

UK Labour right views Corbyn's compromises as chance to resume offensive

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Even as newly re-elected Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn again offers an “olive branch” to the 172 MPs who sought his removal, the Labour right is openly discussing how best to resume their offensive.

The scale of Corbyn's victory was bigger than a year ago, with 61.8 percent of the electorate against challenger Owen Smith. But far from accepting this as a democratic mandate, all that is under discussion in the media and the Labour party is how leadership can be restored to the Blairites, accompanied by a further programmatic shift to the right.

The *Financial Times* complained that Smith's challenge was “lamentable” because he “purported to share Mr Corbyn's radical leftwing instincts.” Dissident MPs “must think how to win the hearts of the party's members without offering the meaningless mush of Mr Smith's ‘Corbyn-lite’.”

An example to be followed is “the suggestion from a group of moderate MPs that the sacred cow of free movement of people may have to be sacrificed”—proof that “some in the parliamentary party still care about winning elections.”

This is in reference to a Fabian Society paper, drawn up by nine Labour MPs including leading coup plotters such as Stephen Kinnock, Angela Eagle and Chuka Umunna, as well as Gisela Stuart who led the Labour Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum. Her inclusion is striking, given that the central charge on which moves to depose Corbyn were based was that he did not do enough to support the case for European Union membership.

The FT also ran an op-ed column by Matthew Taylor, a former head of the Downing Street Unit under Prime Minister Tony Blair. He too calls for a renewed leadership struggle, but this time with “organisation in place, with a coherent and distinctive narrative and with

a credible leader...”

Jeremy Cliffe writes in the *Economist*, “It may be that the party will need to split in the future... But for now they should make at least one more big push to take back the party... It is not yet clear when the opportunity for a new, good-as-can-be challenge to Mr Corbyn will come: perhaps after the party's inevitably unimpressive results in the local elections of 2017 or 2018, or after a Labour rout at an early election called by Mrs May. But when it does come, the moderates must be ready.”

Blairite Dan Hodges writes in the *Mail on Sunday* that there can be “no dignified return,” “peace with honour,” “no truce” or “dignified armistice.”

“After yesterday, Labour's moderates have a simple choice. They hand Jeremy Corbyn their unconditional surrender. Or they fight, fight and fight again to save the party they profess to love.”

The *Independent*, which advances itself as a liberal voice, editorialises that “Corbyn's cult of personality puts Labour ever further from power” because the party is moving “further and further to the left, well away from its social democratic tradition, let alone the election-winning ways of Blairism.”

In the *Sunday Telegraph*, former Labour Cabinet minister, Yvette Cooper, states that someone online had said she should be “beheaded,” which the newspaper says is an “example of the increasingly vicious internet abuse that Labour MPs suffer.”

However, its use as a hook for Cooper's accusation that Corbyn had failed to stem “a rising tide of online abuse” was exposed as a fraud by her own admission that “The worst I get as a Labour MP is usually from the far right. Recent grim tweets include an Australian who wants to behead me, and a Trump supporter who hates refugees.”

Cooper's real concern was for Corbyn to “personally

oppose the Facebook campaigns by his supporters who are calling for moderate Labour MPs to be deselected.”

Cooper has elsewhere said she is “not opposed” to going back to Labour’s front bench!

The *Observer*, the Sunday sister paper of the *Guardian*, ran the most comprehensive outline of the courses of action now open to Corbyn’s opponents by citing a memo circulating among MPs and drawn up by former party leader Ed Miliband’s director of strategy, Tom Baldwin.

The first suggested line of attack is to ensure that the shadow cabinet is made up of anti-Corbyn forces—in order first to isolate him, then to ensure that party policy is not changed and, most importantly, to provide a focus for opposition in the Parliamentary Labour Party as a whole. It cites former shadow health secretary Heidi Alexander that “A new top team, elected by the PLP, will give MPs a respected team around which to coalesce.”

With little chance of this demand being met, however, the *Observer* concludes that “a party within the Labour party could be in the process of forming.”

Baldwin’s memo states that Corbyn would demand MPs pledge “public loyalty to the leadership until the next election and “to rule out another challenge.”

The answer must be that an alternative “team of spokesmen in areas such as ‘migration’ and ‘learning’ should emerge—called the 2020 group—which would be able to set out an alternative set of policy positions to the leadership, while avoiding any kind of formal split.”

This alternative leadership, referred to by others as a “shadow shadow cabinet,” will urge right-wing policies including ending freedom of movement and supporting Tory education policies.

The end goal remains the same, as indicated by the *Observer*’s reference to “conspiratorial talk of challenging Corbyn again in a year or 18 months. It already looks doubtful that Saturday’s most definitive of results has really settled anything at all.”

The *Sunday Times* also reported that “Assem Allam, a Labour donor who has offered to bankroll a new party, said he had spoken to around 30 MPs and peers about forming a breakaway party after Corbyn won the leadership last year and predicted they would act before Christmas.”

In the face of such naked scheming, and reports that only a dozen of the 65 MPs who resigned are prepared to return to his shadow cabinet, Corbyn and his allies continue to pretend that unity is possible thanks to a mutual desire to take on the Conservatives.

The *Observer* article even began by recounting how Labour’s shadow chancellor John McDonnell was seen by reporters after Corbyn’s re-election consoling leading Blairite coup plotter John Woodcock MP. Asking him, “You OK?” he touched Woodcock’s arm and told him, “I’m serious—let’s have a cup of tea soon.”

Corbyn’s first major television appearance following his re-election Saturday was on the BBC’s Andrew Marr on Sunday. When asked about threats of deselection, Corbyn replied that the “vast majority” of Labour MPs have no need to fear.

His remarks were of a piece with his evasive answer to the question, “What is your view of capitalism? Is it broadly good, or broadly bad?”

He replied that he supports a mixed economy, while also a pledging that he was “not proposing” to nationalise key industries.

Corbyn’s appearance was followed by McDonnell’s own on rival ITV’s *Peston on Sunday* alongside Tristram Hunt, MP. When host Robert Peston asked whether Hunt would be welcome back to the shadow cabinet, McDonnell replied that he would. Hunt responded that he cannot take up such an offer because he disagrees too much with Corbyn on policy.

The net effect of the political prostration of Corbyn and McDonnell is to demobilise and disarm all those who looked to them as an alternative. Their role is to neuter opposition to the right-wing cabal that is the Parliamentary Labour Party, even as it prepares the next stage in its offensive against Labour members and the entire working class.



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