

Brexit Update

Ambrose Bierce once said [“War is God's way of teaching Americans geography”](#). It now appears that ‘Brexit’ is God’s way of teaching the British about the European Union. Having narrowly voted to leave the EU in 2016, public opinion is now shifting: most people want to keep key planks of the EU such as membership of the Single Market and the Customs Union, and have a new referendum on any final ‘deal’.

‘Brexiteer’ politicians wrongly refer to leaving the EU while continuing to enjoy its benefits as ‘having your cake and eating it’ but they are wrong. The British are acting more like someone who have pledged to give up eating cake but who now wants to go on eating all the ingredients, and for them to still taste like cake. Disappointment is certain, disaster likely. The only way back to the cake involves a national dose of humble pie, and calling the whole thing off.

My blog of July 20th [“Oh Jeremy Corbyn” – Will You Chose The Old or The Young?’](#) argues that Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn could yet rescue Britain from Brexit by talking openly about the case to remain in the EU, and maybe to ‘reform’ it. So far no leading Labour or Conservative politician has advocated Brexit Exit. If they did, opinion would almost certainly shift in that direction because it is currently not an option with ‘major party’ backing.

Corbyn is a lifelong critic of Europe who achieved new found popularity, especially amongst young voters, at the June 2017 General Election in which he did better than anyone expected. But while the young and Remainers made up the majority of his votes, he said almost nothing clear about Brexit, and has since argued for a ‘hard Brexit’, for instance leaving the Single Market.

If you have views on this, please post a comment on the blog: threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org

As the blog details, in June Corbyn was serenaded by huge crowds at the Glastonbury Festival (the chant ‘Oh Jeremy Corbyn’ to the tune of The White Stripes’ “Seven Nation Army”), a stronghold of pro-EU, pro-Remain sentiment. But just as many Brits patently voted to Leave the EU without much idea of what that meant, many will have voted for Corbyn under the impression that he favoured a softer more pro-European line than Prime Minister Theresa May. They could rightly feel deceived and betrayed. Mr Corbyn may face a choice between loss of popularity and future votes, and changing his position.

If this does happen, and in theory the UK has until March 2019 to negotiate terms of ‘Brexit’, I suggest that we might see the national mood, or as pro-Brexit politicians have grandly called it ‘the will of the people’, shift along the sequence below, which often precedes any U-turn:

- ▽ Confidence (good story for our country)
- ▽ Doubt (mixed evidence/ views)
- ▽ Regret
- ▽ Shame
- ▽ Disownment (it wasn’t me)
- ▽ Disengagement (I’m off)

Of course public opinion is already spread across these stages but there is currently an [increase in doubt](#). Only the consistency effect is anchoring opinion on binary ‘were we right

or wrong' questions close to the 50:50 mark, that and the lack of a public option to Exit Brexit. Plus all the while, there is a national exercise in cognitive dissonance, as more and more people wake up to the implications and decide they want to 'stay in' various bits of 'Europe' while at the same time, Britain 'leaves'.

The blog also explores how the Conservative vote was Settler dominated at the General Election, and the implications of that. I will write more about values and Brexit in a future blog as values group CDSM releases more data.

Meanwhile, the British media is at last starting to question My Corbyn more closely about the wisdom of Brexit. The Labour-leaning Independent for example ran a headline 'Corbyn is for hard Brexit, so he is officially for his party's few, not its many' on 23 July, pointing out that only 4% of his Party Members shared his position against the Single Market.

Corbyn may be pondering the words of a former Labour leader, one James Callaghan: "the skies are darkening with the wings of chickens coming home to roost".

Apology

My apologies to non-British readers for all this Brexit stuff. It's just a bit all consuming here in the little old UK. I'll get back to other campaign issues and ideas next time.

Plastic

A non-Brexit thought to end on. As you have probably noticed, plastics campaigning is everywhere. A huge NGO effort is partly behind this, for example #breakfreefromplastic, although of course the movement is built on the intolerable and inescapable reality of plastic pollution.

One issue the campaign faces is where to draw the line in terms that enable 'ordinary' people to take action and make demands, both of themselves and others. To my mind the 'issue' is crying out for a problem-category, a frame that captures a big chunk of the problem and would, as an objective achieved, force real and significant change but which does not appear instantly utopian and thus unattractive.

Ending 'single-use' plastic is one option, and is being pursued in the case of bottles. Expect to see sale of plastic water bottles being banned from some places soon, if they are not already, and Coca Cola probably cannot sustain its use of plastic bottles much longer. But from plastic bags to endless forms of micro-plastic and plastic which gets into the environment and ends up as 'micro', 'single use' doesn't quite capture it.

How about 'feral plastic'? A frame that captures the danger of plastic 'running wild': things that go bad when they 'get out'? If you have a better idea please email me chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk or follow and contact me on twitter [@campaignstrat](https://twitter.com/campaignstrat).

Two Questions

I'd also be interested in your views on two other environment-related questions. First do you think French President Macron's statement "make our planet great again" was one of the greatest environmental rallying calls ever? And second, would you agree that Elon Musk is probably the world's single most influential figure in action against climate change at the present? Let me know chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk or [@campaignstrat](https://twitter.com/campaignstrat)

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