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*Le nouveau « Nasty Party » ? Le Parti travailliste et la question de la culture lors des élections de 2019*

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## Introduction

- 1 In 2002, after two terrible electoral defeats for the Tories and five years out of power, Theresa May declared:

Let's not kid ourselves. There's a way to go before we can return to government. There's a lot we need to do in this party of ours. Our base is too narrow and so, occasionally, are our sympathies. You know what some people call us - the nasty party.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Two decades later, the situation has dramatically changed. The Conservatives won the 2019 general election (GE) by a landslide and the “Nasty Party” label seems to better suit Labour. This paper posits that Labour’s political rout can be explained, in part, by its inability to grasp one of the new defining elements of British politics, namely, the question of culture. Culture is to be understood as “collective customs and achievements of a people, a particular form of collective intellectual development”.<sup>2</sup> James Davison Hunter defines culture as “a system of moral understanding” and values<sup>3</sup> which “order our experience, make sense of our lives [and] give us meaning”. They claim moral authority over a certain group of people who are therefore provided with a worldview and a “source of identity, purpose and togetherness”. A culture war, as we will see in the first part, is “the political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding” whose ultimate aim is the “domination of one cultural and moral ethos over all others”.<sup>4</sup>

- 3 So as to make sense of the 2019 historic defeat, we will adopt a two-fold approach. In the first part, we will see the cultural dimension of the 2019 GE. It seems that culture is now an important political lever that has reshaped Western politics. During the 2019 GE, culture influenced the way people voted as now so-called “Brexit identities” tend to prevail over traditional party allegiance.<sup>5</sup>
- 4 In the second part, we will see that Labour failed to grasp this new cultural reality as it refused to tackle the Brexit issue in order to focus on old-Left economic policies that further alienated its traditional supporters. On top of that, it seems that the party was plagued by structural problems, from an apparent lack of unity to an extremely unpopular leader.

## The Cultural dimension of the 2019 general election

### A new political trend in the West

- 5 Over the past few years, a new trend has emerged in Western politics: the rise of right-wing populist parties and the collapse of traditional left-wing parties. Professor Yascha Mounk explains that the slow death of social democracy comes from a paradigm shift whereby culture is now a key factor in explaining vote behaviour:
- In most developed democracies, social and cultural issues have, over the past decades, displaced economic ones as the principal political cleavage [...] It has made it far harder for the left to appeal to its traditional working-class constituency, weakening both social democratic and far-left parties.<sup>6</sup>
- 6 Cultural issues, such as immigration or national identities – of what it *means* to belong to a certain nation,<sup>7</sup> now tend to prevail over traditional issues, such as the economy. This is problematic for the left. When the economy was still the main concern for voters, in the 50s and 60s, the left was able to command a coalition of working-class and middle-class voters that Mounk describes as “the bohemian-proletarian coalition”<sup>8</sup> as both groups shared broadly similar economic views. This fragile alliance in the West has been shattered for two reasons: first, structural changes in the economy, in the 70s and 80s, which weakened the political weight of industrial workers<sup>9</sup> as the economy is now service-oriented. And second, as we saw, the premium put on social and cultural questions,<sup>10</sup> as it creates “*a much greater distance between low-wage workers and university graduates and makes it incomparably harder to strike a compromise when their views and interests diverge*”.<sup>11</sup>
- 7 In *National Populism*, Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin see neoliberal globalisation as the root cause of this cultural change. Rising inequality and immigration produced a feeling of relative deprivation that led to what they call the “four Ds”: distrust in elites; destruction of national culture; deprivation in the economic sphere, and dealignment in political identification and voting behaviour. Right-wing populism has thrived on this as it promises to defend national identities, to uphold stability, and to respect the will of the people, contrary to “*elitist liberal democrats who appear increasingly detached from the life experiences and outlooks of the average citizen*”.<sup>12</sup> This new trend is also present in the UK.

## From UKIP to Brexit

- 8 In the UK, this new political trend led to two interrelated elements which share similar causes: the meteoric rise of UKIP and Brexit. The sharp decline in support for the left and the rise of right-wing populism in the UK can be explained by the “left-behind” thesis. Matthew Goodwin defines the “left-behind” as “*older, less well educated, low skilled and white working-class voters*” who used to wield considerable political power but whose importance has faded over the past few decades, as they have been replaced by university-educated and white-collars professionals who are now central to Britain’s political and social debates.<sup>13</sup>
- 9 If this change started in the 60s, the 2008 crisis had a profound impact on the working class as it suffered greatly from austerity measures. Those “left-behind” groups, also called the “let down”,<sup>14</sup> are now:
- Social groups that are united by a general sense of insecurity, pessimism and marginalisation, who do not feel as though elites, whether in Brussels or Westminster, share their values, represent their interests and genuinely empathise with their intense angst about rapid change.<sup>15</sup>
- 10 So-called “post-material values”,<sup>16</sup> such as liberalism, the environment or human rights, now dominate British society and have replaced material concerns, such as economic security and social stability. In a sense, it is as if those groups no longer felt at home in today’s Britain. After 2009, UKIP adopted a new strategy and focused on those voters who felt abandoned by mainstream politics. Their populist agenda, built on the idea of “getting our country back” seems to have struck an emotional chord with the “left-behind” as they felt that they were finally being given a political voice.<sup>17</sup>
- 11 Cultural issues, such as immigration and national identity, are essential to them and seem to have recently reshaped British politics as a whole, as Eric Kaufmann suggests:
- The new [ethno-cultural] cleavage is overshadowing the old economic Left-Right divide. Small-c conservative working-class voters have migrated to the Conservative Party because of immigration and Brexit. On the other side, successful educated cosmopolitans opt for Labour or the Lib Dems.<sup>18</sup>
- 12 This rapid evolution had a tremendous impact on traditional parties. It was instrumental in David Cameron’s decision to hold a referendum on EU membership as it was feared that UKIP might divert voters and seduce Eurosceptic Conservative MPs.<sup>19</sup> On the left, the situation is more complex as it seems that UKIP’s surge actually caused more damage to Labour than it did to the Conservatives as it drained votes away from traditional Labour strongholds.<sup>20</sup> As we will see in the second part, this is mainly due to Labour’s modernization in the 90s. The rise of UKIP, along with growing Euroscepticism in the Conservative Party, was instrumental in the Brexit result.

## The Brexit culture war and the 2019 general election

- 13 The Brexit vote shares similarities with the meteoric rise of UKIP, in particular in its cultural dimension.<sup>21</sup> Brexit is inherently cultural. Mounk argues that “*Britain’s fight about Brexit is best understood as a civil war over the country’s culture*”.<sup>22</sup> It has brought to the fore what used to be an underlying force in British politics: identity politics. Catharine R. Stimpson defines this concept as follows:

Contemporary shorthand for a group's assertion that it is a meaningful group; that it differs significantly from other groups; that its members share a history of

injustice and grievance; and that its psychological and political mission is to explore, act out, act on and act up its group identity.<sup>23</sup>

- 14 Identity politics played a key role in 2019. We might argue that the cultural change that we have discussed is present today in the UK along the Brexit political divide. In other words, the cultural dimension of the 2019 GE lies in the fact that identity politics have prevailed over traditional politics as voters now tend to define their preferences in terms of their Brexit identities, rather than any party allegiance.<sup>24</sup>
- 15 This, however, is not totally new. Back in 2017, John Curtice and Ian Simpson had noticed that “*the 2017 election witnessed a marked change in the ideological basis of Conservative and Labour voting*” as the traditional left/ right divide was accompanied by sharp differences in the libertarian/ authoritarian lines which are directly linked to the positions voters held regarding Brexit.<sup>25</sup> The division along the Brexit vote increased in the following years<sup>26</sup> and resulted in the 2019 GE being polarized according to Brexit identities rather than party allegiance. A King’s College survey showed that in 2019 “*the British public’s Brexit identities are dramatically stronger than their political party identities*” and that this trend has increased since 2018.<sup>27</sup> It seems that British voters now define themselves as either Leavers or Remainers and tend to regard the other side with suspicion, even hatred.<sup>28</sup> Some scholars fear that this tension might escalate in what they call a “British culture war”<sup>29</sup> or even a “cultural revolution”.<sup>30</sup>
- 16 It also seems that, in 2019, the Conservatives understood this new political reality as they focused on cultural issues, such as the upholding of the NHS, with the promise to build 40 new hospitals, to hire 50,000 new nurses and to invest billions of pounds of extra funding. Crime and security concerns were also high on Johnson’s agenda with an additional 20,000 police officers and tougher regulations regarding immigration. But the main objective was obviously to turn the 2019 vote into a Brexit election. This is what Johnson’s campaign team did, as one official recalls:
- It was Brexit, Brexit, Brexit, that focus was drilled into us [...] Boris had to be seen to do everything to get Brexit through. When the October 31 cliff-edge arrived, it had to be very clear to voters that he had done everything humanly possible, almost bar going to prison, to get us out of the EU.<sup>31</sup>
- 17 So, it is in this general cultural context that the 2019 GE was fought, and it appears that Labour, willingly or not, failed to grasp this new challenge.

## Labour’s cultural conundrum

### Recent evolution of Labour’s electoral strategy

- 18 Cultural issues had never really been a problem for Labour as long as the economy trumped all other concerns for its traditional voters.<sup>32</sup> As mentioned above, the party had always relied on a cross-class coalition that was built on the idea that “*blue collar workers and the progressive minded sections of the middle class could cooperate on the same broad political project*”.<sup>33</sup> This fragile alliance started to crumble after the 1992 electoral defeat. As Labour modernized, party analysts believed that the best way to secure a majority was to appeal to Southern voters, who tend to be more affluent than their Northern counterparts. This strategy was vindicated by the 1997 and 2001 victories but came at a price: the growing alienation of Northern and working-class voters. This centre of the road approach was overhauled once again following the 2015 defeat as it

was believed that a clearer delineation between the Conservatives and Labour was needed: as Labour offered no real alternative, voters either opted for the status quo or chose a more radical option, such as UKIP or the Green Party. To remedy this problem, under Jeremy Corbyn, the party tried to:

Set out a radical alternative capable of positioning Labour to the left of the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, regaining the support of those who felt alienated from mainstream politics and voted UKIP and enthusing those, particularly the young, who had effectively dropped out of mainstream party politics.<sup>34</sup>

- 19 Simultaneously, Labour also needed to keep its middle-class support, in particular because the recent surge in Labour supporters was mainly composed of young, middle-class adults.<sup>35</sup> Because a cultural divide had been growing between the two classes, Labour tried to “*combine social liberalism with a strongly radical, redistributive economic programme aimed, at least in part, at shoring up its post-industrial, working-class base*”.<sup>36</sup> If this radical approach looked promising in 2017, we can argue that in 2019 this strategy alienated both sides of Labour’s historical coalition of supporters, with the loss of the so-called “red wall”<sup>37</sup> and waning support among middle class voters. Keeping in mind the cultural dimension of the 2019 GE, we will analyse the strategy put in place by Labour and focus on two elements: the absence of a clear Brexit stance and the impact of the economic policies. On top of that, we will see that an inadequate strategy was undermined by structural problems which made it very difficult for Labour to retain its appeal among its traditional voters.

## The 2019 campaign

- 20 A general overview of the 2019 campaign will help us understand how Labour’s failure to grasp the new cultural reality alienated both sides of its traditional supporters. It seems that Labour’s partial success online even led to further division between the working class and the middle class. Labour’s policies, in particular concerning Brexit and the economy, did nothing to bridge what is now an important cultural gap between the two.

### Overall approach

- 21 In many ways, the 2019 GE strategy was quite similar to the previous one, in 2017. Labour lost, but they had reasons to be hopeful.<sup>38</sup> The unexpectedly positive results of 2017<sup>39</sup> encouraged Labour to enter the 2019 race with confidence. Besides, if Boris Johnson needed an outright majority to finally draw a line under the Brexit debate that had divided the Tories for three years, Jeremy Corbyn could be satisfied with a hung parliament and a potential alliance with the SNP,<sup>40</sup> or even the Liberal Democrats.<sup>41</sup> If the 2019 strategy seemed to be very similar to the previous one, the rhetoric was more aggressive. BBC News political correspondent, Iain Watson, even claimed that there was “an insurrectionary” tone to the Labour campaign.<sup>42</sup>
- 22 Some of the key actors from 2017 were present as the campaign team was headed by a group of Corbyn loyalists: former chief of staff, Karie Murphy, was promoted to election campaign chief and was now in charge of running the election; the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell chaired the daily strategic conference calls; Seumas Milne, as Corbyn’s senior advisor and most-trusted confidante, was in charge of strategy and communication; and finally, Andrew Fisher, as head of policy, oversaw the manifesto.<sup>43</sup>

The official slogan was “It’s time for real change” and the strategy was to adopt a radical approach so as to go beyond the Brexit issue, in a move reminiscent of what Labour had done in 2017.<sup>44</sup> In 2019, Labour wanted to double down on this radical approach and focus on better working conditions, fairer taxes, and more investment in public services.

- 23 The initial phase of the campaign seemed to vindicate the claim that Labour had failed to grasp the cultural dimension of the election, in particular for the working class: it took its heartlands, that is, the Midlands and the North, the so-called “red wall”, for granted, and at first prioritized new targets in Conservative-held constituencies. In the early days of the campaign, senior officials even said that 80% of Labour’s resources would be deployed to new seats.<sup>45</sup> Brexit was somewhat sidelined as it was believed that voters would put their personal interests, such as wages and living conditions, first. Labour’s radical policies would transcend the Brexit cleavage and would then be appealing to both Remainers and Leavers. Contrary to Johnson’s *ad nauseam* emphasis on getting Brexit done, Labour tried to adopt a wider approach whereby Brexit would not be an end in itself, hoping to show that the election was about more than just Brexit. However, in doing so, Labour willingly ignored what British voters’ main concern was.<sup>46</sup>
- 24 Because of poor results in the polls, this offensive strategy was overhauled two weeks before the election.<sup>47</sup> The cultural dimension of the election seemed to have taken its toll. Labour adopted a more defensive approach and now focused on pro-Leave constituencies. The new objective was to demonstrate that Labour’s Brexit stance was not against Brexit but in favour of a better deal. Labour meant to appeal to Brexit voters and to those who felt alienated from Labour. The party focused more strongly on cultural issues, such as the defence of the NHS, the promotion of an important program of nationalisation or an increase in police numbers. The emphasis – and the resources – would then be put on pro-Leave constituencies, even if the move risked alienating the pro-EU majority of Labour’s supporters.<sup>48</sup> It seems that Labour’s partial recognition of the cultural dimension of the election occurred a little too late and failed to offer a strong alternative to the Conservatives’ populist agenda. Before we move on to analyse Labour’s Brexit strategy, we will see how the digital campaign appears to be a case in point in the lost battle to win over working-class voters.

### Digital delusion

- 25 Many pundits claimed that Labour outperformed the Tories on social media.<sup>49</sup> However, social media tend to appeal to younger and, on average, ABC1, that is, more affluent voters.<sup>50</sup> It seems then that when Labour did well online, it further alienated its poorer, traditional voters. The Conservatives, on the other hand, decided to focus on Facebook, which is now increasingly attracting older people, and adopted a radically different approach. They hired two young New Zealanders, Sean Topham and Ben Guerin, who resorted to “shitposting”, that is, “*the act of throwing out huge amounts of content, most of it ironic, low-quality trolling, for the purpose of provoking an emotional reaction in less Internet-savvy viewers*”.<sup>51</sup> They flooded social media with what they call “boomer memes”, that can be described as “*hastily executed and comically dubious pairings of image and text pitched to older voters – is considered more effective than publishing considered analyses of policy*”. Guerin explained: “*You can have a quote from an economist. Or you can have a picture of a dog next to it saying ‘tax is bad’. Guess which one had more engagement*”.<sup>52</sup> The Conservative

campaign online targeted older, working-class voters who do not feel very comfortable with new technology. The Labour digital campaign, on the other hand, seems to have reinforced the working-class prejudices that Labour was no longer their traditional party. This dichotomy would also be present in the policies they put forward, in particular concerning Brexit and the economy.

### The Brexit uncertainty

- 26 It seems reasonable to say that Brexit was the most important cultural issue in the 2019 election. It was actually the most important issue in general, as polls suggest.<sup>53</sup> Yet, as far as Labour was concerned, Brexit remained the elephant in the room for the best part of the campaign. Labour tried to focus on anything *but* Brexit.<sup>54</sup> A leaked document even revealed that, initially, only two of the 27 campaigning days would be devoted to Brexit.<sup>55</sup> The Brexit plan was to renegotiate a better deal with the EU within three months and put it to the people in the following three months. Labour said that the party’s position on such a second referendum would be discussed after the election and Corbyn finally admitted that he would remain neutral.<sup>56</sup>
- 27 This singular approach can nonetheless be explained, as Brexit has been an inherent problem<sup>57</sup> for Labour since the beginning. The Brexit uncertainty had pervaded the whole of the Labour machine. From a bottom-up perspective, it was difficult for Labour to know where to stand. Two-thirds of its voters had backed Remain in 2016 and one third Leave. Worse, in 2017, Labour held both the 25 most Eurosceptic constituencies in Britain and the 25 most pro-EU.<sup>58</sup>
- 28 The Brexit conundrum was not limited to Labour’s supporters. It also revealed deep structural problems at every level of the Labour organisation. First, Brexit reinforced the left-right division within the party. Ever since the attempt to remove Corbyn from office by Labour MPs in 2016, the left wing of Labour tried to centralize power in the leader’s office and root out the (parliamentarian) opposition. This move, led by the Milne-Murphy axis,<sup>59</sup> was directly opposed by the right of the party,<sup>60</sup> pro-EU and generally hostile to Corbyn.<sup>61</sup> Quite ironically, if Labour refused to fight the culture war during the 2019 election, it was itself at war with its own identity. It seems that Brexit fuelled this civil war between the right and the left for the very soul of the party. According to Oxford Professor Ben Jackson, this feud was about:
- Which faction is the legitimate legatee of the battered, but still attractive, Labour tradition? Since this disagreement is existential—about which side is authentically Labour—it is also a bitter and intractable one.<sup>62</sup>
- 29 This tension – and mutual distrust – was materialized geographically in 2017: Corbyn loyalists tended to work at the leader’s office in Westminster (also known as “loto” for “leader of the opposition’s office”) while Labour MPs worked in “Southside”, which is Labour HQ on Victoria Street and that Corbyn’s core team see as “a bastion of anti-Corbyn resistance”.<sup>63</sup> This internal division was also present in 2019 inside the campaign team as John McDonnell and Andrew Fisher favoured a second EU referendum when Karie Murphy and Seumas Milne thought it would put off voters in leave-supporting seats.<sup>64</sup>
- 30 If Brexit was a moot point for Labour’s grassroots and a divisive factor within the party, it was also a personal problem for Jeremy Corbyn. His Brexit stance, among other cultural issues, was actually to deliver the *coup de grâce* to his leadership in 2019. A

lifelong Eurosceptic, he had to back Remain during the 2016 referendum to please his pro-EU supporters, but did so unenthusiastically. His ambiguous Brexit stance had reinforced his unpopularity since 2016, but it was not the only reason. As a matter of fact, Corbyn entered the 2019 race as the most unpopular opposition leader in 45 years, according to Ipsos Mori.<sup>65</sup> Among other things, some older voters resented his support for the Irish Republican movement, while many in the working class felt betrayed by his Brexit stance. Many of Labour’s traditional supporters, in particular in the middle-class, were repelled by accusations of anti-Semitism. A BBC Panorama program called “Is Labour Anti-Semitic” and remarks by UK Chief Rabbi that anti-Semitism had taken root in the Labour Party reinforced the idea that Labour was not doing enough to tackle the problem. Corbyn even refused to apologize for his party’s handling of anti-Semitism during a BBC interview. Almost simultaneously, Boris Johnson made the most of this cultural issue by apologizing for Tory islamophobia and for remarks he had made about Muslim women.

- 31 It seems fair to assume that Labour’s Brexit strategy, or the absence of any clear Brexit plan, went a long way toward explaining the rejection of the working class. Arguably, Labour failed to provide the working class with a sense of identity, as it refused to acknowledge the Brexit problem. This was also detrimental to the middle-class vote, as those voters defected to more progressive parties, such as the Liberal Democrats or the Greens, which were anti-Brexit parties. Brexit was indeed a big problem for Labour. As the Conservatives targeted Leave voters and managed to secure the vote of 74% of those who voted out in 2016, Labour’s uncertainty meant that they only managed to secure the support of 49% of Remain voters while alienating almost 30% of their 2017 voters.<sup>66</sup> Instead of focusing on cultural issues, Labour decided to adopt a radical set of economic policies. Here again, it seems that this approach estranged both sides of its traditional supporters.

### The economic policies

- 32 Concerning the economy, Labour adopted a radical approach, as in 2017. Instead of focusing on cultural issues, Labour promised to “unleash a record investment blitz”.<sup>67</sup> They would invest billions in social services, raise minimum wage, make transport more accessible, abolish universal credit and nationalise key industries, in a bid to transform the country.<sup>68</sup> Only the richest 5% of taxpayers would have to bear the burden. Given that the Tories were described as arch capitalists, the more they attacked the manifesto, the better, as it proved that Labour was on the side of the many, not the few.<sup>69</sup> Most economic policies were actually quite popular with the public,<sup>70</sup> but failed to convince as many voters as in 2017. Mounk explains that if this far-left approach somewhat worked in 2017, its meteoric success quickly passed, not only in Britain:

Its short-lived success was largely owed to negative space. As social democratic parties declined, voters went in search for some—for any—kind of left alternative. Because of the longstanding ideological dominance of the center left, the only people who could offer this alternative were orthodox leftists whose political outlook had been formed in the 1960s and 70s, like Corbyn and Mélenchon, or new populists who forged their political identity in countercultural street protests following the 2008 financial crisis, like Iglesias.<sup>71</sup>

- 33 Novelty made them popular but eventually, they failed to pass the test of time. In the case of Jeremy Corbyn, this failure, as we saw, can be imputable, in part, to Labour’s

inability to grasp the new cultural reality. The main criticism levelled at Labour concerning their manifesto was that it was extremely confusing: too many proposals, too little coherence, quite unrealistic.<sup>72</sup> Working-class voters, who had not yet recovered from the 2008 crisis and the ensuing austerity years, feared that all those economic measures might increase the national debt.<sup>73</sup> Besides, some proposals, such as free broadband, were seen as unnecessary luxuries. It seems therefore that once again Labour did not grasp the cultural reality of the working class: buying them off would not provide them with the sense of identity they searched, in particular if those economic measures reinforced their financial misery. As far as the middle class was concerned, the promise to carry out a green revolution was popular but the question “who would pay for that” remained a sticking point. The question of money is indeed important for this segment of the population that some researchers call “the squeezed middle” and which has seen the cost of life rise while wages remained low.<sup>74</sup> It seems therefore that Labour decided to continue with an economic approach instead of a cultural one, but as we saw, 2019 was the cultural election. Labour failed to see this political shift.

## Conclusion

- 34 This article aimed to analyse Labour’s 2019 GE fiasco through a cultural perspective. We can conclude that the 2019 defeat illustrates three things. First, it would be unfair to call Labour the new Nasty Party, because, to their credit, they refused to abide by the new populist agenda set by the Tories. However, it seems that just like the Conservatives at the turn of the millennium, they need to carry out some serious soul searching if they ever want to get back into power. Second, Labour clearly failed to grasp the new cultural reality of British politics. This is a mistake that the Tories did not make as they primarily focused on cultural issues and framed their campaign strategy around the idea of “Get[ing] Brexit Done”. And third, this failure shows recurrent – and long-standing – problems within the party, such as unconvincing political strategies, unrealistic policies, and the absence of a unifying leader at the helm. The 2019 defeat, therefore, epitomizes more than a decade in the wilderness.

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## ABSTRACTS

When Theresa May claimed that the Conservative Party was dubbed the "Nasty Party" in October 2002, few were those who could have contradicted her. It had suffered a second landslide defeat and its image and reputation had been damaged by the violence of the Thatcher years and tainted by accusations of racism. Seventeen years later, after Corbyn's historic defeat in the 2019 general election, it seems that the tables have turned. Labour's failure to bring its social(ist) message home during the so-called "once in a lifetime" election might be the climax of a decade in the wilderness. In this paper, we posit that Labour's defeat can, in part, be explained by its incapacity to deal with one new defining element of British politics, the issue of culture. Labour willingly ignored the cultural dimension of the 2019 general election and instead, decided to focus on traditional economic policies that further alienated its traditional supporters. The first part will be devoted to the importance of culture in the 2019 general election and focus on a recent paradigm shift whereby culture is now essential in Western politics. The second part will deal with Labour's cultural conundrum, that is, their inability to acknowledge the new cultural reality.

Lorsque Theresa May affirma que le Parti conservateur était surnommé le "Nasty Party" en octobre 2002, rares étaient ceux qui auraient pu la contredire. Il venait de subir une deuxième défaite écrasante, et son image et sa réputation avaient été endommagées par la violence des années Thatcher et entachées par des accusations de racisme. Dix-sept ans plus tard, après la défaite historique de Jeremy Corbyn aux élections générales de 2019, il semble que les rôles se soient inversés. L'incapacité des Travailleurs à faire passer leur message social(iste) semble être le point culminant d'une décennie dans le désert. Dans cet article, nous avançons que la défaite des Travailleurs s'explique, en partie, par leur inaptitude à faire face à un nouvel élément essentiel de la politique britannique, la question culturelle. Les Travailleurs l'ont volontairement ignorée en 2019 et ont décidé de se concentrer sur des politiques économiques classiques qui ont encore plus aliéné leurs partisans traditionnels. La première partie sera consacrée à l'importance de la culture dans l'élection générale de 2019. La deuxième partie traitera du problème culturel des Travailleurs, à savoir de leur incapacité à reconnaître cette nouvelle réalité politique.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** culture, Parti travailliste, Corbyn, Brexit, élections législatives britanniques de 2019

**Keywords:** culture, Labour, Corbyn, Brexit, 2019 general election

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