection process or not. That did not find enough support, particularly amongst unions, at the party conference [in 2018], so we have the system we now have' (quoted in Burtenshaw, 2020).

This is important evidence that shows that the divergent interests between Momentum and trade union leaders had strong implications on the extent to which Corbyn was able to re-organise the Labour party. It also shows that in coordinating these differences, Corbyn felt compelled to side with the trade union leaders. This is likely because these leaders held more internal power, both through their delegate share at the party conference but also through the increasingly strong personnel connections between Corbyn's office, the party bureaucracy and UNITE, in particular. This analysis is visualised in Figure 6.1. By securing greater influence over staffing decisions at the party bureaucracy, Corbyn had basically resurrected the Blair-era party machine through which the leader's will was exerted throughout the party. The major point of difference was that in the New Labour era, the accountability that the PLP held with regards to the leader was less significant

because they shared a similar ideological orientation. Under Corbyn's leadership the PLP was largely comprised of MPs that retained, in principle, a Third Way orientation. The decision to prioritise the interests of UNITE reflected a choice to maintain the pre-existing command and control party structure instead of a more fundamental shift towards an organisational model that would have sustained the mobilisation of Corbyn's mass support base. The problem for this was that it did not diminish the authority of pro-Third Way elites, who while weakened due to their loss of authority within the Shadow Cabinet, could exert their opposition through the public exposure that they received as parliamentarians. The new structure did not necessarily equip Corbyn with any leverage over these parliamentarians either.

Figure 6.1: Labour organisational structure, 2017-2020



Source: author's visualisation

This is significant as from 2018, about a year after the General Election, relations between Corbyn and the PLP deteriorated. The proximate cause for this was the Skripal poisonings in Salisbury, where Corbyn failed to condemn the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, while in his

press briefing, Seumus Milne questioned whether Russia was behind the poisonings. This response was publicly rebuked by significant elements of the PLP as it resurfaced concerns that Corbyn was a foreign-policy extremist. It also provoked tensions within the Shadow Cabinet, which after the chicken coup was largely composed of Corbyn supporters. The Shadow Foreign Secretary, Corbyn-ally Emily Thornberry, gave a speech in which she acknowledged the 'prima facie evidence' that Russia was responsible for the poisonings. The Shadow Defence Secretary, Nia Griffiths, did not consult LOTO before publicly supporting the Government's expulsion of Russian diplomats. Moreover, Corbyn's response produced a public rift with McDonnell who went against Corbyn by agreeing with the call for Labour MPs to stop appearing on *Russia Today*, the Russian-state run news channel that Corbyn had frequently appeared on (Jones, 2020, p. 111). As Andrew Murray, who remained in his advisor position after the General Election, says 'up until then we'd still ha[d] a quiescent PLP. I wouldn't put it higher than that, but a quiescent PLP… [The Skripal poisonings] started bringing all the doubts about Jeremy and LOTO to the surface again' (Andrew Murray quoted in Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 81). This was critical, as the broader external environment shifted towards Brexit, a re-assertive, hostile PLP would significantly constrain Corbyn's capacity to re-orient the party.

6.2 An incoherent orientation to Brexit

The 2017 General Election result was a blessing and a curse for Corbyn. By preventing the Conservatives from forming a majority government, Corbyn exceeded expectations and secured his position within the party. However, because Theresa May's government lacked a majority, it was exceedingly difficult to pass Brexit legislation. While there were significant internal divisions within the Conservative party, the actions of the European Research Group (ERG) of MPs were particularly notable as they continually prevented May from passing any Brexit legislation that was deemed to be a 'soft Brexit'. As Brexit negotiations with the EU floundered, the issue naturally increased in salience, which made the strategic impasse that arose for Labour in the result of the

referendum – where the majority of its voters supported Remain, but the majority of its constituencies and the constituencies that it needed to win voted Leave – increasingly pertinent. It was imperative that Labour orientate itself to the politics of this social conflict, in order to adapt the manner through which it articulated its anti-system social bloc.

In this context, some of Corbyn's core advisors at LOTO were pushing for Labour to negotiate a soft-Brexit bi-partisan compromise with May. Andrew Murray wrote a memo shortly after the 2017 election advocating for Labour to 'offer to forge a common national position and take responsibility for delivering it in talks with Brussels… In the here-and-now, I think the JC leadership has enough credit in the bank. Our radicalism in general would remain undiluted… It would make Labour look statesmanlike, confident, national, patriotic and govern-ready. We would be seen to be acting to put the country first at a moment of mounting concern and alarm' (Andrew Murray's memo is quoted in Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 194–5). Strategically, Murray's memo argued that this action 'would marginalise the Blairite/Lib Dem position in terms of public opinion, or at least reduce it to that much smaller group that oppose any Brexit on any terms and agitate for a second referendum' (quoted in Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 194–5). This memo, along with secondary accounts of the dynamics in LOTO around Brexit, can be interpreted as evidence that Corbyn's staff were largely inclined to push Labour to adopt a soft Brexit, largely on strategic grounds (Jones, 2020, pp. 186, 195, 204–7; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 134–6, 194–6).

The Shadow Cabinet was split, largely according to whether an individual politician held a constituency that voted Remain or Leave. Keir Starmer, as Shadow Brexit Secretary, had particular influence over the party's policy position and looked to push Labour in a direction that was closer to the interests of Remain voters. Starmer was one of the few MPs that had supported the chicken coup and yet was invited back into the Shadow Cabinet. In the first PLP meeting of 2018 Corbyn ruled out supporting the UK remaining in the European single market, which reportedly provoked outrage amongst pro-European Labour MPs (Mason, 2018). After this speech, LOTO's Head of

Policy, Andrew Fisher, was tasked with developing a policy in which Labour would negotiate for the UK to leave the single market and the customs union, pursue an independent trade policy and not have to follow the EU's state aid rules (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 71). When this policy was presented to a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet Brexit Subcommittee on February 12, Starmer was outraged and threatened to resign (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 71–2; Stewart, 2018b). One of Starmer's advisors described Corbyn's advisors as 'so discourteous that they were just trying to bounce their version of Brexit through… You just don't behave like that' (Anonymous Starmer advisor quoted on Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 71).The scale of Starmer's influence was demonstrated as Fisher was directed by LOTO to work with Starmer to develop a policy in which Labour would commit to joining *a* customs union rather than remaining in *the* customs union. In a speech in Coventry on the 26th of February, Corbyn confirmed this policy: 'we have long argued that a customs union is a viable option for the final deal. So Labour would seek to negotiate a new, comprehensive UK-EU customs union to ensure that there are no tariffs with Europe, and to help avoid any need for a hard border in Northern Ireland' (Corbyn, 2018a). Labour's position on joining a customs union was one of the few steps that it made towards a coherent Brexit position between the 2017 and 2019 General Elections.

In July 2018, May set out her 'Brexit blueprint', which prioritised maintaining the UK's access to the internal market over a hard break with the EU. This in turn prompted the resignations of the Brexit Secretary, David Davis, and Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. In setting out Labour's opposition, Starmer recommitted Labour to 'respect the result of the referendum', but beyond this he re-iterated Labour's six redlines for the party to support a Brexit deal (Starmer, 2018):

1. Does it ensure a strong and collaborative future relationship with the EU?
2. Does it deliver the "exact same benefits" as we currently have as members of the Single Market and Customs Union?
3. Does it ensure the fair management of migration in the interests of the economy and communities?

4. Does it defend rights and protections and prevent a race to the bottom?

5. Does it protect national security and our capacity to tackle cross-border crime?

6. Does it deliver for all regions and nations of the UK? (Starmer, 2017; See also The Labour Party, 2018)

But the problem with these redlines, as expressed by LOTO and Labour MPs in Leave-voting constituencies, was that they did not allow for Labour to support any Brexit deal (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 210–13). While ordinarily it would not be the Opposition's responsibility to clearly set out its position with regards to a trade deal, because May lacked a majority to pass her deal through parliament, Labour was repeatedly put in the position of having to vote down legislation that would have enabled Brexit. Without setting a realistic position as to what type of Brexit deal Labour would countenance, Labour's commitment to respecting the referendum result was increasingly questioned, making it harder to convince Leave voters that Labour was committed to their interests. This was the inherent problem of Labour's 'strategic ambiguity' – in trying to take a middle of the road position, it was showing insufficient commitment to Remain or Leave voters. More fundamentally, as Brexit increased in salience there was a clear impasse or contradiction between the directness and perceived integrity with which Corbyn was able to respond to issues around austerity or foreign policy, in contrast to his inability to state what he thought about Brexit. This made it harder to portray himself as an anti-system politician. In part, this could be due to the belief that existed in LOTO that, with a Conservative minority government, Labour would only need one last heave to get across the line. As Carl Shoben, who was Corbyn's appointment as the Director of Strategy at the party bureaucracy argues:

> 'the hung parliament probably sowed some of the seeds of our destruction, because from that moment, rather than thinking about a long-term strategy of winning an election, we were in an election mode, thinking that the Tories could collapse at any time and it was our job to make them collapse. Possibly the energy going into

making a Tory collapse pushed us into a Brexit position it would have been better not to be in' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 189).

The mass Remain campaigns

Corbyn's problems were also compounded by the growing support for a second referendum amongst the membership, which made a soft-Brexit an increasingly toxic policy option for Corbyn to support. This was again acknowledged by Andrew Murray, who says Labour's inability to articulate a firm position 'created the space for a mass Remain movement' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 186). There were two sides to this mass Remain movement.

On the one-hand there was the People's Vote campaign, which held its first event in April 2018. This had clear institutional links to the Britain Stronger in Europe campaign, in that it was funded by Roland Rudd, but also to New Labour: it was directed by the former spin doctors Peter Mandelson and Alistair Campbell, the campaign's director was former Miliband advisor, Tom Baldwin, and Patrick Heneghan and John Stoliday, who had been Directors at the party bureaucracy until 2017, joined the staff. Given these personnel, LOTO was suspicious of the motives of the People's Vote campaign. It appears that this scepticism was justified, as Baldwin has subsequently acknowledged that they were 'looking for an opportunity to define themselves against the Labour leadership' by framing Corbyn's Labour as 'betray[ing] a Remain vote which had propelled it to a decent result in 2017' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 189). Moreover, intermittent meetings held between Mandelson and Deputy Leader Tom Watson throughout the 2017-2019 period show that electoral professional elites inside and outside the party's dominant coalition sought to take advantage of the Brexit issue to increase pressure on Corbyn (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 164–7). At the same time, the capacity of the People's Vote campaign to mobilise marches of over a million people compounded the difficulty that Corbyn had in appearing as an anti-system politician on this issue. As was explored in the last chapter, during the election campaign mass rallies had been an important technique to portray Corbyn as in touch with the

masses, now he was in parliament offering a non-position on a highly salient issue while many of the supporters that had voted in his leadership campaigns were campaigning on the streets.

The other side of the mass Remain movement was Another Europe is Possible (AEIP). This was a smaller grouping that was organised amongst members of the movement that Corbyn had assembled in his leadership campaigns. For instance, the group's national organiser, Michael Chessum, had been a member of Momentum's steering group, and Laura Parker was a prominent AEIP spokesperson whilst also employed as Momentum's national organiser. AEIP positioned itself in line with the 'Remain and Reform' message that Corbyn had campaigned on during the 2016 referendum. This group had become emboldened by Labour's success at the 2017 Election. As Chessum argues, 'we had a strong Corbyn opposition which was on the offensive. So we took a turn after the elections towards being more anti-Brexit, straight out anti-Brexit' (quoted in Kogan, 2019, p. 385). However, according to some of its organisers, AEIP was met with scepticism by LOTO, who believed that they were working with the right-wing of the party to undermine Corbyn (Chessum, 2020; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 133–4; interview with Luke Cooper, February 2020).

Prior to the 2018 party conference, AEIP and the People's Vote campaign worked separately to Labour's position. While the People's Vote was more public-facing, and campaigned by organising large-scale public demonstrations, AEIP worked to mobilise support amongst the Labour party membership. As AEIP convenor, Luke Cooper (interview, February 2020) explains, 'we used the only decision-making mechanism that members have and that's local party motions to conference.' This organising work saw 151 CLPs submit motions to the 2018 party conference calling on the party to support a second referendum position, 130 of these also committed Labour to supporting an anti-Brexit position (Kogan, 2019, p. 390). In this way, mass movements were constructed that aligned with the organising potential of the grassroots element of Corbyn's support base, which acted to make it more difficult for Corbyn to impose a soft-Brexit orientation.

This clearly frustrated staff at LOTO who felt constrained in their capacity to impose a soft-Brexit position. James Schneider, who had moved from Momentum to become Deputy Communications advisor at LOTO, said that anytime Corbyn or LOTO tried to advance a possible benefit to Brexit, they would be stymied because 'the balance of forces within the labour movement were hugely on the side of 'Brexit is bad, let's try and cushion the blow and stop it' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 185). Likewise, Corbyn's speechwriter, Alex Nunns, argues that:

> 'It was very difficult to talk about any potential benefits of Brexit. Identify any opportunities for a social government outside the EU – even while acknowledging the drawbacks – and you'd have ultra-Remainers frothing at the mouth and creating a fake controversy that would probably drown out rather than amplify the message. So the most we felt we could do was acknowledge the sentiments of Leave voters in wanting to kick the establishment' (Alex Nunns quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 186).

The tension between the interests of mass membership and LOTO was clearly making it difficult for Corbyn to lead the party's orientation to the way in which Brexit was unfolding and interacting with social conflicts outside of the party.

The 2018 Party Conference

Clearly, the difficulties that Corbyn had in co-ordinating the interests of different elements of his institutional support base were rearing up to constrain the party's orientation to Brexit. The new Party Chairman, Ian Lavery, who prior to his election as an MP in 2015 had been President of the NUM, described the dynamics of the 2018 party conference:

> 'At conference you've got thirteen fucking thousand people there – brilliant, absolutely fantastic. [But while] I don't want to have a battle with anyone about who the heartlands are, and there's lots of people in poverty in London and the SW as in the rest of the country, look at how many are from the North and South' (quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 192).

While Lavery's comments are not quite akin to the 'trot-busing' disdain with which Corbyn's opponents in the party bureaucracy had previously described the mass membership, it is reasonable to interpret this statement as suggesting that the membership was unrepresentative and therefore should not have influence over party policy. While the identity of the elites had changed, the command-and-control structure of Blair's party was in full swing.

At the 2018 conference, Corbyn and his supporters utilised the old machine to prevent the members from imposing a Remain orientation to Brexit on the party. While the large quantity of CLP motions to the party, and the positions of the GMB, TSSA and key senior Shadow Cabinet members, meant that the party would have to endorse a second referendum, LOTO was determined that Remain would not be an option in such a referendum. The key institution LOTO relied on to exert control was the compositing meeting. The stated purpose of the compositing process is to combine similar motions into a single composite motion to be debated and voted by conference delegates, but in practice, this meeting serves to ensure that there will no major and divisive debates in the public eye. There are also arcane rules around the meeting itself. Unanimity must be reached, but delegates must be present for the entirety of the meeting to speak. The effect of this is described by AEIP organiser, Luke Cooper (interview, February 2020), 'the bureaucracy tries to wear you down until people are at the end of their tether and will accept whatever the chair of the meeting is saying. It's a very old machine, trade union politics method.' The meeting to determine the Brexit composite for the 2018 conference went for 7 hours. At the outset, Unison was pressured by UNITE and LOTO to back down from a position where Remain would appear as an option in a public vote. As a result, the GMB also felt that it had to back down, leaving the TSSA, a relatively small union, as the only major union that supported AEIP (Kogan, 2019, pp. 392–3; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 138–141; Watts, 2018). Eventually, a compromise was brokered in which Labour would prioritise the push for a General Election, and failing that 'keep all options on the table, including campaigning for a public vote.'

The effect of this intra-party debate was to leave Labour's orientation to Brexit unresolved, which manifested in a continuation of strategic ambiguity. While it is possible that this position reflected a strategy devised by Corbyn's advisors, the evidence presented here suggests that, in the post-2017 General Election landscape, this orientation was more a result of an organisational impasse due to no actor able to definitively direct the dominant coalition. Moreover, the way in which this position was achieved suggests that while Corbyn was seeking to use a Blair-style machine to ensure an outcome, it was much more difficult in an organisation in which power was more diffusely spread. It seemed that while this machine could ensure that some union delegates backed down from an outright pro-second referendum position, this was insufficient to prevent a second referendum from becoming a part of Labour's strategic ambiguity position. In this sense, while the external environment increased the salience of Brexit, Labour was unable to respond in large part because the structure of its party organisation prevented it from definitively deciding intra-party debates.

The fragility that underpinned strategic ambiguity was demonstrated just a day after the compositing meeting. In an interview on BBC Radio 4, John McDonnell said that 'if we are going to respect the last referendum, it will be about the deal, it will be a negotiation on the deal' (quoted in Walker et al., 2018). While Len McCluskey told the Guardian, 'the referendum shouldn't be on: "Do we want to go back into the European Union?" The people have already decided that' (quoted in Morris, 2018). Starmer interpreted this as another attempt by LOTO to bounce their preferred policy through. As a result, when moving the composite motion on conference floor, he broke from remarks that had been pre-prepared with LOTO to argue that 'it's right that Parliament has the first say, but if we need to break the impasse our options must include campaigning for a public vote and nobody is ruling out Remain as an option' (Kogan, 2019, p. 393; Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 142). While Starmer was met with a standing ovation by the conference, the Conservative's immediately tweeted: 'CONFIRMED: Labour will not respect the result of the referendum' (The Conservative Party, 2018). In Corbyn's speech the following day, he did not walk back Starmer's

remarks (Corbyn, 2018b). Corbyn and LOTO's attempt to maintain an internal peace through strategic ambiguity had immediately broken down and provided further ammunition to the Conservatives to argue that Labour did not support Brexit.

Implications for articulation

In November 2018 May introduced the details of the Withdrawal Agreement that had been negotiated with the EU. This was roundly opposed by the ERG and the Brexit Party, for not going far enough, while it did not meet Labour's six tests. Prior to the parliamentary vote on this agreement, in January 2019, Corbyn gave a speech in which he sought to reframe the Leave vs. Remain divide within the anti-system discourse that was at the heart of his articulation project:

> 'I would put it like this: if you're living in Tottenham you may well have voted to Remain. You've got high bills, rising debts, you're in insecure work, you struggle to make your wages stretch and you may be on UC, and forced to access food banks. You're up against it. If you're living in Mansfield, you are more likely to have voted to Leave. You've got high bills, rising debts, you're in insecure work, you struggle to make your wages stretch and you may be on universal credit, and forced to access food banks. You're up against it. But you're not against each other' (Corbyn, 2019).

The broader problem with this rhetoric was that, after a year and a half of near constant Brexit debate, Remain and Leave had become more dominant than the anti-system identity Corbyn had made salient in 2017 (Hobolt et al., 2020). While the economic circumstances of these groups may have aligned in terms framed by Corbyn, this speech failed to explain how Labour's response to Brexit would ameliorate these divides because Corbyn was not offering a position on this specific issue, which had become the most salient divide in British society. In effect, disaffected Leavers expressed this frustration at the European Union, while disaffected Remainers expressed this frustration at the Conservative political establishment tasked with implementing Brexit. While Labour was not a member of either of these institutions, by failing to orient itself to these divides,

it is possible that Corbyn appeared the worst of both worlds: to Remainers, he was a secret Leaver; to Leavers, he was a closet Remainer. In the parlance of articulation theory, Labour was struggling to adapt the radical ideas that had allowed it to articulate an anti-system articulation when austerity and the economy was dominant to the reality when anti-system politics had become increasingly defined by Brexit.

The major turning point for Labour was the 2019 European Parliamentary Elections. Labour lost half of its MEPs and, with just 13.6% of the vote, finished behind both the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democrats. Two days after these elections, in which the Conservatives fared even worse than Labour, Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister. She was subsequently replaced by Boris Johnson. Having resigned from May's Cabinet a month earlier, Johnson could signal a total commitment to 'get Brexit done.' Johnson's appointment further compounded the external pressure on Corbyn to adopt a clearer response on Brexit as another General Election became imminent.

Until the very end, Labour's orientation to Brexit lacked coherence. At the September 2019 party conference, Lavery and McDonnell had been presented with data that showed that confirmed that Labour was haemorrhaging votes in all directions (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 300–2). But most significantly, for every one vote that the party was losing to the Brexit Party, they were losing three to the Liberal Democrats. At this point, there was general agreement that, while the party would maintain the policy agreed on at conference, they would 'hug Remainers' (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, pp. 300–2). Corbyn won backing for a policy in which Labour would push for a General Election, negotiate a new Brexit deal with the European Union and then commit to putting this deal to the public through a referendum. This was the policy that had been negotiated by unions in July, but was opposed by Andrew Fisher in LOTO, as well as Starmer, Abbott and now McDonnell in Shadow Cabinet – who had all made public commitments to support Remain (Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 254). Prior to conference, it was agreed that

potential Cabinet members would be allowed a 'free vote' to campaign however they wanted in this hypothetical referendum.

It is often assumed that the strategic dilemma Labour faced with regards to Brexit was the driver for strategic ambiguity. However, the sequencing of Labour's response to Brexit suggests that, at various points in time, Labour could have committed to an avowedly soft-Brexit position or to a second-referendum position. At different stages either of these more coherent positions may have proved more strategically viable. For instance, if Labour had been able to negotiate a soft-Brexit position shortly after the 2017 General Election, it may have diffused the issue for all but the most staunch Remainers. Conversely, if Labour had committed to a second referendum position much earlier, it could have sought to frame this position in a much more coherent framework than the position that it finally adopted. Strategic ambiguity implies that there was a clear strategy behind this position. While that may have been the case in the 2017 General Election, in the subsequent period any strategy had become inward facing and designed to appease actors that held power within the dominant coalition though had conflicting interests.

As such, this section has demonstrated that Labour's incoherent orientation to Brexit was fundamentally shaped by organisational tensions. There was an organisational impasse where Corbyn had resurrected a Blair era machine in order to command party policy, however this immediately ran up against the organised and politicised nature of the mass membership at the 2018 party conference. At the same time, this mass opposition was leveraged by some elites that held Third Way orientations in order to stymie Corbyn's efforts. The implications of Corbyn's organisational approach for the prospects of sustaining an anti-system articulation are well elaborated by a former advisor, Matt Zarb-Cousin:

> 'The turning point in that way of thinking was 2017. Because 2017 – we'd just started to, despite everything else, define who Jeremy was an anti-establishment politician and people were receptive to that. In 2017 – when we came very close to winning. At the beginning of the year we'd started to define Jeremy as a left

> populist, anti-establishment leader and the public was receptive to that. What changed was the election and the election result… it was a hung parliament and that was way beyond our expectations. And so we thought maybe we don't need to do all the party democracy stuff. That took a back seat and we started to act like we'd won the election. And started to believe that the country was more left wing than it was and we didn't have to win the arguments' (interview, April 2020).

Ultimately the strategic ambiguity response involved deflecting or trying to synthesise the issue within the anti-system articulation, which failed because it did not to take into consideration the way in which structural and socio-institutional developments had altered the underlying experiences that had made an anti-system articulation possible. By consciously not attempting to win the arguments in its external environment, Labour's social bloc began to drift apart.

6.3 Responding to anti-Semitism

Throughout his leadership Corbyn's background had created news reports of his links to extremist groups. Prior to 2017 these had added fuel to perceptions that Corbyn was incompetent, however they did not appear to really impact his popularity as evidenced by the way in which the majority of the public agreed with his comments linking the terrorist attacks that occurred during the campaign to foreign wars (Smith, 2017). However, in the period between 2017 and 2019, Corbyn struggled to respond to accusations that he was an anti-Semite and that his leadership had made the Labour party a beacon of anti-Semitism.

The allegation of anti-Semitism was raised prior to the 2017 election, however it was not made about Corbyn as an individual. There was a scandal over reports of a 2009 event held at the Parliament in which Corbyn had referred to Hamas and Hezbollah as 'friends' (Syal, 2016). Two of Corbyn's supporters, Naz Shah and Ken Livingstone, were forced to resign over anti-Semitic remarks that they had made. According to secondary accounts, Corbyn appeared to be active in forcing their resignations (Jones, 2020, pp. 222–3; Kogan, 2019, p. 342). Following these incidents,

Corbyn established an inquiry into anti-Semitism and other forms of racism in the Labour party. Shami Chakrabarti, a human rights lawyer, was named as Chair. The report, released on June 30, 2016, found that while antisemitism was not endemic in the party, there was 'too much clear evidence (going back some years) of minority hateful or ignorant attitudes and behaviours festering within a sometimes bitter incivility of discourse' (Chakrabarti, 2016, p. 1). The report recommended reforms to the party's disciplinary and complaints procedures, the appointment of a general counsel to offer legal advice on disciplinary issues, and a range of measures to improve ethnic diversity amongst party staff (Chakrabarti, 2016, pp. 27–29). While the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the pre-eminent communal organisation for Jewish people in the United Kingdom, stated that they 'appreciate the careful way in which Shami Chakrabarti has engaged with our community and that she took on board and addressed some of our concerns with commendable speed' they also found the report to be 'weak on the demonisation of Israel and omitted any mention of party figures who have displayed friendship towards terrorists' (Board of Deputies of British Jews, 2016). The launch of the Chakrabarti report was largely overshadowed by the actions of the grassroots activist, Marc Wadsworth, who heckled the speech given by Ruth Smeeth, a Jewish MP, yelling that she worked 'hand in hand' with *the Daily Telegraph* (Kogan, 2019, p. 343). Likewise, at a training event for anti-Semitism held during the 2016 party conference, Jackie Walker, a Jewish political activist and vice-chair of Momentum, criticised Holocaust Memorial Day for only commemorating the genocide of Jewish people (Jones, 2020, pp. 225–6). Walker was suspended and eventually expelled from the party and Momentum. These actions were indicative of a burgeoning view amongst elements of the grassroots base that interpreted these allegations as a politicised smear against Corbyn.

Labour as organisationally anti-Semitic

Anti-Semitism became a significant reputational issue for Corbyn in the period between the 2017 and 2019 General Elections. There was a perception that the Labour party was institutionally anti-Semitic as it failed to seriously investigate and discipline members that were accused of anti-

Semitism. There is compelling evidence that suggests part of the reason that Labour developed such a reputation was tied to the antagonistic relationship between LOTO and the party bureaucracy. The leaked report into the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit found that in the period between 1 November 2016 and 19 February 2018, during which the party bureaucracy was largely run by opponents of Corbyn, over 300 complaints of anti-Semitism were registered but only 34 investigations were initiated, culminating in 10 suspensions (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 14). It is also worth noting that the recommendations from the Chakrabarti inquiry were not implemented in this time. However, when Formby became General Secretary in March 2018, specially constituted panels were formed that would meet every month and had the power to suspend or expel members. An independent barrister was also brought in to advise these panels. There was a clear uptick in suspensions after these reforms. In 2019, 45 members were expelled for anti-Semitism, 296 members were suspended, and 104 members quit whilst being investigated (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 630). The leaked report found that 'the hyper-factional atmosphere prevailing in party HQ' was a major reason why so few cases were properly investigated prior to Formby's appointment (The Labour Party, 2020, p. 16). Advisors to Corbyn argue that this dynamic compelled LOTO to intervene and expedite prominent cases, like those of Ken Livingstone and Jackie Walker (Jones, 2020, pp. 230–1). It was this intervention that an Equalities and Human Rights Commission investigation criticised (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 7). This shows that Corbyn and LOTO did take the organisational aspect of anti-Semitism seriously and were able to shift this dynamic once they had gained control of the party bureaucracy and the dominant coalition more broadly.

Corbyn as personally anti-Semitic

Further problems emerged over the personal allegations that were made against Corbyn. This issue first emerged in March 2018, when Luciana Berger, a Jewish MP, raised an issue over comments that Corbyn had made in a 2012 Facebook post in which he questioned why a mural that used anti-Semitic tropes had been removed. While Corbyn apologised, this was significant as it was an

act of potential anti-Semitism that was directly linked to Corbyn as an individual. In the same month, Christine Shawcroft, a Corbyn supporting grassroots member of the NEC, was forced to resign after suggesting that Alan Bull, a council candidate in Peterborough who shared an article that suggested the Holocaust was a hoax, was denied his candidacy due to 'political reasons' (BBC News, 2018). In a Facebook post announcing her resignation, Shawcroft apologised, but argued the 'this whole row is being stirred up to attack Jeremy, as we all know' (quoted in Stewart, 2018a). This shows that at the same time that Corbyn was being linked to anti-Semitic behaviour, the view that this was politicised was gaining wider prominence amongst elite representatives of the mass membership.

The perception that Corbyn was anti-Semitic was further exacerbated in his response to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism: 'anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities' (IHRA, 2016). The IHRA provided several examples, two of which were met with concern amongst Palestinian groups (IHRA, 2016). Firstly, one example suggested that 'denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination eg. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour'. The second suggested that anti-Semitism included 'applying double standards by requiring of it [Israel] a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.' In 2017, the European Parliament had adopted a resolution calling on EU member states to adopt this definition and the examples.

In July 2017, the NEC rubber stamped a code of conduct endorsing the IHRA working definition but excluded four of the examples, the two outlined above, and two more: accusing Jewish people of being more loyal to Israel than their home country; and comparing contemporary Israeli policies to those of the Nazis. This code of conduct received significant criticism from the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Jewish Labour Movement (McGuinness, 2018). In the ensuing

weeks, Corbyn agreed to incorporate elements of three of the examples but persisted in his opposition to the idea that suggesting 'a State of Israel is a racist endeavour' was anti-Semitic. Given the broader context, in which Corbyn and the Labour party were being accused of not taking the issue seriously, it has been suggested that this response failed to demonstrate that the party was actually oriented to the debate as it was unfolding in society. As Andrew Fisher, the Head of Policy at LOTO, suggests, 'when you're a party accused of anti-Semitism, saying "we're going to define antisemitism, we know better than an international panel of Jewish academics agreeing with it" – it's just a fucking idiotic thing to do '(Andrew Fisher quoted in Jones, 2020, p. 238).

As criticism continued, there was a growing majority on the NEC, which by this was controlled by Corbyn supporters, to move on from the issue by adopting the IHRA in full with all examples. Nevertheless, in a sign that key delegates from the membership maintained the defensive view that this was a plot against Corbyn, Pete Willsman, a long-time NEC delegate from the left and from the mass membership, was recorded as saying that that those behind the accusations were 'making up duff information without any evidence at all' (quoted in Syal, 2019). Momentum subsequently withdrew its support for his NEC re-election, although he was still re-elected.

At a meeting of the NEC in September 2018, in which delegates had briefed that the NEC would endorse the full IHRA definition, Corbyn sought to include a statement that committed Labour to stand in solidarity with Jewish people and emphasised that the IHRA definition would 'not undermine freedom of expression on the Israel-Palestine conflict', that 'it cannot be considered racist to treat Israel like any other state or assess its conduct against the standards of international law' and 'nor should it be regarded as antisemitic to describe Israel, its policies or the circumstances around its foundation as racist because of their discriminatory impact, or to support another settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict.' However, a majority, including two Jewish NEC members who were otherwise core supporters of Corbyn – Jon Lansman and Rhea Wolfson – opposed Corbyn's statement. Corbyn was restricted from enacting his preferred position by an

NEC that he nominally controlled. This is strong evidence of the difficulty that Corbyn had in co-ordinating his supporters, particularly amongst the membership, through his command-and-control organisational structure.

It is worth questioning why Corbyn was unable to act in a different way. As Karie Murphy notes, 'we delivered as much on anti-Semitism as we could operationally despite the failings of those in Labour HQ charged to manage the processes. What we failed on was politically, because Jeremy found it difficult to engage' (quoted in Pogrund & Maguire, 2020, p. 124). Len McCluskey attributed Corbyn's difficulties to his leadership style, 'here you have a principled, decent man, and all his life he's been able to say what he wanted… Suddenly he's the leader of a political party and your views have to be altered accordingly, you can't just say something and say it's your view, happy to be criticised, happy to defend yourself. You can't, you're the leader of a party' (in Jones, 2020, p. 239). This style was certainly part of Corbyn's appeal, in the sense that he put principle above pragmatism and thereby appeared differently to more professionalised MPs.

It is also possible that the faction of support in the membership that viewed this as a politicised issue designed to hurt Corbyn impaired him from shifting his position. Jewish Voice for Labour solidified this view. Formed in 2017, it was a proudly pro-Corbyn organisation that's main impetus to 'unjustified allegations of anti-Semitism … used to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership' (Daisley, 2017). In practice, the group sought to challenge the Jewish Labour Movement's position as the representative voice for Jewish members and supporters of the Labour party. It grew to have over 1200 members, although reportedly two thirds of these members were not Jewish (Jones, 2020, p. 233). As a sign that this created a splinter within broader mass support behind Corbyn, Jon Lansman referred to JVL as 'an organisation which is not just tiny but has no real connection with the Jewish community at all… it doesn't represent the Jewish community in a way that JLM clearly does represent the Labour wing of the Jewish community' (quoted in Rocker, 2018). But not only did the JVL appear to influence Corbyn's means of engaging with the issue of anti-Semitism, its presence at events also stymied efforts made by LOTO to try and create

outreach with other Jewish community groups. For instance, other groups pulled out of an event that LOTO organised in conjunction with the *Jewish Chronicle*, when they found out that the JVL would be present.

Ultimately, this fissure provided the institutional and intellectual legitimacy to the perception that Corbyn 'had his hands tied' on anti-Semitism, which retained a prominent position within the Labour party. Corbyn's efforts can be contrasted with those of Momentum, who did take the issue more seriously. For instance, they put out several videos, one of which received over 1.3 million views, on their social media channels that were aimed at political education around the language that activists use, and how this can be anti-Semitic. Momentum's efforts, and his own Jewish identity, meant that Lansman became a prominent defender of Corbyn in the media. However, Lansman and Momentum felt that their efforts were not supported by other elements of Corbyn's internal coalition (interview, Laura Parker, September 2019). As Lansman says, 'I now feel I have been used as a Jew to defend the party, but I'm not supported afterwards. They're quite happy for me to go on fucking radio or TV to defend Jeremy, but I'm not supported afterwards' (quoted in Rocker, 2018).

While polling analysis of the 2019 General Election has found that anti-Semitism may not have influenced individual vote choices, it is highly conceivable that it would have contributed to Corbyn's personal unpopularity. It is certainly possible that it impaired Corbyn's image of personal integrity, which had been a pillar of his specific anti-system appeal. Survey and content analysis has found that the scale of anti-Semitism within the Labour party was inflated (Philo et al., 2019). However, the sequence of evidence laid out in this section demonstrates that Corbyn's individual response to the issue may have emanated from a bunker mentality. It appears that Corbyn, a long-time anti-racist campaigner, failed to make sense of these allegations, which was influenced by the types of people he sought for counsel in the issue. This led a viewpoint to take hold that all opposition was necessarily hostile, which impaired the capacity of the party to strategically respond to issues at different points, like the IHRA definition debate, that may have provided the basis for

diffusion. The intra-party debates around Labour's response also demonstrated the limits to the control that Corbyn could exercise and the growing strains between his office and representatives of the mass membership.

6.4: Labour's incoherence on Brexit catches up at the 2019 General Election

The 2019 General Election was a disaster for Labour. The party suffered a 7.9% decrease in its vote share and lost 60 constituencies. Much has been made of Labour's loss of the 'Red Wall', the post-industrial constituencies that form a band that links the mining regions of Wales, through the midlands and former industrial heartlands of the North and North East. It is true that 18% of working-class Labour voters defected to the Conservatives, which is a higher rather than Labour voters over-all (Fieldhouse et al., 2021). At the same time, Labour actually retained constituencies that had the highest levels of deprivation and low-levels of home ownership, though somewhat ironically given the narratives around the election – these constituencies are largely located in urban areas that are typically seen as middle class (Cooper & Cooper, 2020). The 'Red Wall' constituencies that Labour lost to the Conservatives tended to be mixed urban-rural, have high rates of home ownership, relatively high numbers of pensioners and were largely ethnically homogenous (Cooper & Cooper, 2020). The structural problem for Labour was that the social groups that did support it, including the non-white, non-asset holding working class, lived in primarily urban constituencies which has diminishing influence under the UK electoral system. This was a major feature of the strategic dilemma that had personified the electoral difficulties that had underpinned the entire post-New Labour period.

The divisions between different working class groups were a long-standing feature of British politics that had been amplified in the Thatcher era, when she had incorporated property owning working class members and those that initially benefited from the growing number of services jobs, while the manual workers that recognised their economic security was under threat had become more militant, in turn making it harder for a 'modernising' Labour party to synthesise

their interests into their social bloc (Lilleker, 2002, p. 74; Mudge, 2018, p. 342). Yet while this problem clearly proceeded Labour's struggles at the 2019 election the specific inability to articulate a commonly shared sense of political disaffection was a direct failure of the Corbyn period.

While 2019 was undoubtedly a 'Brexit election', it was taking place in a context in which the vast majority of the voting public was fatigued and disaffected. A YouGov poll in June 2019 found that 30% of voters actively avoided news about Brexit (ITV News 2019); while in October 2019, six weeks before the General Election, 70% of respondents in a YouGov poll diagnosed themselves with Brexit fatigue (YouGov 2019). As Matthew Flinders (2020) argues, this polling indicates a widespread political engagement that is consistent with the long-term disaffection that characterised the 2015-2019 political context.

While the voters in the Red Wall constituencies that Labour lost were likely motivated by the identity as Leave voters, Remain voters were similarly disaffected (Hobolt et al. 2020). In this context, it is worth nothing that 28% of 2017 Labour voters defected to another party, and over half of these voters were Remainers (Edward Fieldhouse et al. 2021). This was significant as while Red Wall constituencies are widely characterised as 'Leave' constituencies, they still retained significant minorities that had supported Remain. In many of these Red Wall constituencies, the defection of Remainers to the Greens, Liberal Democrats or to abstention was higher than Labour's margin of defeat, which represented a major change in the party's social bloc from 2017. At the 2017 General Election, while the core of Labour's articulation was different middle class groups, the party had managed to channel widespread disaffection through an articulation project that spoke to questions of fairness under the Conservative government's economic programme. In 2019, largely due to external forces beyond Labour's direct control, the political context had changed and Brexit was the major question. Labour's predicament became more difficult when, on November 11th, the Brexit Party announced that it was standing down its candidates in seats held by the Conservatives in order to concentrate its firepower in Labour seats. This was damaging because it meant that in key marginal seats Labour had hoped to win the Conservative vote would

remain intact, while in marginal seats held by Labour there was significant concern that Labour's vote would be split. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the party had been unable to re-orient to the way in which anti-system politics had shifted, largely due to organisational dynamics. This problem continued to plague the party during the campaign, leading it to pursue an electoral strategy that mirrored its 2017 campaign, which revealed the disconnect between the elites within the dominant coalition and politics as it was unfolding outside of the party.

The new Conservative Prime Minister proved successful in articulating widespread disaffection directly in terms of Brexit, as he possessed a unique ability to sustain disaffected voters' frustration with the political establishment while minimising the potential for Corbyn to articulate a social bloc around his 2017 economic populist narrative. In the short period between his assumption of the Prime Ministership and the General Election, Johnson's pro-rogation of parliament was struck down by the Supreme Court, parliament vetoed his first attempt at a Brexit deal, and then continually voted against him calling an election until he took the possibility of a 'no-deal Brexit' off the table. While, in reality, Johnson had a substantial amount of control in enabling these events to unfold in the way that they did, it is reasonable to assume that they only compounded voters' sense of Brexit fatigue and disaffection at the 'political establishment.' His campaign slogan, 'Get Brexit Done', provide a sharp point of contrast with Labour's continued strategic ambiguity. At the same time, he effectively depoliticised austerity. In his first speech, Johnson (2019) promised to 'make your streets safer' by recruiting over 20,000 police officers, to build over 20 new hospitals, and a 'level-up per-pupil funding in primary and secondary schools.'

While Johnson limited the ideational space for Labour to repeat its 2017 performance, the party persisted with the same strategy regardless. This is puzzling as there is evidence that Corbyn's team at LOTO were aware of the problems that Johnson presented. Andrew Murray had written a strategy paper that recognised Johnson would be able to nullify any anti-austerity pitch, and advocated that Labour focus more directly on social transformation as the centre-piece of its articulation strategy. To do this, Murray argued that Labour would have to sidestep the

'debilitating, divisive and ultimately phoney "culture war"' associated with Brexit, on which Labour's messaging was 'confused or conflicting' (quoted in O. Jones 2020, 183). Likewise, on the same day as the Brexit Party's announcement, Seamus Milne provided a 'narrative ark' that set out Labour's plan for such a strategy, which is outlined by Owen Jones (2020, 285–89): in the first phase, Labour would frame the UK as at a crossroads moment on climate change and on Brexit, in which the Conservatives represented billionaires and powerful interests; in the second phase, Labour would portray the Conservative commitment to ending austerity as hollow, as was their promise to implement a fair Brexit; in the third phase, Labour would outline how its agenda would shape the future, through an implementation of a Green New Deal and a significant public investment program. The problem was that this reflect a series of policy proposals that were not tied together in a coherent articulation frame that demonstrated the party's orientation to the dominant social conflict in society – Brexit. By the 2019 election, the majority of the British electorate viewed politics primarily through their Brexit identities (Hobolt et al. 2020). As per Eidlin's modified articulation theory, this did not mean that Labour could not articulate a new social bloc, but it would have to engage with these identities. However, there was clearly a belief within LOTO, likely developed due to the organisational dynamics preventing Labour from developing a coherent position on Brexit, that Labour could maintain an anti-system articulation project while side-stepping the question of Brexit.

Labour's manifesto, launched on the 21st of November, included a huge swathe of policies including a £400bn public investment programme, public ownership of the railways, royal mail and other utilities, scrapping tuition fees, the removal of charitable status for private schools, free bus travel for under-25s, a programme to build over 100,000 homes, the abolition of universal credit and an overhaul of welfare and a raise in taxes on the wealthiest 1%. The nature of these policy announcements tended to reflect the sense that wide-ranging policy had been popular in 2017, so it would be popular again in 2019. Independently most of these policies were popular, yet

they failed to engage with the interests of Labour's social groups and explain how the party would ameliorate their disaffection as it was experienced and expressed (Price, 2020; Smith, 2019).

In 2017 Labour's slogan 'For the Many, Not the Few' provided a neat way of summarising who the Labour party proclaimed to represent and who it saw as its opponents. This worked when many voters' experiences were profoundly shaped by the practical effects of austerity, and Labour could articulate voters' disaffection in economic terms. While economic inequality was still highly prevalent in the UK, the country's political elites had spent the last three and a half years failing to implement, and then debating, the outcome of the Brexit referendum. An individual voter's expression of disaffection was likely determined by whether they identified as a Leaver or a Remainer, and Labour's articulation strategy failed to engage with these identities as they existed. Labour's inability to engage with this reality is symbolic in the party's lack of a slogan. Yet in the intervening period, Labour's opponents had succeeded in increasing the salience of Brexit as the prominent divide. Labour's inability to articulate a coherent frame was perhaps symbolised by its lack of a slogan. The party trialled several including 'putting money in your pocket' and rehashing its 2017 success. On the 24th of November, just two and a half weeks before election day, the party finally settled on 'On Your Side'. This was quite hollow, and failed to resonate with the dominant issues of the day compared to the Conservatives' promise to 'Get Brexit Done.'

One positive for the Labour party was that it had continued to invest heavily in mass outreach through a sophisticated digital team, investing in a Community Organisation Unit, and through tighter campaign collaboration with Momentum. Indeed, in the 2019 General Election, the party's social media campaign reached more people than it had in 2017. Likewise, there were thousands of canvassers on wintery December nights deployed in a much more targeted manner. But because Labour could not provide these campaigns with a coherent ideological orientation, the Conservatives' simpler promise to 'Get Brexit Done', combined with promises of more hospitals, police officers and school funding more directly spoke to the experiences and desires of a great swathe of voters.

This reflects the need for a party to connect its organisational resources with an ideological orientation in order to have an articulation capacity. This is acknowledged by key party figures. Andrew Fisher says that policy incontinence is a 'fair way to describe it, but it's because there was literally nothing else. No strategy, no planning, no themes, no narrative.' While Unite General Secretary, Len McCluskey says that 'it was a mish mash of policies which, in my opinion, was determined by people who don't live in the working class world.' Finally, an anonymous Shadow Cabinet minister said that 'there were far too many policy announcements, so rather than things sticking in people's minds, they'd forgotten and it was another policy, another policy, another policy, and nobody was actually considering what those policies were. They just thought: there's another one from Labour' (Pogrund and Maguire 2020, 315). While Mary Robertson, the Head of Economic Policy at LOTO, links this problem to the way in which Labour interpreted the 2017 election, saying that it 'created a mentality, an understanding of how we get positive press: we do policy announcements.'

It is necessary to directly consider why Labour persisted with this strategy despite apparent evidence at the time, that it would prove ineffective. It is probably the case that by the election campaign, it was too late for Labour. Their inability to develop a coherent Brexit problem in the preceding years continued into the campaign. At the 2019 party conference that was held just over two months before the election, Brexit policy adopted was that, if Labour were to win an election it would negotiate a new Brexit deal within six months, and then put this deal to a new referendum in which Remain would be an option. Moreover, Corbyn himself would remain neutral in this referendum but cabinet ministers would be free to campaign on either side. Polling indicates that a majority of the population did not understand Labour's policy on the agenda. Labour's struggle to orient itself towards Brexit was reflected on by Andrew Fisher:

> 'You could see the difference, the marked contrast, when [Corbyn] was talking about child poverty versus how he spoke about Brexit. One of the things I'd reflect on – and any future Labour leader should reflect on – is you don't just get to lead

on issues you want to lead on. If you're the leader you have to lead on everything, not just the things you care about' (in Jones, 2020, p. 202).

At the same time, in the lead up to the election campaign, disfunction within LOTO meant that the key strategists and policy makers that had been influential in devising the 2017 campaign were side-lined. In the period between 2017 and 2019, Corbyn and John McDonnell appear to have become estranged (O. Jones 2020; Pogrund and Maguire 2020). Secondary accounts suggest that strains appeared after the Skripal poisonings, and developed further as McDonnell increasingly advocated for Labour to take a more pro-Remain position on Brexit. A related development was the increasing hostility between key advisors at LOTO. During the 2019 party conference, Andrew Fisher – the architect of the successful 2017 election manifesto – announced that he would resign. In his resignation letter, which was leaked, he listed a series of examples of misconduct which he characterised as a 'snapshot of the lack of professionalism, competence and human decency which I am no longer willing to put up with daily. I've tried to resolve some of these issues for a long time, but have been unable to…' (quoted in Helm and Tapper 2019). Meanwhile, Karie Murphy was forced out of LOTO and into a position at the party bureaucracy. While Murphy had been critical in providing direction to LOTO after its initial struggles, her managerial style resulted in increasing accusations of bullying and favouritism. Murphy denied these accusations, but in both Jones' (2020) and Pogrund and Maguire's (2020) secondary accounts, there was increasing pressure on Murphy to resign over the course of 2019.

These internal developments portray a LOTO that was ill prepared for an election. Two figures, McDonnell and Fisher, that were commonly identified as providing the ideological genesis for Corbyn's successful articulation in 2017 had been side-lined. This would make it harder to develop the ideas and strategies to ensure that the party was oriented to the social conflicts that the election would be fought around. At the same time, the dysfunction prevented LOTO from co-ordinating with other institutions like the party bureaucracy and the Shadow Cabinet to ensure

that the party institutions would provide the means for the party to mobilise and connect the social groups that it targeted as components of its social bloc.

6.5 Conclusion

Across Chapters 5 and 6 I have explored the fluctuations in success of Corbyn's articulation project. The major finding to emerge from Chapter 5 was that the period of Corbyn's relative success, which largely occurred during 2017, was during the period in which Corbyn had united an insurgent coalition and gained ascendancy within the dominant coalition. In Chapter 6, I have demonstrated that this proved largely ephemeral. The difficulties in co-ordinating the interests of Corbyn's different support bases led Corbyn to ultimately side with union leaders in major intra-party decisions around organisational restructuring. This meant that Labour did not fundamentally shift the party's accountability structure, meaning that power was distributed in a similar fashion to the New Labour period.

Yet, as there were major changes in the party's external environment, primarily around the way in which Brexit became the predominant means through which anti-system politics was interpreted, this organisational structure did not allow for any actor to emerge to orient the party towards this issue. Brexit accentuated the strategic dilemma that had plagued Labour under both the Miliband and Corbyn leaderships. This dilemma became internalised within Labour's dominant coalition. Evidence suggests that Corbyn and his advisors initially sought to impose a soft-Brexit policy to minimise the salience of the issue, however they were rebuffed by parliamentary elites within the Shadow Cabinet including Keir Starmer and, potentially, allies of the Corbyn project like John McDonnell. The inability to resolve these internal debates also allowed pro-Remain mass movements to gain currency, which made it harder for Corbyn to deny the second referendum cause. At the same time, the pro-Remain or pro-second referendum actors could not impose their preferences as they lacked the organisational control that Corbyn and his supporters had through their influence at the conference and NEC. As a result, Labour's incoherent orientation towards Brexit was a reflection of the organisational stasis that characterised Corbyn's leadership. He had

achieved some change in the composition of the dominant coalition, however an inability to co-ordinate his insurgents meant that this dynamic could not be institutionalised, which limited the party's capacity for articulation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Left parties are intimately tied to the development of party systems over the last century. These parties emerged with the expansion of suffrage, providing representation to the masses of newly enfranchised voters. As left parties became reformist in their orientation, they helped to construct the ideas and policies behind the modern welfare state, in the process securing the political loyalty of millions. It was these parties' transition to a neoliberal orientation that helped to embed a new ideological paradigm in the last decades of the twentieth century. And, over the last decade, these parties have declined – becoming small actors within rapidly transforming party systems.

In this thesis, I have developed a conceptual framework that can explain how and why left parties have transformed, which also details how difficult it can be to achieve this change. This is significant, as it deepens our understanding of the chameleon-like nature of these parties and helps us to recognise how one type of party can act in so many ways. This framework links a party's organisational structure – the types of actors that hold power at a given point in time and the institutions that they construct to embed themselves – with its political ideas.

I have employed this framework to help us to understand the puzzle of the left's contemporary decline. This is an outcome that has provoked substantial debate in academia and the commentariat. Throughout this thesis I have acknowledged the relevance of existing explanations: a socio-structural explanation, which offers a particularly deterministic interpretation, where the structural transformation from industrial to knowledge economies has dramatically reduced the electoral demand for left parties; a party competition explanation that emphasises the role that challenger parties have played in politicising structural changes to narrow the space for left parties within national party systems; and an ideational explanation that argues that in response to the financial crises that hit high-income democracies between 2008 and 2012, left parties failed to develop a policy response that represented the interests of their supporters.

The conceptual framework that I have deployed complements, rather than rejects these theories. The point of difference is not that socio-structural factors or increased party competition

do not have explanatory value in identifying the process of left party decline. It is more to say that existing explanations have failed to take seriously the role that left parties have played in their own decline, leaving a number of open questions: why have left parties failed to adapt to structural transformation, to develop new political ideas that can make sense of the financial crisis and can contend with the arguments and policy direction of challenger parties? Historically, left parties have been agents in their own success – what has happened to make these parties, essentially, useless?

To answer this question, the conceptual framework that I have developed contributes to articulation theory by linking a party's capacity for articulation to its organisation. A party can only mobilise or construct a viable social bloc through the articulation of identities that speak to the experiences of an array of social groups (Amable & Palombarini, 2021; Eidlin, 2016; De Leon et al., 2009, 2015). I argue that a party can only generate the relevant ideas for articulation, if its organisational structure provides it with an orientation that is relevant to the day-to-day experiences that it is seeking to describe and synthesise. As a party is not a singular actor but is comprised of an array of actors that hold distinct interests that are tied to the specific nature of their social relations, a party's overall ideology and the scope of its ambition is tied to the type of actors that hold power and how this dynamic is institutionalised. To conceptualise this organisational dynamic, I drew on Panebianco's (1988) concept of the dominant coalition, which is comprised of the actors that control internal 'zones of uncertainty'. I argue that the historically specific composition of the dominant coalition and the extent of its institutionalisation will determine the nature of the party's ideological orientation.

A critical juncture is likely to disarticulate a party's social bloc, as it will provoke a social transformation that will reduce the efficacy of the identities and ideas that the party relies on to unite its disparate support groups. At the same time, because different actors inside the party will have different social connections, this juncture will likely shift the composition and the institutionalisation of the party's dominant coalition. It will provoke new intraparty debates over

how the party should respond to social transformation, the scope of which will reflect the ideational and material interests of different actors. As such, I argue that for a party to effectively articulate a new social bloc, it must undergo a process of ideological re-orientation. The culmination of this process is dependent on the outcomes of intra-party debates, and specifically the emergence of actors with new perspectives to shift the composition of the dominant coalition. At the same time, for this orientation to be institutionalised within the organisation, the new dominant coalition must be legitimised. This latter factor is effectively predicated on pre-existing elites either recognising the legitimacy of new actors or giving way through defeat or détente.

I drew on the works of Katz and Mair (1995, 2009, 2018) and Panebianco (1988) to identify a generalised structure for contemporary left parties and argued that the specific ways in which left parties re-oriented to the critical junctures that emerged from the social transformation of the 1970s and 1980s constrained their capacity to re-orient to the critical juncture and anti-system politics of the 2010s. In the late 1980s, left parties stabilised their electoral position through the articulation of a social bloc that was underpinned by the Third Way. This ideological orientation was pioneered by professional experts and politicians who, through their institutional loyalties to technocratic and financial networks, fashioned a heavily market oriented Social Democratic ideology (Mudge, 2018). This ideological orientation was only embedded through a series of intra-party debates, in which electoral professional elites prevailed over trade union leaders and grassroots activists. Moreover, the way in which this orientation was embedded was contingent on the institutionalisation of a purely electoral professional dominant coalition, as the defeated union leaders and activists struggled to gain any influence within their parties. A corollary was the severing of ties between the party and the social groups that had traditionally formed the core of the party's social bloc, as the Third Way party relied on focus groups, polling and policy delegation to articulate a much more standardised and middle-class bloc.

While this orientation was sufficient to meet the environmental demands of the 1990s, the left parties' social blocs were widely disarticulated by the financial crisis. In the 2010s, these parties

have lacked the capacity to articulate new identities, because their electoral professional elites do not have the social and interpretive connections to engage with their supporters. Most significantly, the process through which the Third Way orientation was embedded within left party organisations has limited the scope for change. Because professional elites had secured a hegemonic position in the dominant coalition, any actors that push for re-orientation are essentially forced to come from the parliamentary party. Yet, because the elite networks that connect most left party parliamentarians to the outside world remained positioned around technocratic or corporate entities, it is difficult to envisage a majority of these elites developing vastly different ideational or material interests. This is the first clear constraint on the shift in the composition of the dominant coalition that is required for a left party re-orientation. The second is tied to the institutionalisation of the electoral professional dominant coalition. Because internal accountability runs through the left party, even if new actors were to emerge from the much-diminished extra-parliamentary wing of the party, they would only be able to shift the composition of the dominant coalition by reshaping the power structure of the entire organisation. This would either require electoral professional elites to agree to decrease their own influence, which is a difficult scenario to conceive, or for an insurgency to develop which sees an array of opposing actors put aside their conflicting interests to move their parties.

This organisational structure limits the capacity for ideological change, which is a precondition for articulation. Without organisational change, the electoral professional dominant coalition will ensure that left parties retain ideological orientations that are tied to a technocratic competency but are less well connected to the needs and interests of the social groups that their potential supporters inhabit. The tools that make this dominant coalition effective – polling, media, policy delegation – do not necessarily allow for a social understanding of environmental change or for re-interpretation.

In this thesis I applied this concept to the case of the British Labour party, with specific attention to the party's decline in the decade after the 2010 General Election.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated the ability of my organisational framework to explain ideological re-orientation within post-war trajectory of the Labour party. Rather than the period between 1945 and 2010 being characterised by linear progression before collapse, I identified two phases. Each phase was characterised by a distinct articulation project. The first phase occurred between 1945 and 1979 and was underpinned by an articulation of a cross-class social bloc, underpinned by an ideological orientation around Keynesian commitments to full employment and expanded social rights. The second phase ran from the late 1980s through to 2010, in which Labour articulated a middle-class cum financial interest group social bloc, through Third Way commitments to globalisation and aspiration. Significantly, I identified that each phase was dependent on a fundamentally different organisational structure and most pertinently, the decade in between the phases was characterised by the social transformation associated with de-industrialisation and the disarticulation of the party's cross-class social bloc. Labour, as an organisation, did not simply respond to these setbacks and change its programme. Instead, I outlined a series of intra-party debates that only ended with the reforms following Tony Blair's ascension to the party leadership in 1994. I drew on a series of secondary accounts to demonstrate that this re-orientation was contingent on the centralisation of power in the parliamentary leadership. To execute authority, Blair constructed a party machine by refunctioning the party bureaucracy and interlinking it with his own office. This enabled the party leader managerial influence over zones of uncertainty, which allowed Blair to institutionalise his control over the party organisation and to shift party accountability away from institutions like the party conference and into the hands of the parliamentary party. As such, the intra-party debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s were pivotal to the erosion of trade union influence within Labour's dominant coalition, as electoral professional elites achieved the required institutionalisation to re-orient the party. As such, I demonstrate that this organisational change was an important pre-condition for the articulation of the New Labour social bloc.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I traced the process by which the leaders that succeeded New Labour were constrained by the organisational structure that they inherited.

The Miliband period, analysed in Chapter 4, was a case where there was insufficient compositional change within the dominant coalition to fundamentally re-orient Labour away from the Third Way. Miliband himself was an example of an electoral professional elite that sought ideological change. However he was confronted with an organisational structure in which internal accountability rested with the parliamentary colleagues that opposed his intended orientation. Where New Labour leaders had relied on the party machine to manage relations with the parliamentary party, Miliband appointed likeminded advisors to his own office but could not influence staffing within the party bureaucracy. As a result, the party machine did not provide the managerial function, which limited Miliband's internal authority. This provided space for parliamentary elites in the Shadow Cabinet to water down Miliband's proposals for ideological space, particularly with regards to the party's economic plans. While trade union leaders provided a potential ally, Miliband eschewed their support potentially because their interests and background were in greater conflict with his own, relative to Miliband's parliamentary colleagues. Ultimately, Miliband failed to shift the composition of the dominant coalition because he lacked natural allies, which resulted in the loss of intra-party debates.

The Corbyn period, analysed across Chapters 5 and 6, was slightly more complex because there was a clear shift in the composition of the dominant coalition. Through a series of intra-party battles, trade union leaders and, to a lesser extent, party activists gained influence within the dominant coalition. Corbyn's leadership signified a potential shift in internal accountability, which would rest in the hands of the membership rather than the parliamentary party. However, throughout his leadership electoral professional elites continued to resist and maintained some influence within the dominant coalition. So while there was a clear shift in the composition of the dominant coalition, this volatile internal power dynamic prevented institutionalisation. As a result, Labour's orientation to changes in the external environment was predicated on which side held

greater internal sway at a given point in time. In the period around the 2017 General Election, this was Corbyn's internal coalition, which enabled the party to articulate an anti-system social bloc. However, in the period after the election, internal fractures produced a more sustained stalemate which limited the party's capacity to respond to the way in which the framing of social conflicts transitioned from economic justice to Brexit. In the end, while Corbyn achieved compositional change, the lack of internal stability prevented the institutionalisation of his intended re-orientation.

Across the empirical chapters, I have identified a clear process in which the legacy of the organisational structure that enabled the articulation of the Third Way social bloc constrained any re-orientation. The institutionalisation of an electoral professional dominant coalition made it harder for new actors to make the necessary organisational changes to shift the party's ideological orientation. This provides a clear case where organisational stasis prevented the party from responding to exogenous changes, prompting stagnation and decline.

As touched on earlier, the utility of this organisational perspective is its compatibility with existing perspectives. The socio-structural or party competition explanations of left party decline, this approach are clearly relevant to explaining why these parties are in the midst of an existential crisis. However, the problem with these perspectives is that they do not seriously consider the decision making or responsiveness of left parties as a factor. The organisational perspective that I have adopted in this thesis recognises that exogenous factors have produced a critical juncture but argues that left parties do have the agency to respond. By analysing how this juncture reaches inside the party and impacts the relationship between different types of party actors, we can better understand why these parties have proved so ineffective, which ultimately offers a more nuanced approach to the question of their decline.

7.1 Implications and Contribution

These findings make an important contribution to the study of political change. As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, existing approaches to the study of left party decline emphasise

exogenous factors. The implication of these explanations is that party change and party decline is entirely voter led. The dominance of this interpretation within political science could stem from an increased reliance on survey methodologies to understand how voters have shifted their preferences in response to the broad social structural changes that are associated with the transformation towards a knowledge economy. It is much easier to track demographic and preference changes amongst a party's support base than to rigorously evaluate a party's organisational dynamics. Where efforts to analyse party behaviour have been made, such as through data compiled by the Comparative Manifesto Project or Chapel Hill Expert Survey, this focus is still on a unitary actor as the variables in question are essentially an approximation of the way in which a party positions itself with regards to the electorate. While these data sources have proved pivotal in tracking long term changes in both social structure and in party positions, they do not provide us with the tools to conceptualise or analyse *why* a party has chosen a specific policy or strategy.

Meanwhile, the landmark studies of party ideology and party organisation are primarily historical in nature (Berman, 2006; Mudge, 2018; Ziblatt, 2017). In part, this must come from the types of sources required to analyse the relationship between party organisation and party ideology or mobilisation strategy, which may be archival or secondary in nature. As a result, there could be a considerable time lag between access to sufficient data and the time period in question. As such, my thesis makes an important contribution in demonstrating the relevance of organisational approaches to study of contemporary political dynamics. I have outlined and applied a concept that enables us to identify the process through which organisational dynamics can inhibit or enable a party to engage and construct an electoral bloc. The task of the researcher is to classify the relevant internal actors and analyse the process through which they engage with each other and to identify the implications for the party's decision-making.

It is also helpful to question the implications of my findings for the future of left parties. As far as I am aware, mine is the first study to analyse the post-crisis period through the lens

offered by articulation theory. Abstention, volatility and low political loyalties are common trends that have been identified as defining the present moment (Evans & Tilley, 2017; Mair, 2013). These can also be treated as a sign that the structural change associated with the transition towards the knowledge economy has not been successfully articulated by any particular party. In part, this can be understood as a result of the fragility of the pre-crisis articulations of the 1990s. A range of research has demonstrated that this order was typically constructed around coalitions of 'insiders' (Rueda, 2005). There is cross-national variation in which specific groups can be classified as insiders, where it broadly defines wage-earning and asset holding groups that are useful in the advancement of country and firm specific competencies. These insider groups, particularly the wage-earners, typically enjoy access to employment security and increasing wages; outsiders suffer from precarious employment. Left parties, under the guise of the Third Way, were complicit in the articulation of this bloc. Yet, the financial crises and continued structural transformation has narrowed the scope of who belongs to this insider bloc, such that its members rarely constitute a solid majority within their party systems. Any party will struggle to articulate a social bloc that builds on the interests of this insider coalition as a political base, while incorporating precious outsiders.

In this way, the anti-system politics that has defined the 2010s reflects the difficulty that parties have had in articulating a new social order (Amable & Palombarini, 2021; Hopkin, 2020). The re-emergence of challenger parties has been tied to their capacity to incorporate outsider groups into a social bloc, yet this bloc also rarely constitutes a majority – in part due to the difficulties of articulating common interests and identities across different groups of outsiders that sit on either side of core-periphery and education divides.

My thesis paints a bleak picture for the future of left parties. Historically, these were the parties that were best positioned to incorporate insiders and outsiders into a coherent social bloc. Yet, my thesis has shown that the organisational structure that facilitated the articulation of a more insider oriented social bloc has become institutionalised in a way that is almost impossible to

change. In effect, while these parties' dominant coalitions remain controlled, almost exclusively, by electoral professional elites, it will prove difficult for the party to articulate a response to the present critical juncture. As Covid-19 exacerbates existing social conflicts and exposes new ones, left parties do not appear to be the engines of new policy ideas. Indeed, the current moment requires left parties to construct new institutions that enable them to forge connections with outsider social groups. This will prove difficult where the parties remained controlled by electoral professional elites whose ideational and material interests ensure that they are suspicious of actors who may have stronger relationships with different aspects of society. As a result, these parties are stuck trying to resurrect a political order that does not match the structural realities that the wider electorate experiences.

This certainly appears to be the case for the British Labour party, where under Keir Starmer's leadership the party appears to be primarily focused on vanquishing all elements of the Corbynite period. This appears to contrast with the experiences of some left parties that have enjoyed moderate returns to influence. It remains very early days, but in the USA and Germany, the Democrats and the SDP have both, respectively, seen surprising advances of left-wing activists within internal party structures. While this has heightened internal tensions, their recent electoral successes appear to be predicated on electoral professional elites within the party dominant coalitions recognising the legitimacy of these activists' position. In this way, they have sought to align their interests in a way that may guide a cautious re-orientation. However, it is far too early whether this alignment can be stably institutionalised.

Much of this speculation is based on whether the cartel party or electoral professional party is as self-sustaining as is implied by my research findings. One of the essential assumptions that has underpinned my conceptual framework is the notion that the mass and catch-all models were not self-reinforcing. Because the dominant coalitions in these organisational models were comprised of multiple types of actors, they were susceptible to internal conflict in the wake of a disarticulating critical juncture. Each actor had unique interests that were premised on their specific

relations outside of the party, which meant that a range of interpretations of change could gain influence within the party. The more dispersed organisational structure, where there was a clear distinction between the different party faces, meant that there was some possibility for the entry of new actors.

However, the cartel or electoral professional party is different. It is the first where the organisational structure is dominated by electoral professional elites from the party in public office, which in turn has provided them with the basis to reshape the functions of the other party faces. The broad effect of this has been to increase the disconnect between the party and society. As the empirical chapters of my thesis have demonstrated, different efforts to reconnect the party to society have been blocked by the veto points allowed under the prevailing organisational structure. Clearly re-orientation and further articulation is premised on future efforts prevailing. It is not clear that the cartel party allows for such a possibility.

7.2 Limitations and Generalisability

The obvious limitation that arises from this thesis is drawing general conclusions about the status of left parties from analysis of the British Labour party. This problem could be particularly acute when we consider the wider electoral and social context in which the Labour party exists. Firstly, the Labour party competes in a majoritarian system. The specificities of the UK's first-past-the-post electoral system make it much harder for the Labour party to regain its stature as a party of government, as it penalises parties whose supporters are concentrated in urban centres due to the number of urban constituencies relative to rural or towns. Left parties in high-income democracies do not necessarily share this constraint, particularly if they compete in proportional representation systems. In such systems, there would be less pressure for left parties to articulate cross-class coalitions, which may resolve some of the tensions that may force ideological re-orientation. Nevertheless, in non-majoritarian systems left parties continue to face significant challenges, and there is compelling research that points to the difficulty in sustaining a social bloc that encompasses

an array of groups that hold conflicting material interests (Abou-Chadi & Wagner, 2019). To this end, the puzzle that has guided this thesis – why these parties decline, and why they appear incapacitated in responding to their decline – remains for these parties. While the type of electoral system that the party competes in may influence the nature of intra-party debates, as it could influence the formation of internal actors' interests, the framework that I have used to analyse the British Labour party should still be of great value in exploring the dynamics of other left parties' decline.

The structure of the UK electoral system presents another potential limitation in relying on findings from just the British Labour party. The flipside of the first-past-the-post system is that it provides a floor to the Labour party, in that it tends to have higher entry costs to challenger parties. As such, there is potentially less impetus on the electoral professional elites to dramatically shift the parties' ideological orientation as they can act with the knowledge that, even if Labour were to be a permanent opposition party, their personal security is not likely to be at stake. Electoral professional elites in left parties that operate in non-majoritarian systems are less likely to enjoy this security, and so therefore they may have greater incentive to either guide the re-orientation of their parties or to work with new actors to enable such a process to occur. Yet the findings from my research go some way to allaying the basis of these concerns. Despite the high entry costs to challengers, the Labour party did face threats. UKIP and the SNP ate into different segments of Labour's prevailing social bloc, and the former was particularly effective in politicising Europe as an issue to which Labour struggled to re-orient itself. Moreover, there was consistent evidence that electoral professional elites were not resting on their laurels, but instead were motivated by concern over how Miliband and then Corbyn's desired re-orientation could personally impact their standing. This was clearly demonstrated in the Corbyn leadership, both as a motivation to remove Corbyn as leader during the chicken coup, and as the attempt to direct resources during the 2017 General Election to safer constituencies. As such, there is no reason to assume that the internal motivations of electoral professional elites in the Labour party should be

significantly different to other parties, on the basis of the protection that Labour's first-past-the-post system provides to the party.

Finally, there is a concern that the Labour party's history makes it potentially unrepresentative of the left party family. Unlike the Labour party, many other left parties' histories are not as intimately connected to trade unions. The effect of this could be tied to the differences in ideological orientation that guided the Labour party relative to other, particularly European, parties in the first half of the twentieth century as it did not join the Second International. As a result, the Labour party could be described as having a more labourist understanding of social democracy, which was distinct from that of the major socialist parties of Europe whose social democracy emerged as a revision of orthodox Marxism (Berman, 2006, p. 18). As a central pillar of the concept that has been developed across this thesis is that there is a path dependency between previous iterations of a party's organisational structure and that process through which it engages in ideological re-orientation, these different histories would likely mean that European left parties are composed of different types of actors.

Rather than these being distinct constraints on my research findings, they can instead by approached as lines for future enquiry. It is evident that despite the internal validity of the concept developed in this thesis, it is important to apply it to a wider range of cases. As the vast majority of left parties have suffered from distinct decline, understanding how parties with distinct organisational histories have achieved a common outcome could be the basis for a more comparative study. Equally, it is also possible that the organisational moves towards catch-all and then cartelised structures had a homogenising effect, as all left parties in high-income democracies became composed of electoral professional elites. Another possible line of study could be identifying variation amongst left parties. Where the French Parti Socialiste has completely faded, the German Social Democratic Party has stabilised and the Portuguese Partido Socialista has regained a dominant position. Have these different parties undergone ideological re-orientations that can be explained by different organisational structures?

Equally, future research could consider whether the concept developed in this thesis can explain a wider range of parties. Articulation theory has been applied to a vast range of parties, and as my concept seeks to explain variation in a party's capacity to articulate, there is no reason that its applicability should be limited to left parties. It would be particularly interesting to analyse how centre-right parties have responded to the present period of structural transformation. Like their left-wing counterparts, these parties have needed to re-orient to the emergent conflicts and inequalities that have shifted the contours of their social bloc. One strategy appears to have been re-articulation around identitarian frames. However, this strategy is risky because it can radicalise supporters. Indeed, there is substantial cross-national variation in the extent to which such radicalisation has occurred. One was of explaining this variation is the extent to which pre-existing elites retain control over the party organisation. If centre-right parties have suffered from organisational decay, elites may lose control over zones of uncertainty, which would create space for radical insurgencies led by affiliated organisations or local parties.

This could be studied through similar processes of comparative historical analysis, to identify the causal process through which changes to a centre-right party's organisational structure has facilitated a radicalisation of the party's ideological orientation. There have been significant advances in the American literature that have demonstrated how the GOP's increased reliance on the financial power of outside interests groups has decayed the party's organisational structure, creating space for radical right insurgences through affiliated organisations. The Conservative Party is a potentially similar case, where under Margaret Thatcher, the party developed connections with think thanks like the Institute for Economic Affairs and the Centre for Policy studies, which potentially broke the hold of traditional party elites over the party organisation. This in turn could have enabled the influence of radicalised actors to gradually grow over subsequent decades. Finally, the CDU/CSU represent a case in which the party appears to have retained a more moderate ideological disposition, which could potentially be explained through traditional elites retaining power over the party organization, particularly strong connections with local parties.

Comparative historical analysis would also be helpful in better testing the assumption that mass and catch-all parties were not self-sustaining. Deeper analysis of decision making across different organisational models would allow us to test the idea that the cartel party is harder to change than other organisational models. Once again, I believe that the organisational framework that provides the means of identifying and analysing actor interests would provide the basis to explain why this variation exists. Nevertheless, future research in this space would be valuable to our understanding of organisational stasis in contemporary politics.

Ultimately, in this thesis I have sought to provide a party-centred account of one facet of our increasingly volatile politics. Parties are the organisations through which ideas about the way that the world works are translated into concrete political action. In order to generalise this into a new way of thinking about the relationship between ideology and organisation, I suggest that we approach the study of politics through analysis of the way in which power dynamics between different types of actors influence the ideas through which, we in turn, interpret the world. The question that arises amidst increased environmental catastrophe and a global pandemic is whether there are social forces that can shift entrenched power dynamics to enable new ways of thinking to become embedded amongst political parties.

Moreover, amidst these increasingly pronounced crises there is a clear question about what role the left can play. Under the terms of this thesis, it is the job of left parties to describe the effects of these processes in novel ways that provide potential supporters with the necessary ideas to make sense of the fluctuations in their own day to day experiences. The potential fear that arises is that left parties are stuck – that they cannot move forward and develop the underpinning ideologies. As the effects of the various crises become more pronounced, this stagnation would leave more and more space for more pernicious actors to discuss social effects and mobilise new social blocs. The overarching implication is that without organisational change, the left's future is increasingly grim.

Appendix

List of interviewees

Interviewees were selected through an initial purposive selection of key party elites, MPs and advisors around the Miliband and Corbyn leaderships. In these interviews I asked for suggestions of other relevant people and actors and attempted to reach interviewees at regional structures. Based on this combination of purposive and snow-balling interview techniques, I interviewed the following individuals between March 2019 and March 2020:

Jon Lansman	Chair of Momentum 2015- ; NEC member 2017-
Rachel Godfrey Wood	Momentum National Organiser
Darren Rodwell	Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council
Navendu Mishra	Momentum National Organiser; MP for Stockport 2019-
Stephen Houghton	Leader of Barnsley Council
Lloyd Russell-Moyle	MP for Brighton Kempton 2017-
Caroline Flint	MP for Don Valley 1997-2019
Alex Smith	Media Adviser, Ed Miliband Leader's Office 2010-2011
	Deputy Director, Strategy and Communications, Jeremy Corbyn's
Steve Howell	Leader's office 2017
Anon. A	Organiser, Labour Community Organising Unit
Bambos	MP for Enfield Southgate 2017-
Charalambous	
Luke Cooper	Organiser, Another Europe is Possible
Michael Walker	Journalist, Novara Media
James Meadway	Adviser to John McDonnell 2015-2019
Anon. B	Advisor to the Labour Party General Secretary, 1998-2018

Tim Livesey	Chief of Staff, Ed Miliband Leader's Office, 2012-2015
Stewart Wood	Labour Member House of Lords 2011- ; Adviser to Ed Miliband 2011-2015; Shadow Cabinet 2011-2015
Jon Cruddas	MP for Dagenham, 2001-
Andrew Adonis	Labour Member House of Lords 2005-
Ann Black	NEC Member 2000-2018
Laura Parker	National Director, Momentum 2017-2019
Matt Zarb-Cousin	Advisor to Jeremy Corbyn, 2016-17

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