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## **Marching to the left? Programmatic competition and the 2017 party manifestos**

Nicholas Allen and Judith Bara

### **Abstract**

This article analyses the content of the 2017 general election manifestos, and introduces the latest estimates from the Manifesto Project to explore recent ideological movements in the British party system. It reports the changing policy emphases in recent Conservative and Labour manifestos and the ideological positions of the major political parties in 2017. It finds that Theresa May’s party produced its most left-wing manifesto since 1964, and that Jeremy Corbyn’s party produced its most left-wing manifesto since 1992 and the election before the advent of New Labour. The article also finds that the ideological space between the Conservatives and Labour opened up in 2017, and that Northern Ireland’s Democratic Unionists published comfortably the most right-wing manifesto.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to thank Yael Reiss for her careful coding of the manifestos and the Manifesto Project team for making the pre-release data available to us.

There are at least two reasons for thinking the 2017 general election was a watershed in the evolution of Britain's party system. The first concerns the parties' electoral appeal and the apparent return of two-party politics. In 2017, the Conservatives and Labour between them secured no less than 82.3% of the popular vote. This was a dramatic increase on the 67.2% they had garnered in 2015, and the first time since 1979 that they had obtained more than four-fifths of votes cast.

The second reason, and the primary focus of this article, concerns the programmatic basis of party competition and apparent shifts in the two major parties' ideological positions. The source of Labour's shift can be traced to the aftermath of the 2015 general election, when the party elected Jeremy Corbyn as its new leader in place of Ed Miliband.<sup>1</sup> Corbyn was from the radical left of the party and the most rebellious Labour MP between 1997 and 2010. But in a party that was dissatisfied with 'politics as normal' and which had recently introduced a one-member-one-vote system for choosing its leader, Corbyn's reputation worked to his advantage. Now *he* was in a position to abandon New Labour centrism for good.

The source of the Conservatives' shift can be traced to the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum. David Cameron had called, fought and lost the vote to keep Britain in the European Union, and then promptly resigned. He was succeeded as Conservative leader and prime minister by Theresa May, who inherited the responsibility for negotiating Brexit.<sup>2</sup> May also hinted at taking her party in new directions. With at least one eye on 'left behind' working-class voters, she promised not to govern in 'the interests of the privileged few', but to 'make Britain a country that works for everyone'. If her rhetoric hinted at a return to traditional One Nation priorities, it was also a snub to some aspects of Thatcherite orthodoxy: the new prime minister talked of having employees represented on company boards, of constraining corporate pay and of 'a proper industrial strategy'.

It was partly in a bid to bolster her personal authority and policy agenda that Theresa May called a snap election in March 2017. The thinking seemed impeccable. The Conservatives were comfortably ahead of Labour in the opinion polls, and May's personal ratings were far ahead of Jeremy Corbyn's. Almost everyone anticipated an enhanced majority, which would cement May's agenda and give her greater leeway in conducting the tortuous Brexit negotiations with the EU. In the event, Labour exceeded all expectations, capturing 40.0% of the vote, to the Conservatives' 42.3%, and depriving May of an overall majority. It was only with the aid of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionists (DUP) and a confidence-and-supply agreement that she was able to continue in office at the head of a minority government.

In this article we explore what the 2017 manifestos reveal about the parties' ideological movements before polling day. More specifically we report the 2017 estimates from the Manifesto Project, an authoritative and widely-used source of comparative data on parties' policy positions.<sup>3</sup> Although we focus on the Conservatives and Labour, we also address all the other parties that won and took their seats in the 2017 Parliament, as well as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). As we shall see, the content of the 2017 manifestos suggests three things: a leftwards shift by the two largest parties; the opening up of ideological space between the Conservatives and Labour; and a distinct ideological clustering in UK politics, with the Tories, UKIP and the DUP on one side, and Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, the Scottish Nationalists and Plaid Cymru on the other.

### **Manifestos in the 2017 general election**

Manifestos are a staple feature of British general elections. Although few people actually read them, politicians tend to take them very seriously. For a start, they are official statements of medium-term policy priorities and, as such, form the basis of a

governing party's 'mandate'. Incoming governments usually claim the right to implement their manifesto policies, while voters can potentially hold them to account at the next election if they fail to do so. And even if voters cannot remember what a government promised, journalists and opposition parties certainly can. Most parties will thus wish to avoid making too many promises they know they cannot keep.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, manifestos matter for politicians interested in the long-term direction of their party. Once an idea makes it into a manifesto, it becomes official party policy and has a better chance than not of remaining so in the medium term. Inertia matters in politics.

Politicians also take manifestos seriously because of the media attention they attract. To be sure, manifestos rarely have any impact on election outcomes and have probably become less important shapers of the campaign agenda in recent years. New forms of digital and social media have multiplied the arenas for political debate, and new practices, such as leaders' debates, have created new focal points in campaigns. Nevertheless, there is always the risk that a badly drafted manifesto may create an embarrassing gaffe; and that risk is never worth taking.

For this reason, the drafting of manifestos is generally a long drawn-out affair. It is also generally a tightly controlled affair. Manifestos are usually compiled by the party leaderships in consultation with key front-bench spokespersons, policy advisers and, to a greater or lesser degree, party conference resolutions or other forms of membership contribution. Party leaders also usually have the final say on manifesto content and emphasis, and they often put their name to a personal message that appears at the front of the document.

Theresa May's decision to seek an early election meant that all the parties had to expedite the production of their manifestos.<sup>5</sup> The timing of most general elections, even those that occur before they are strictly necessary, can be guessed with some

degree of accuracy. Political parties therefore have time to develop policy, consult on proposals and solicit appropriate material from relevant ministers or spokespeople. None of the parties had this luxury in 2017.

The resulting documents were the usual mixture of colours, sizes and content. The Conservative's manifesto, *Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future*, was the longest at over 35,000 words. Labour's *For the Many not the Few*, a phrase borrowed from the new Clause IV of the party's constitution, was a shorter read at nearly 25,000 words. Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats' *Change Britain's Future*, the Scottish National Party's *Stronger for Scotland* and UKIP's *Britain Together* were all above 20,000 words in length. At the shorter end of the spectrum were the Greens' 3,000-word *The Green Party for a Confident and Caring Britain* and Plaid Cymru's 6,500-word *Action Plan 2017*.

The DUP's 8,000-word *Standing Strong for Northern Ireland* was also at the shorter end of the spectrum. During the campaign, few people outside of Northern Ireland had paid much attention to the region's distinctive party system, and even fewer had paid any attention to its manifestos. But to everyone's surprise, the DUP would go on to assume a pivotal post-election role as the buttress to a minority Conservative government.

It is possible if not probable that manifestos themselves played some role in the circumstances that led to a hung parliament. Two key 'manifesto moments' stand out for their potential impact on the election result. The first of these centred on Labour. Several days before its official launch, the draft manifesto was leaked. The aim was reportedly to discredit Corbyn and his campaign by revealing supposedly unacceptable left-wing plans, such as scrapping tuition fees, creating at least one publicly-owned energy supplier in every region and stressing that any Labour prime minister would be 'extremely cautious' about using nuclear weapons. If that was the

aim, the move backfired. Many of the policies were well received, certainly by potential Labour voters, while the party gained welcome positive publicity. The leaked draft was also well received by Labour activists and the associated grassroots movement, Momentum. The leaked manifesto ‘electrified Labour’s campaign’ and coincided with if not caused a turnaround in the party’s support.<sup>6</sup>

The second ‘manifesto moment’ centred on the Conservatives. In keeping with her strategy of reaching out to voters in traditionally Labour-supporting areas, Theresa May launched the document in Halifax, Yorkshire. A number of policies were criticised for being inconsistent with traditional Conservative values—or at odds with many Tory voters’ interests—but by far the most damaging was the proposal to align the threshold for free domiciliary care for the elderly i.e. the care received in people’s homes, with the threshold for free residential care. Henceforth everyone, including those living in expensive homes, would have to pay for care until all their assets were reduced to £100,000. Critics labelled the proposals ‘a dementia tax’, and May was forced to concede a cap on the maximum that people would need to pay for care. This apparent U-turn, just days after the manifesto launch, exploded the Conservatives’ mantra that their leader could provide ‘strong and stable’ leadership. As misfortune would have it, this phrase featured 13 times in the party’s manifesto. For the rest of the campaign, however, it became an ironic byword for May’s fallibility. As Labour’s support climbed, the Conservatives’ projected vote share receded.

### **Manifestos and issue salience**

Manifestos are often long and complex documents that are open to various interpretations. At the same time, they need to get a series of fairly simple priorities past journalists and through to a mass audience. Parties thus rely heavily on emphasis and repetition when drawing up manifestos.

This point about emphasis and repetition is central to most attempts to measure parties' priorities and extract their ideological positions from manifesto texts. The underlying assumption here is that if parties wish to prioritise a policy area, they will continue to refer to it. The salience of a policy thus provides an indication of its importance to the party.<sup>7</sup> By analysing the content of a manifesto—in effect, reading and coding the text in order to measure how much of it deals with certain policy areas—it becomes possible to gauge the policy emphases in it. Since manifestos are published ahead of every election, it is possible to trace shifts in policy emphases over time by applying the same measures to different manifestos. And since policy emphases can be fitted to what we think of as the left-right ideological dimension, it is also possible to see how political parties move in broad ideological terms.

It is precisely this logic that underpins the Manifesto Project, a cross-national collaborative enterprise that collects and analyses party manifestos across time and space. The Manifesto Project began in 1979 as the Manifesto Research Group, and between 1989 and 2009 was known as the Comparative Manifestos Project. In order to give practical effect to the assumptions about salience and emphasis, the Manifesto Project employs a coding frame based on 56 mutually-exclusive policy categories.<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of analysis, each sentence in a manifesto is counted under one, and only one, of these 56 categories. However, some sentences are often very long and contain references to more than one policy area. Thus, rather than use natural sentences, these sentences are further divided, generally on the basis of punctuation such as commas or semi-colons and bullet points, into what is called a 'quasi-sentence'. Each quasi-sentence can then be coded more accurately and allocated to the correct policy category.

Once all quasi-sentences are coded, analysing the policy emphases in a given manifesto is simply a case of comparing the number of quasi-sentences under each

category as a percentage of all quasi-sentences in the entire document. This approach controls for the varying lengths of documents and enables researchers to compare different parties' manifestos in different elections.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the approach by reporting the ten most prominent Manifesto Project categories in Conservative and Labour manifestos respectively in 2010, 2015 and 2017. The rankings provide, in effect, an indication of how the parties' policy priorities shifted over time. Table 1 shows that in the 2017 Tory manifesto, the three most prominent categories were 'Technology and Infrastructure', which covers reference to the importance of modernising industry, transport, communication and other aspects of infrastructure central to economic development, 'Welfare State Expansion', which includes support for expanding things like health care, child care and social care for the elderly, and 'Equality: Positive', which covers favourable references to social justice and the fair treatment of all people. Indeed, nearly one-third of all quasi-sentences in the 2017 manifesto related to just these three categories. The relative prominence of 'Technology and Infrastructure' in 2017, certainly compared to its scores in 2010 and 2015, arguably reflected Theresa May's commitment, as noted, to developing a 'proper industrial strategy'. Meanwhile, the combined relative prominence of 'Welfare State Expansion' and 'Equality: Positive' are consistent with May's wish to govern for everyone, not 'the privileged few'.

**Table 1: Ten most salient Manifesto Project categories: Conservative Party, 2010–2017**

2010 Manifesto		2015 Manifesto		2017 Manifesto	
1	Political Authority (12.2%)	1	Welfare State Expansion (8.7%)	1	Technology and Infrastructure (14.5%)
2	Governmental and Administrative Efficiency (8.7%)	2	Law and Order (8.4%)	2	Welfare State Expansion (10.8%)



3	Law and Order (5.7%)	3	Economic Planning (5.9%)	3	Equality: Positive (6.8%)
4	Non-economic Demographic Groups (5.4%)	4	Technology and Infrastructure (5.6%)	4	Law and Order (6.1%)
=5	Welfare State Expansion (5.2%)	5	Education Expansion (5.2%)	5	Market Regulation (5.3%)
=5	Decentralization (5.2%)	6	Market Regulation (5%)	6	Education Expansion (4.0%)
=5	Environmental Protection (5.2%)	7	Equality: Positive (4.7%)	7	Democracy (3.7%)
8	Technology and Infrastructure (5.0%)	8	Europe: Negative (4.6%)	8	Labour Groups: Positive (3.6%)
9	Internationalism: Positive (4.7%)	=9	Decentralization (4.2%)	9	National Way of Life: Positive (3.5%)
10	Economic Orthodoxy (3.9%)	=9	Military: Positive (4.2%)	10	Military: Positive (3.1%)
		=9	National Way of Life: Positive (4.2%)		

Turning to Labour's manifestos, Table 2 shows the ten most salient Manifesto Project categories in 2010, 2015 and 2017. 'Welfare State Expansion' was the most prominent policy area in 2017, with more than one-sixth of all quasi-sentences in the party's manifesto addressing this issue, ahead of 'Equality: Positive' and 'Technology and Infrastructure'. Together, these three categories accounted for more than one-third of all quasi-sentences in the 2017 manifesto. As the columns for the 2010 and 2015 manifestos show, Labour has always placed a heavy emphasis on supporting and funding the welfare state; in 2017, however, this emphasis was much greater.

**Table 2: Ten most salient Manifesto Project categories: Labour Party, 2010–2017**

2010 Manifesto	2015 Manifesto	2017 Manifesto
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1	Welfare State Expansion (8.2%)	1	Welfare State Expansion (12.8%)	1	Welfare State Expansion (17.4%)
2	Technology and Infrastructure (7.3%)	2	Market Regulation (8.1%)	2	Equality: Positive (9.8%)
3	Education Expansion (6.7%)	3	Law and Order (7.7%)	3	Technology and Infrastructure (8.2%)
4	Culture (6.2%)	4	Labour Groups: Positive (6.9%)	4	Labour Groups: Positive (6.4%)
5	Non-economic Demographic Groups (5.9%)	5	Equality: Positive (5.7%)	5	Democracy (4.9%)
6	Economic Orthodoxy (4.4%)	6	Decentralization (5.4%)	6	Environmental Protection (4.5%)
7	Labour Groups: Positive (4.1%)	7	Technology and Infrastructure (4.8%)	7	Law and Order (4.1%)
8	Law and Order (3.8%)	=8	Education Expansion (4.4%)	8	Market Regulation (3.8%)
9	Internationalism: Positive (3.6%)	=8	Democracy (4.4%)	9	Freedom and Human Rights (3.5%)
10	Incentives (3.4%)	10	Economic Orthodoxy (4.3%)	10	Decentralization (3.3%)

One intriguing point to emerge from Tables 1 and 2 is that neither of the Manifesto Project categories dealing with European integration—positive or negative references to the European Union—made it into the top ten for either of the two major parties’ manifestos. Despite Brexit overshadowing almost everything at Westminster, including the general election campaign, it did not directly dominate the manifestos.

A second intriguing point is that both major parties’ manifestos in 2017 prioritised the same three areas: infrastructure, the welfare state and social justice. The relative emphases varied, of course, but both parties still appeared to be concerned with the same issues. Given that these issues historically have been associated with the political left in Britain—and a general commitment to increased levels of taxation and public spending—there appears to be some evidence that the Conservatives in

2017 really were seeking to move onto Labour's turf. We can explore this claim further by analysing many of the Manifesto Project policy categories simultaneously.

### **The 2017 manifestos and ideological positions**

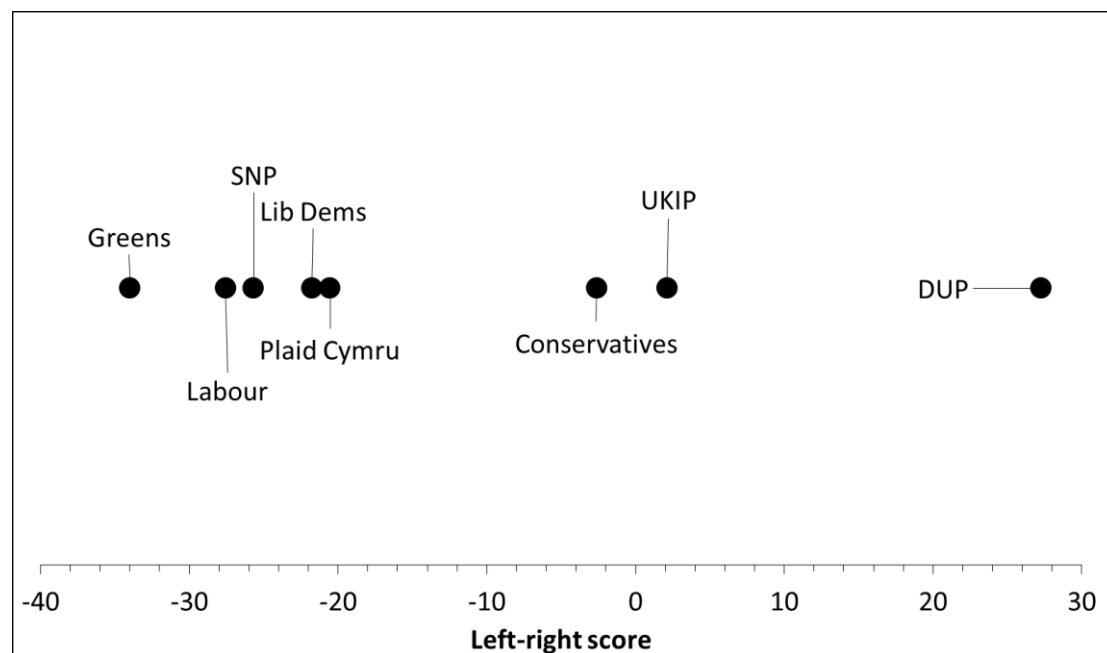
One of the main contributions of the Manifesto Project has been to simplify the analysis of party competition by combining salience measures of different policy areas into the construction of a simple 'left-right' scale. Most commentators simplify their analysis of politics by talking in terms of 'left' and 'right', as do many of those engaged in politics. Although an over-simplification, this terminology does provide a common language for understanding what different political parties stand for. It also structures how many politicians think about politics.

The Manifesto Project's left-right scale is derived from 26 of the 56 categories that are used to code quasi-sentences. It works by combining 13 categories that are associated with right-wing thought, such as support for law and order, a smaller state and free-market economics, and by similarly combining 13 categories of policy associated with left-wing thought, such as support for internationalism, economic planning and labour groups. The combined salience scores for all 13 left-wing categories are then simply deducted from those for all 13 right-wing categories. When right-wing categories are more salient than left-wing categories, the resulting left-right score will be higher; and when left-wing categories are more salient than right-wing categories, the score will be lower.

Figure 1 reports the left-right scores and ideological positions of eight political parties in the 2017 general election. It shows what most readers would probably expect: the Greens, Labour, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru, often regarded as the progressive parties in UK politics, are all clustered towards the left of the scale, with Labour to the left of the Liberal Democrats but to the right of the

Greens. Meanwhile, the Conservatives, UKIP and the Democratic Unionists are arranged across the right of the continuum, with the DUP on the extreme right. It is perhaps surprising just how far to the right of the other political parties the DUP are positioned; it is certainly consistent with their positions on issues such as abortion and gay marriage, that locate them firmly outside the mainstream of British politics.

**Figure 1: Selected parties' left-right scores, 2017**



How do these positions compare to the same parties' positions in the 2015 general election?<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 shows the change in the eight parties' left-right score between the two general elections. Those parties that moved leftwards have a negative score, whereas those parties that moved rightwards have a positive score. In keeping with what many analysts would have predicted about the party under Corbyn, it is clear that Labour moved significantly to the left. The Liberal Democrats and Greens also moved to the left, albeit not to the same magnitude. The Conservatives, meanwhile, shuffled slightly to the left, but not by anything to the same extent, as did the SNP. Three parties by contrast shifted rightwards between the 2015 and 2017

general elections. Plaid Cymru had a more right-wing manifesto in 2017 than in 2015, while UKIP and especially the DUP moved noticeably to the right.

**Figure 2: Changes in selected parties' left-right scores, 2015–2017**

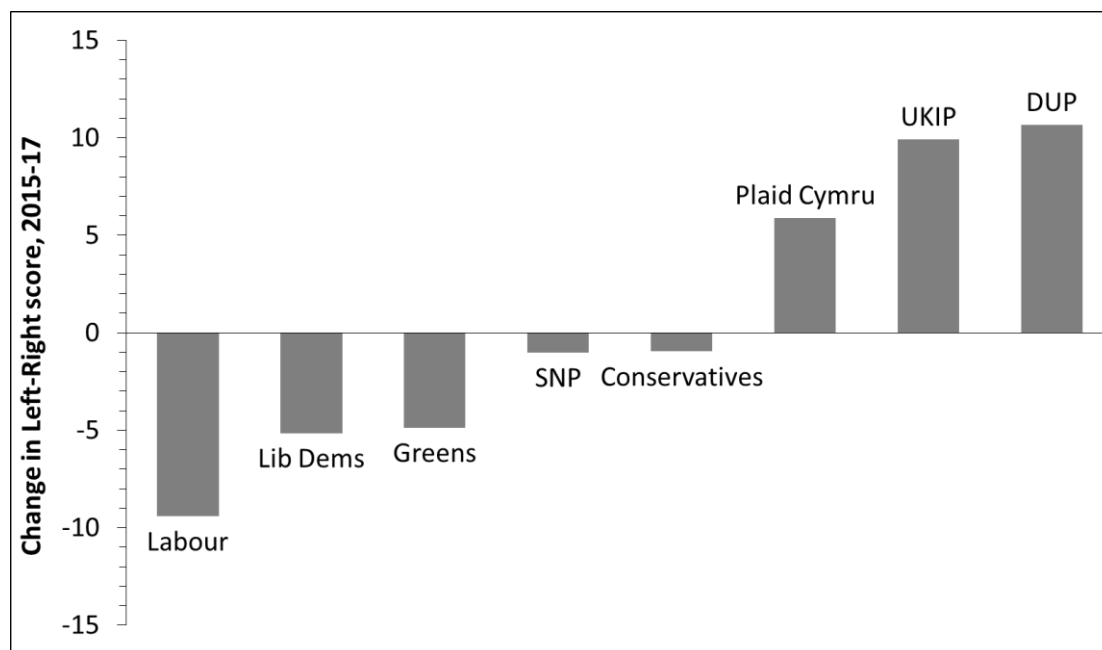
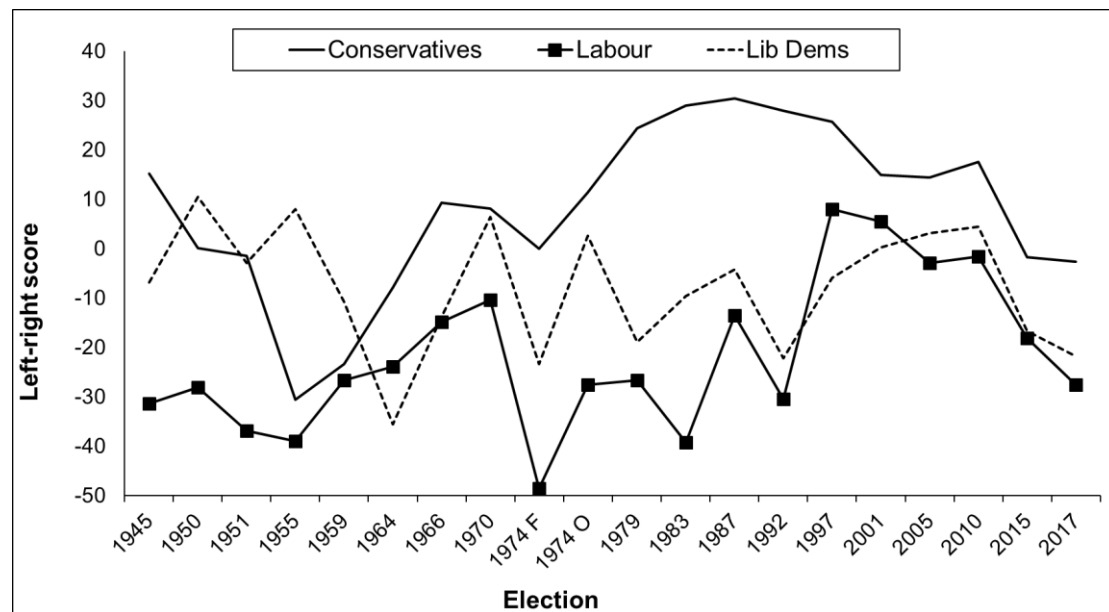


Figure 3 extends the analysis further back in time by looking at how the 2017 ideological positions of the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats—the parties for which there are Manifesto Project data going back to 1945—compare with their positions in all post-war elections. As can be seen, the Conservatives' leftwards move between 2015 and 2017 was not as pronounced as that between 2010 and 2015, but their manifesto was the most left-wing since 1964. Perhaps surprisingly, Labour's leftwards move under Corbyn between 2015 and 2017 was less than a similar move under Miliband between 2010 and 2015, but it left the party with pretty much the same score as in 1992. That election, of course, was the last before Tony Blair became leader. In left-right terms, the 2017 manifesto arguably signalled the final abandonment of New Labour.

**Figure 3: Right-left movement, 1945–2017**

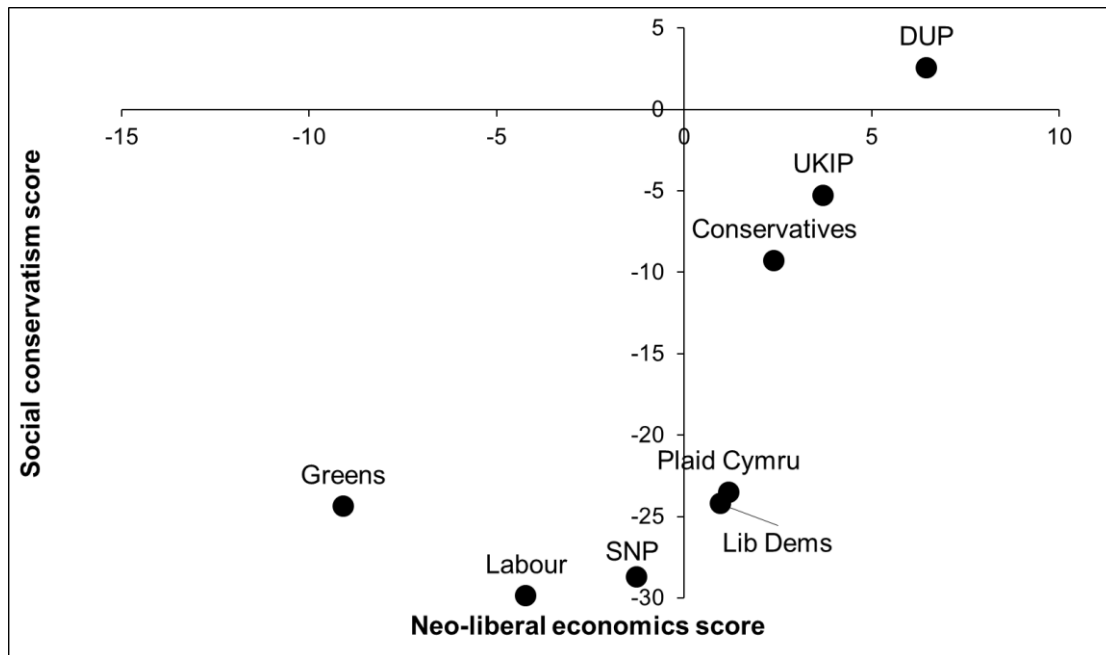
The Liberal Democrats also continued their leftwards track since the 2010 election. They were again located between two major parties, but they remained noticeably closer to Labour than the Conservatives. From this perspective, and others, it was entirely understandable why the party did not wish to enter into any kind of post-election deal with a minority Conservative government. The party was still suffering from its participation in the 2010–2015 Coalition; but it was also tracking further away from the ‘Orange Book’ centrism that had characterised Nick Clegg’s leadership.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to showing the parties’ positions and movement on a single left-right scale, Manifesto Project data can also be used to unpack parties’ positions further by distinguishing between their economic and social positions. To this end, various policy categories can be aggregated to produce a single measure of how committed a given party is to the free market and neo-liberal economics; and a single measure of how socially liberal or conservative it is.<sup>11</sup> To interpret the resulting summative scales, a higher neo-liberal economics score means the party is more committed to the free market, and a lower score means it is more statist. Similarly, a

higher social conservatism score means that a party is more committed to traditional social values and authority, whereas a lower score means it is committed to personal freedom in people's private lives.

Figure 4 maps the eight parties' positions on both these dimensions in 2017. It is immediately apparent that the parties' positions are generally arranged along a diagonal line, from bottom-left to top-right: more socially liberal parties are more statist, and more socially conservative parties are more committed to the free market. The left-right dimension, in other words, combines both these dimensions. Nevertheless, the different dimensions still allow us to take a more nuanced view of the parties. For example, the Greens' manifesto was more socially conservative than Labour's, but it was also much more statist in its economic approach. Meanwhile, only the DUP achieved the feat of having a positive score on both dimensions. If its 2017 manifesto was marked by a notable commitment to neo-liberal economics, it was marked even more by its commitment to socially conservative values. The position of the Conservatives suggests that, despite all its attempts to liberalise, it still has some way to go in terms of embracing mainstream modern Britain.

**Figure 4: Parties' neo-liberal economics and social-conservatism scores, 2017**



What Figure 4 does not show is how the parties moved on these two dimensions between 2015 and 2017. Surprisingly, there was no particularly statist turn away from neo-liberalism by Labour under Corbyn. Both the 2015 and 2017 manifestos scored -4.2 on this scale. Yet, there were signs that some ‘clear-red water’ had opened up between Labour and the Conservatives on economic policy, largely as a result of the latter’s movement towards a more neo-liberal position (from a score of -2.8 in 2015 to +2.4 in 2017). Indeed, the difference between the two largest parties’ neo-liberal economics scores in 2017 was 6.6, which was the largest it had been since 1992 (when it was 14.0). Conversely, both major parties became markedly more liberal on social issues in 2017, the Conservatives scoring +1.1 in 2015 and -9.3 in 2017, and Labour -12.0 and -29.9. Labour’s shift was considerably greater, however, and its social-conservatism score was the lowest (and least conservative) in post-war history. Labour’s pronounced movement on this dimension thus helps to explain the party’s broader leftwards move on the single left-right scale.

## Discussion



The outcome of the 2017 general elections raised many questions, not only about the immediate prospects of Theresa May's minority government and Brexit, but also about the future of the party system.<sup>12</sup> Not the least of these was the possibility of a return to two-party politics and an electoral market once again structured around the Conservative-Labour electoral duopoly. There is still no sign of a third-party resurgence at time of writing, but it is by no means certain that this state of affairs will continue. The long-term factors that drove party fragmentation after 1970—especially partisan de-alignment, new issue cleavages and the creation of new electoral systems—have not gone away, and there is no reason to suppose that the party system will become as settled as it was in the early post-war period. At the very least, multi-party politics is likely to persist in Scotland and Wales because of devolution.

The outcome of the 2017 general election also raises questions about manifestos themselves, particularly when no party has an obvious mandate to implement its pledges. Governing parties usually claim the right to deliver on a manifesto when they have clearly 'won' an election. Since no party has secured a majority of the popular vote since 1931, governments have usually claimed a victory on the basis of winning a majority of seats in the House of Commons. Yet, the Conservatives were unable to make even this claim in 2017, and it is perhaps no surprise that talk of electoral mandates has temporarily slipped away. The mandate doctrine is a curious feature of British constitutional theory. It is a useful tool to demonstrate democratic linkage between programmatic parties and voters, especially in a system in which people vote directly for individual MPs, not parties. It is not something that stands up to scrutiny, however. The 2017 election is yet another blow to its credibility.

Our analysis of the content of manifestos conveniently sidesteps this thorny normative question. The failure of any party to secure an outright majority does not

affect the validity of the positions that parties took prior to an election, nor does it affect the analytical value of measuring those positions.

What the Manifesto Project data reveal is that the centre of gravity in Britain's party system undoubtedly moved leftwards between 2015 and 2017, just as it had between 2010 and 2015. Labour arguably marched in that direction; the Conservatives shuffled. But the end destination can be more important than the distance of travel. Labour's manifesto was their most left-wing since 1992, while the Conservatives' manifesto was their most left-wing since 1964. The two major parties' moves, together with those of the Liberal Democrats, Green and SNP, suggest an electoral offering that was much more left-wing than it has been some for a long time.

This development raises two obvious questions. The first is whether it will continue. Labour's unexpected performance in 2017 may well embolden the party to produce an even more left-wing programme for the next election. Corbyn's grip on the party was certainly strengthened, and it is now much more difficult for moderate voices to argue that only a return to New Labour centrism will suffice. Meanwhile, the reaction against austerity has seeming pulled the wider public mood to the left, and there are clear electoral incentives for the Conservatives to track Labour's movement, at least as far as internal dynamics allow.

The second question concerns the fate of the current Conservative government. In order to secure its position, Theresa May agreed a confidence-and-supply deal with the DUP, the party that shifted most to the right. As part of that deal, the DUP secured no less than £1.5 billion in transfers to Northern Ireland to support various infrastructure projects. Later the party came out strongly against suggestions by mainland politicians to impose more socially liberal measures on the region, such as relaxing abortion laws. The 2017 manifesto data has provided further evidence, if any were needed, that the two parties make uncomfortable ideological bed fellows.

Self-interest, not shared ideas, is the foundation on which their deal was built.

Conservative ministers will forget that at their peril.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> T. Quinn, 'Revolt on the left: Labour in opposition', in N. Allen and J. Bartle (eds) *None Past the Post: Britain at the Polls, 2017*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018, pp. 34-57.

<sup>2</sup> N. Allen, 'Gambling with the electorate: The Conservatives in government', in Allen and Bartle (eds) *None Past the Post*, pp. 1-33.

<sup>3</sup> A. Volkens, P. Lehmann, T. Matthieß, N. Merz, S. Regel and B. Weßels, The Manifesto Data Collection, Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR) Version 2018b pre-release. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung.

<sup>4</sup> J. Bara, 'A question of trust: implementing party manifestos', *Parliamentary Affairs* 58:3 (2005), 585-599.

<sup>5</sup> See P. Cowley and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2017*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 177-202.

<sup>6</sup> Quinn, 'Revolt on the left', p. 52

<sup>7</sup> I. Budge and D. Farlie, *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue Effects and Party Strategies in Twenty-Three Democracies*. London, Allen and Unwin, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> I. Budge, H.-D. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara and E. Tanenbaum, *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945–1998*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.181-184

<sup>9</sup> N. Allen and J. 'Public foreplay' or programmes for government? The content of the 2015 party manifestos', *Parliamentary Affairs* 70:1 (2017), 1-21.

<sup>10</sup> T. Quinn and B. Clements, 'The Liberal Democrats: Realignment in the centre', in N. Allen and J. Bartle (eds) *Britain at the Polls 2010*. London: Sage, 2011, pp. 63-88

<sup>11</sup> M. Laver and I. Budge (eds) (1992) *Party Policy and Government Coalitions*, London: Macmillan, p. 24. Our social conservatism scale omits the Manifesto Project category 'Government Effectiveness'.

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<sup>12</sup> R. Campbell, 'A coalition of chaos: where next?', in Allen and Bartle (eds) *None Past the Post*, pp. 190-211.