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FORWARD THINKING

The space between leave and remain: archetypal positions of British parliamentarians on Brexit

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Abstract

Brexit has caused a chasmic divide in the UK. Voters and Parliament are divided, as are the UK's major political parties. Such divisions may not be so surprising, however, given that Brexit crosses traditional party lines. Preferences to leave or remain do not fit neatly onto the traditional Left/Right dimension. Instead, the idea that European integration constitutes a new dimension in party competition has been gaining ground. This article creates a typology of Brexit 'clusters' through a discourse analysis of Conservative and Labour MPs, building an intricate picture of the archetypal positions of parliamentarians during the cacophonous Brexit period. Six clusters of MPs are found, crossing party lines and indicating that a Europe-related dimension is taking hold in British politics. Proposals for future research using the typology are also put forward.

Keywords Brexit · Parliament · Party competition · Voting dimensions

Introduction

On 23 June 2016, 51.9 percent of people in the UK voted to leave the European Union (EU) (Electoral Commission 2016). Since that historic day, a host of vitally important issues have come to the fore, with the potential to shape the UK's future relations with the EU and the day-to-day lives of people living in Britain and across Europe. From the minute details of specific customs arrangements, to the discussion of 'Brexit unicorns' (the mythical, simplistic promises that the leave campaign was accused of creating), debate and negotiation between the UK and the EU spanned more than four years. Even with the Brexit deal sealed, such discussions are bound to continue to surface as the UK gets used to life outside of the EU.

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Brexit has caused a chasmic divide in the UK. Just days before the UK officially left the EU, polling showed that public opinion was just as split as it was in 2016, albeit with 'remain' coming out on top (YouGov 2020). The parties themselves are "deeply internally divided" (Hobolt 2018, p. 1). Brexit has been so straining on the two major UK parties that multiple MPs from across the House defected to establish an alternative party, Change UK (BBC News 2019), and, in January 2019, the Conservative Government suffered the greatest defeat in House of Commons history, due to a huge rebellion from the party's own backbenchers (Aidt et al. 2019). Parliament is unavoidably divided, exemplified by the two General Elections following the Brexit referendum, in 2017 and 2019, and the 2019 vote of confidence in Theresa May's government, all attempting to bring an end to the Brexit deadlock. Such division may not be so surprising, however, given that Brexit crosses traditional party lines (Hobolt 2018, p. 5). Preferences to leave or remain in the EU do not fit neatly onto the traditional Left/Right economic dimension. Instead, the idea that European integration constitutes a new dimension in party competition has been gaining ground (see, for example, Costello et al. 2012; Dolný and Baboš 2015; Clarke et al. 2017; Hobolt 2018).

If Brexit is one of the greatest political challenges the UK has faced since the second World War, then we need to know what was going on in Parliament at the time. This article contributes to the already wide-reaching literature on Brexit by digging deeper than quantitative research has done so far. The use of Political Discourse Analysis allows for a complex picture of MP positions to be built, filling in the gaps between the two poles of the pro-/anti-integration cleavage—something that would not be possible using quantitative means, such as roll call analysis.

The main purpose of this article is to build a typology of Brexit positions, to make sense of the cacophonous Brexit period in Parliament in a way that is yet to be done. A great deal of interesting research has been carried out into the pro-/anti-integration cleavage. The typology developed here brings nuance to this seemingly binary cleavage, helping us to understand what it means to lie between the two poles. Given the complexity of Brexit, it is insufficient to consider parliamentarians in a binary way and this more complex take helps us to understand why the Government—or any other group in Parliament—struggled to build a majority for any particular type of Brexit, until the eleventh hour. This is highlighted, for example, by the indicative votes for different Brexit options in March 2019, none of which reached anywhere near a majority. Whilst Parliament was remain-leaning [around 75% of MPs voted to remain (Politics Home 2016)], in the end, the Brexit deal was passed. This typology brings to light an in depth picture of MPs' thoughts and feelings about the Brexit process during that chaotic period, how the resulting deal—so different to the Parliament's initial leanings—was possible, and how a majority based on that initial remain-voting majority never came together.

To this end, this article puts forward a new typology of Brexit 'clusters', answering the research question*: What were the archetypal positions of Labour and Conservative MPs on the issue of Brexit as the UK prepared to leave the EU?* The focus of this project is on the two major parties of Government; the Conservatives and Labour. The structure is as follows. A literature review first considers the impact of Brexit on factionalism, partisanship and party competition in Britain, bringing

context to an analysis of the Brexit-time Parliament. Whilst a nascent literature focuses on various different aspects of Brexit itself, the issues faced are not entirely alien to British politics, hence the rooting of the project across different conceptual bases. The research design follows, outlining the method, Political Discourse Analysis, and the value it brings to projects such as this, along with the sampling and data collection techniques, and the timeframe for analysis (23 June 2016 to 31 May 2019). The Brexit clusters are then presented, based on a random sample of 75 MPs from across the party and Brexit divides. Six clusters are found to exist: three on the remain side, two on the leave side and one cluster crossing the Brexit divide. Through discourse analysis, it is found that these clusters of MPs cross party lines, adding to the growing evidence that a new Europe-related dimension is taking hold in Britain. The subsequent section reflects on the cross-cutting nature of these clusters. Ultimately, the increasing salience of a new dimension has the potential to reshape party competition as we know it. However, only time will tell as to whether we return to business as usual as the transition period ends and Brexit moves away from the front and centre of political life. Further systematic analysis is proposed to understand the long-term effects of these Brexit-time clusters on party competition in Britain.

Factionalism, party discipline and party competition in the age of Brexit

Despite the complexity of Europe as an issue for political parties, it is "coherent, not chaotic [and] connected to domestic political conflict, not sui generis" (Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 2). In other words, whilst the Brexit process has created a number of obstacles for British politics, they are not completely unfamiliar. Therefore, this paper is rooted in the literature on the two main parties' relationships with Europe, factionalism and party competition.

The divisive nature of EU politics for the Conservatives is not unexpected given that it goes "to the heart of Conservative identity and statecraft" (Lynch and Whitaker 2013, p. 318). The Conservative Party leadership has long been faced with clashes over Europe within the party. After Heath's reliance on Labour rebels before the UK's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) (Smith 2012, p. 1279), Thatcher's conversion to Euroscepticism (Heppell et al. 2017, p. 765; Smith 2012, p. 1281; Childs 2010, p. 265) and the Major rebellions over the Maastricht Treaty (Berrington and Hague 1998: 44; Geddes 2013, p. 74; Bale 2016, p. 41), Euroscepticism amongst Conservative MPs rose from the early 1990s (Heppell et al. 2017, p. 766). Infamously, Britain's EU membership became an unavoidable topic for Prime Minister David Cameron (Bale 2016, p. 265), leading him to call the EU referendum which ended his and his successor, Theresa May's, premierships. The Euroscepticism of the party elites is mirrored at the grassroots where research suggests that 69% of Conservative party members voted to leave the EU, leaving roughly 30% as Remainers (Poletti 2017).

The Labour Party's relationship with the issue of Europe has, arguably, been just as fraught (Forster 2002, p. 1). Initially Eurosceptic, the left of the party, fronted

by Tony Benn, opposed entry to the EEC (Hill 2004, p. 219; Wickham-Jones 2004, p. 34). In the party manifesto of 1983, he and Michael Foot then committed Labour to the UK's withdrawal from the EEC in 1983 (Labour Party 1983). By the late 1980s, however, the party had switched to a more pro-European stance (Dimitrakopoulos 2016), then strengthened by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown in the late 1990s and 2000s (Crowson 2010, p. 130). Divisions continue to exist, however, notably during Jeremy Corbyn's time as leader. Corbyn's Eurosceptic reputation as "Benn's protégé" (New Statesman 2018) raised some concern about the party's pro-European views (Dimitrakopoulos 2016). This view was no doubt at odds with the overtly pro-European grassroots (Bale et al. 2018, p. 19) and Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) (Cowley and Wager 2018). With Keir Starmer, a 'vocal Remainer' (Marley and Hutton 2020), now Labour leader, views in the Party appear mostly to have re-converged. Of course, the pluralism in each party on the issue of Europe cannot be ignored; left-wing Euroscepticism still exists and Europhiles have a presence in the Tory Party, too, especially in Parliament.

Research into factionalism is very relevant to Brexit, given the lack of unity in Parliament throughout the negotiation process, highlighted by events like the March 2019 indicative votes (Institute for Government 2019). Up until December 2019, the existence of a minority Government meant that cross-party negotiation would have been necessary to get any Brexit deal approved; during Theresa May's premiership, "even if the Prime Minister could [have relied] on her own troops, her majority would not [have been] assured" (Russell 2019, p. 20). Only the majority formed after the 2019 Brexit General Election overcame this need for cross-party support.

European Integration itself is said to have been the cause of the factionalisation of many political parties across Europe in the past (Boucek 2009, p. 474), the issue tending to bubble up around referenda as politicians establish groups on both sides of the campaign. 'Competitive factionalism' arises when vital issues, like a member state's relationship with Europe, cross traditional party lines and cannot be integrated with the party ideology. Competitive factions are "opposed rather than simply separate" (Boucek 2009, p. 479) and "too much fragmentation complicates decision-making and the enactment of coherent policy packages" (Boucek 2009, p. 473). This resonates with the numerous (unsuccessful) votes on the various Brexit Deals put to MPs between the June 2016 referendum and January 2020. Boucek argues that the political climate during Major's premiership, as the Maastricht Treaty 'Social Chapter' was debated, is defined by competitive factionalism. Given the discordant nature of Parliament during the Brexit negotiations, this period could be labelled similarly.

Additional Brexit-specific features may have fed factionalisation as time passed and fresh issues, including specific customs arrangements and the Irish backstop, drove new wedges between groups of MPs. As parliamentarians voted against the party line, others felt emboldened to rebel (Bevington and Wager 2019, p. 11), and as decision-making in the Commons remained uncoordinated (Russell 2019, p. 21), levels of unity fell.

Research into the effects of new cleavages on traditional party competition is gaining ground and is highly relevant to the Brexit-time Parliament (Clarke et al. 2017; Hobolt 2018). The European integration dimension flows from pro- to anti-integration positions, cutting across the traditional Left/ Right dimension of party

competition (Costello et al. 2012, p. 1231). If European integration is a 'sleeping giant' (van der Eijk and Franklin 2004), where "contestation is most visible around EU-related referendums" (Parsons and Weber 2011, p. 386), Brexit has been an opportunity for new dimensions to gain in salience, further disrupting the traditional Left/Right base of party competition.

The growing importance of new cleavages has been explained in different ways. Party strategy is seen as the key driver by Sitter (2001), whereas Hooghe and Marks suggest that the change has occurred not as a result of "mainstream parties [shifting] in response to voter preferences but because voters have turned to parties with distinctive profiles on the new cleavage" (2018, p. 126). A range of other factors including voters' "economic- and immigration-focused benefit–cost calculations… risk assessments, emotional reactions to the EU and leader image cues" (Clarke et al. 2017, p. 461) have also been found to be relevant. Whatever is spurring on this new cleavage, or whether the primary battleground of party competition has fully shifted from the traditional economic dimension to a European integration focus (Kriesi 2007), it is clear that "Britain is more divided than ever" (Goodwin and Heath 2016, p. 331) and this has the potential to dramatically reshape the traditional bases of party competition. The largely statistical research conducted in this area has given us a general idea of the cleavages that exist and the poles at either end. What we have less of an idea of, however, are the positions that exist in between those extremes. Filling in these gaps using qualitative research adds nuance to what we know, information that would be lost in statistical work where the complex and multi-faceted picture of political attitudes may be reduced to numbers on a scale.

Analysing MPs' discourse

To develop a typology of Brexit clusters, this study uses a random sample of Conservative and Labour MPs (including those who defected to establish Change UK) and Political Discourse Analysis (PDA). The timeframe is 23 June 2016 to 31 May 2019, meaning research could take into account the new issues that arose throughout the negotiation period and how they fit into broader discourses. The terms 'cluster', 'group' and 'grouping' are used interchangeably, to mean *a group of MPs who converge in terms of the issues they most often mention, or consider most important, during discussions of Brexit*, rather than a term such as 'faction'. Factions are said to persist through time and differ from the "ad hoc combinations of politicians in agreement upon on particular issues" (Rose 1964, cited by Boucek 2009, p. 463). If this typology of archetypal positions was found to be consistent in subsequent research, it would justify the use of the term. For now, in the initial stages of concept development, the terms outlined above are considered more appropriate.

Whilst there exist "many versions of discourse analysis" (Fairclough 2003, p. 2), this project is innately political, making PDA most appropriate. Analysis here involves (the ultimate) political actors, parliamentarians, in the most political context, Parliament. The latter aspect is vital to PDA and the "institutional dimension is obvious in the case of such political contexts as Parliament" (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, p. 18). PDA contributes "to answering genuine political questions…

if…it focuses on features of discourse which are *relevant* to the…event whose discursive dimension is being analysed" (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, p. 18). The timeframe for analysis and the specific discourse analysed were, therefore, chosen based on their relevance to the Brexit process.

PDA facilitates analysis of "political discourse from a critical perspective, a perspective which focuses on the reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse" (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, p. 17). It allows the researcher to develop an intricate picture of how language is used and the meaning behind the plain words printed in Hansard reports, the source of data in this research. This was vital given that dissent can be expressed in many different ways (Kam 2009, p. 39; Lynch and Whitaker 2013, p. 318), outside of voting against the party or government line. Dissenting MPs "may form groups within or beyond the party to promote alternative policies…[or] defect to another party" (Lynch and Whitaker 2013, p. 318), as seen in the formation of Change UK. Given that not all MPs who opposed the government line had rebelled at the point of voting, and that 'membership' of factions is not necessarily made publicly clear, PDA is a useful tool to bring to light real levels of dissent and groups that exist.

The sampling process began with the full population of Labour and Conservative MPs elected at the 2015 General Election (Politics Home 2016), split into two separate lists by party (330 Conservative; 232 Labour). Research was limited to MPs from Britain's two main parties of Government at the time of the referendum: the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. Whilst smaller parties have been rising in relevance, these two parties matter most. MPs who later defected to Change UK were included in the sample as the defections took place during the period of analysis. Given that this group defected from their original party affiliations over Brexit (Stewart 2019; BBC News 2019) and Brexit remained a key theme of Change UK's rhetoric (Change UK 2019), they were still considered relevant. Party leaders were not included in the analysis, but Government ministers were, due to the changing make-up of Government since the EU referendum. The variation between discourse as Minister and as backbencher was considered an interesting area of investigation, to see in practice how backbenchers who enter the Government may toe or shape the party line.

Following a pilot study which used critical-case sampling, a form of purposive sampling, to collect data from a pool of 15 "information-rich cases" (Etikan et al. 2016, p. 2), data was collected and analysed in groups of 15 MPs, until a set of themes consistently emerged. Eight Conservatives and seven Labour MPs were chosen using a random number calculator to make up each group of 15, to account for the greater number of Conservatives elected in 2015. This process resulted in a total sample of 75 MPs, which equates to around 13% of the total population. As Table 1 shows, this study's sample is generally in line with the full population, in terms of referendum stance and party. Almost three quarters of the sample are made of Remainers, meaning far fewer leave-voting MPs were included, in line with the total population of Labour and Conservative MPs elected in 2015.

The search tool on the Hansard website (Hansard 2020) was used to find the parliamentary speeches in which each MP mentioned the term "Brexit", between 23 June 2016 and 31 May 2019. These speeches were collated into a document,

Table 1 Political party and referendum stance in sample and full population

	Sample	Population (conservative and labour MPs elected in 2015)
Total	75	561
Party		
Conservative	40 (53%)	330 (59%)
Labour	35 (47%)	232 (41%)
Referendum stance		
Remain	54 (72%)	406 (72%)
Leave	20 (27%)	147 (26%)
Not declared	1 (0.01%)	8 (0.01%)

All percentages rounded to nearest whole number

creating a database of the sample's discourse on Brexit. Analysis was not limited to debates about Brexit specifically—as the subject is so wide-reaching, MPs would discuss Brexit in debates ranging across policy areas—but was limited to debates held in the Commons Chamber rather than those of a more 'general' nature held in Westminster Hall (Parliament 2020).

Analysis was carried out inductively and the approach accounts for attention to and position on Brexit. The *position* of the speeches is central to the discourse analysis and resulting clusters. The direction (e.g. remain/ leave or pro-/anti-Common Market etc.) formed the basis of the clusters. The intensity of the statements made was included in the written analysis where relevant. *Attention* paid to Brexit was also considered in the formation of the clusters; as becomes clear below, certain MPs paid more or less attention to Brexit and that is particularly relevant in the case of the first cluster, the 'disinterested' group.

The greatest strength of the random sampling method used here is that it allows the researcher to "draw inferences about a population" (Etikan et al. 2016, p. 4), increasing the level of generalisability of the resulting clusters. Of course, the greater the sample size, the more possible it is to generalise. Analysis of the total population would always be desirable and there may be benefit in accounting for geographic and demographic factors as would be possible through the use of quota sampling. Having said that, given the clear set of themes that consistently emerged with a sample of 13% of the total population, the typology of 'clusters' developed here can be said to sufficiently constitute the archetypal positions in Parliament.

Building a typology of Brexit positions

Six clusters are found to exist, crossing party lines and defined instead by the MPs' Brexit attitudes. Of these six, three groups fall on the remain side of the spectrum, two are made up of leave-voting MPs and one includes MPs from both sides of the Brexit divide, as Table 2 shows. There are fewer leave-voting clusters and these clusters are smaller than the remain-leaning groups. This reflects the number of Remainers and Brexiters in Parliament and the priority of these issues for the MPs

Table 2 Typology of Brexit 'clusters'

'Clusters' and key criteria	Stance	MPs		
1. Disinterested (10)	Both	Natascha Engel (Lab; Rem) Kate Osamor (Lab; Rem) Cat Smith (Lab; Rem) Helen Jones (Lab; Rem) John Glen (Con; Rem)	Victoria Atkins (Con; Rem) Craig Whittaker (Con; Rem) Karen Lumley (Con; Lea) Maria Caulfield (Con; Lea)	Jesse Norman (Con; did not disclose)
2. Policy Areas (8) Health DEFRA Science/innovation Local government	Remain	Naz Shah (Lab) Holly Lynch (Lab) David Tredinnick (Con) Antoinette Sandbach (Con) David Mowat (Con)	Philip Dunne (Con) Therese Coffey (Con) James Davies (Con)	
3. Economic concerns (20) General economic concerns Business and trade Anti-'No Deal' Pro-customs union	Remain	Mark Field (Con) Mark Prisk (Con) David Morris (Con) Caroline Nokes (Con) Edward Argar (Con) James Morris (Con) Sajid Javid (Con)	Philip Hammond (Con) Jim Fitzpatrick (Lab) Gloria de Piero (Lab) Rushanara Ali (Lab) Ivan Lewis (Lab) David Hanson (Lab) Mark Hendrick (Lab)	Karl Turner (Lab) Chris Evans (Lab) Gareth Thomas (Lab) Stephen Timms (Lab) Nia Griffith (Lab) Bill Esterson (Lab)
4. Democratic concerns (20) Parliamentary sovereignty Anti-factionalism and divisiveness Constituents Campaign lies and Brexit unicorns	Remain	Steve Reed (Lab) Albert Owen (Lab) Toby Perkins (lab) Stephen Kinnock (Lab) Clive Betts (Lab) Yvette Cooper (Lab) Dominic Grieve (Con)	Pat McFadden (Lab) Chris Elmore (Lab) Hilary Benn (Lab) Christian Matheson (Lab) Matthew Pennycook (Lab) Chuka Umunna (Lab)[b] Andrew Mitchell (Con)	Jim McMahon (Lab) Maria Eagle (Lab) Chris Leslie (Lab)[a] David Lammy (Lab) Melanie Onn (Lab) Anna Soubry (Con)[a]
5. Opportunity (11) Brexit as an opportunity (Optimism) (Sovereignty)	Leave	Jacob Rees-Mogg (Con) Steve Barclay (Con) Suella Braverman (Con) Steve Baker (Con)	David Amess (Con) Bill Cash (Con) Michael Gove (Con) Steve Double (Con)	David Davis (Con) Julian Lewis (Con) Kate Hoey (Lab)

Table 2 (continued)

'Clusters' and key criteria	Stance	MPs	
6. Constituency concerns (6) Constituents, or 'the people' Business and trade	Leave	Sheryll Murray (Con) Lucy Allan (Con) Nigel Evans (Con)	David Burrowes (Con) Peter Bone (Con) Nadine Dorries (Con)

[a]Defected to Change UK

[b]Defected to Change UK, then to the Liberal Democrats

themselves. For Remainers, the two most important sets of concerns are economic and democratic in nature; clusters three and four are equally large in size. For Brexiters, opportunity is most important; almost twice as many leave-leaning MPs discuss opportunity than fall into the sixth and final cluster.

This section introduces the clusters as concepts and the key criteria associated with each group, allowing further research to use and build upon this conceptual base. First of all, the cluster crossing the Brexit divide is described, followed, in turn, by the remain-leaning and leave-leaning groups.

Cluster 1: Disinterested

The first group is the only to include MPs from both parties and from across the Brexit divide, but Brexit attitudes remain central to its definition. These MPs appear to be disinterested in Brexit, explicitly stating that there are more important things to discuss than the UK's exit from the EU or saying nothing (or nearly nothing) at all on the subject.

Criteria 1: "there are more important things than Brexit"

A number of MPs explicitly stated that Brexit was not the most important issue to be discussed. Caulfield, for example, stated that "Surely it is more key to fight for a referendum on abortion for women in Northern Ireland than for a second referendum on Brexit" (Caulfield, 05/06/2018) and Smith argued that "The Government's domestic policy agenda cannot stop because of the Brexit negotiations" (Smith, 14/09/2017).

Criteria 2: Little or no attention paid to Brexit

Aside from those MPs who made no mention at all of the subject, Brexit was brought up by this group as a means to discuss issues that were otherwise side-lined by the Brexit debates: "Looking beyond Brexit, the reason I welcome this Finance Bill is that it places a very great emphasis on helping working families…" (Atkins, 18/04/2017)—or to highlight how much parliamentary time was being taken up by the subject: "although Brexit is important, it is all we debate in this House" (Osamor, 19/03/2019).

Jesse Norman, the only MP in the sample not to have disclosed his Brexit stance, made reference to the subject in Ministerial conclusions summarising what others had said in the debate or in passing. For example, he raised Brexit seemingly ironically in discussing disruption on the M26: "…Operation Stack was deployed to address disruption—nothing to do with Brexit of course—at the border" (Norman, 25/10/2018).

Attention will now turn to the remain-leaning MPs in clusters two (Policy Areas), three (Economic Concerns) and four (Democratic Concerns).

Cluster 2: Policy Areas

This group of MPs spoke of Brexit only in relation to a (set of) specific policy area(s). Those policy areas tended to be health or DEFRA-related, including the environment, fisheries and agriculture. Rather than paying lip service to Brexit as a means to discuss to a separate policy issue as in cluster one, these MPs spoke of the specific impact of Brexit on certain policy areas on more than one occasion. These statements were either promoting the Government's position or used as an opportunity to debate the negative impact of Brexit on different policy areas or UK legislation.

Criteria 1: Health; NHS

Early on in the period of analysis, Tredinnick spoke of the negative impact that certain EU directives had had on UK health policy (Tredinnick, 22/11/2016; 08/12/2016). Dunne, as Health Minister, discussed the Government's considerations of the impact of Brexit on various health-related matters but later, as a backbencher, brought attention to the life sciences sector, farming and the environment.

Criteria 2: Agriculture; Environment; Fisheries

As for Dunne, the environment and DEFRA-related issues were a concern to the majority of this group. Lynch, for example, spoke consistently throughout the period of analysis about the common fisheries policy and the impact of Brexit on fishing communities around the UK.

Therese Coffey is a good example of an MP with a ministerial position during the period of analysis who related Brexit only to the specific policy areas in her portfolio, rather than other Ministers (like Sajid Javid or Steve Baker) who used a discussion of Brexit to generally promote the government line.

Criteria 3: Science and Innovation

James Davies spoke of funding for chemical and pharmaceutical businesses, in the context of Brexit, as "an important feature of the northern powerhouse" (Davies, J., 13/12/2016), a Government scheme to boost the economy in the North of England by investing in skills and innovation (Northern Powerhouse 2020).

Criteria 4: Local Government

Concerns raised about local government mainly surrounded funding made available by the Government to help Councils prepare for Brexit (for example, Shah, 28/03/2018).

Cluster 3: Economic Concerns

This group of Remainer MPs were concerned primarily with the economy and discussed the effects of Brexit on business and trade, one of the most salient issues for remain-leaning MPs. These MPs also spoke out against a no-deal Brexit and tended to take a pro-Customs Union position. Maybe not surprisingly, both MPs in the sample who have held the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer since the referendum—Sajid Javid and Philip Hammond—fall into this cluster. However, Javid seemed to be promoting the government line from early on, whilst Hammond did not as staunchly, even during his time in office.

Criteria 1: General economic concerns

A number of the MPs in this cluster were concerned by the "cost of Brexit" (Ali, 09/01/2019) and its impact on other areas of spending.

Criteria 2: Business; Trade

That Brexit was "causing so much uncertainty for businesses" was a common issue raised by these MPs (Lewis, 13/03/2017)—as was the topic of future "trade agreements in a post-Brexit world" (Field, 10/04/2019).

Criteria 3: Anti-'No Deal'

For Ali, fears of the effects of a 'No Deal' Brexit were tied up with uncertainty and a lack of clarity around the process as a whole and the outcomes (Ali, 22/05/2018; 20/12/2018; 25/04/2019).

Criteria 4: Pro-Customs Union

These MPs tended to speak positively of Customs Union membership. De Piero, for example, stated that achieving a Brexit deal that would protect jobs "requires a permanent customs union or arrangement" (De Piero, 29/01/2019).

Cluster 4: Democratic Concerns

MPs in this final remain-leaning cluster spoke mostly of the ways in which Brexit was and could continue to undermine democracy in the UK. The sovereignty of Parliament, factionalism, the position of their constituents and perceived referendum campaign lies were important to these MPs. A subgroup of Change UK MPs appears in this cluster, for whom the 'People's Vote' was of particular importance.

Criteria 1: Parliamentary sovereignty

Claims that parliamentary influence was being undermined by Brexit was particularly heightened in 2017, when the so-called 'Henry VIII powers' (for example, Cooper, 28/06/2017), which would give the Government a free hand in legislating post-Brexit, were discussed.

Criteria 2: Anti-factionalism and divisiveness

Concerns about Tory factionalism, in particular, were voiced by these MPs. Only one MP, Soubry, referred specifically to the European Reform Group (ERG). Others referred more generally to "warring factions" (Kinnock, 12/10/2016) or "a faction within a political party…the right wing of the Conservative Party" (McFadden, 31/01/2018). These MPs suggested Tory factionalism was undermining May's ability to govern in the national interest. MPs concerned by parliamentary factions were also more likely to discuss the division caused by Brexit in the outside world, which would "be very difficult indeed to heal" (Mitchell, 18/07/2018).

Criteria 3: Constituents

These MPs made regular reference to their constituents. Perkins, for example, described how he had "spent a lot of time" speaking to people in his constituency about the negotiations (Perkins, 21/06/2017). At times, dramatic language was used to describe the position of constituents in remain-voting areas; "our constituents are tearing their hair out" (Cooper, 27/03/2019).

Criteria 4: Campaign lies and 'Brexit unicorns'

Misinformation in the referendum campaign and throughout the negotiations was brought up by MPs in this cluster. McFadden described the leave campaign's 'Brexit unicorns', whilst Matheson described how the 'vague promises' made by the Government on Brexit were "like promising a five-year-old rainbows and unicorns" (Matheson, 14/03/2018). Benn took a less fantastical approach, referring to Brexiters' "wild and optimistic promises" (13/02/2019).

Change UK subgroup criteria: the 'People's Vote'

This cluster contains a subgroup of MPs who defected from their original party to form Change UK (or, *The Independent Group for Change)*. Umunna, Soubry and Leslie held the concerns outlined above but paid, also, specific attention to the People's Vote—or, second referendum—campaign. Soubry first explicitly asked for a People's Vote in November 2018. Between then and the end of the period of analysis, she mentioned it a further 30 times. Umunna discussed the idea for the first time

at a similar point but raised it far less frequently. Leslie described how holding a People's Vote could help to break through the parliamentary deadlock experienced in 2019 due to the Brexit Bill (Leslie, 26/02/2019).

The final part of this section sees the leave-leaning clusters conceptualised. Two such groups exist, with the first including two subgroups.

Cluster 5: Opportunity

Opportunity was central to the discourse of this first group of Brexiters, with two separate themes emerging. The first subgroup speak in very optimistic terms when discussing Brexit. This group includes various MPs associated with the leadership of the ERG. The second subgroup is more specifically concerned with sovereignty, for example, taking an anti-Customs Union stance. This cluster of leave-leaning MPs appears to be more ardent in their support for Brexit and more agnostic in their discourse towards EU membership in comparison to cluster six.

Criteria 1: Brexit as an opportunity

Reference to Brexit as an 'opportunity' was central to the discourse of this group of leave-leaning MPs and was, overall, the greatest concern for Brexiters. As Secretary of State, Barclay spoke mostly of the regulatory opportunity outside of the EU's rules, whilst others spoke of opportunities that the UK would have to "do business across the world" (Amess, 07/07/2016). Some, however, took a harder line, using very emotive language. From the very beginning, Cash, for example, spoke of the vast array of different opportunities Brexit would bring for the UK in terms of its historic role on the world stage. Rees-Mogg and Braverman also spoke of the opportunities that Brexit would bring for the "poorest in our society" (Rees-Mogg, 22/11/2017)—a sentiment mirrored by Steve Double who spoke of Brexit as an opportunity for the Government to "invest in the poorer regions of our country" (Double, 12/10/2016). This social justice-centred argument is in direct contrast to Remainer MPs like Anna Soubry who argued that Brexit would only make life more difficult for this section of society.

Subgroup 1 criteria: Optimism and freedom

This group of leave-leaning MPs can be split into two subgroups. The first spoke very optimistically about the freedom the UK would have after leaving the EU. The discourse of these MPs centres on ideas, rather than policy areas or specific, tangible concerns, as do other clusters. Optimism was central to Braverman and Rees-Mogg's discourses, Braverman consistently spoke of her optimism about Brexit itself and the UK's position afterwards. Rees-Mogg focussed on the position of the UK after Brexit. On freedom, Braverman used very strong language from the beginning, stating that UK could now "break free from the shackles of the EU" (30/11/2016).

There may be a link between this cluster and leadership of the ERG, a Eurosceptic "party within the Conservative Party" (Politics Home 2018), established during John Major's time and re-invigorated around the time of the 2016 referendum (BBC News 2018). Rees-Mogg was the group's Chair between early 2018 and September 2019, whilst Braverman was Deputy Chair until resigning to take a DExEU Ministerial role in 2018. Steve Baker has claimed expenses for the ERG which suggests some level of affiliation (BBC News 2018). The group is, however, not required to publish its membership and speculation exists surrounding the extent of its support (Conservative Home 2017; The Times 2017; Financial Times 2019) and other Tory Brexiters, like Cash, linked to the ERG (Open Democracy 2019) do fall into the second subgroup in this cluster.

Subgroup 2 criteria: Sovereignty concerns

Sovereignty was also a key theme in the discourse of these MPs and has been central to pro-Brexit campaigns since before the referendum. It was championed throughout the period of analysis by Cash. As Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee (UK Parliament 2017) and long-time Eurosceptic, Cash spoke frequently of the sovereignty of Parliament, its importance to voters and its centrality to democracy. The sovereignty of the UK Parliament is often raised alongside specific anti-customs union sentiment, concerns around the continued power of the European Court of Justice over UK legislation and potential free trade agreements, issues which all have the power of the UK or Parliament at their centre. For Hoey, the only leave-voting Labour MP in the sample, 'doing Brexit well' was inherently linked "getting out of the single market and not being in the customs union" (Hoey, 12/06/2018). David Davis criticised the Brexit deal as it stood at the end of 2018 leaving the UK "subject to the rule of the European Court of Justice, albeit by a back-door and concealed route" (Davis, 06/12/2018). Cash, additionally, spoke about Brexit allowing the UK the freedom to negotiate and trade, and giving Parliament itself greater freedom in those deals (Cash, 18/07/2018).

Cluster 6: Constituency Concerns

The final cluster is made up of those leave-leaning MPs who related Brexit most to their constituency or raised the concerns of local voters. A number of MPs discussed the impact of Brexit on business and trade in their constituencies. Unlike the fifth cluster whose discourse shows ardent support for Brexit, MPs in this cluster do raise potential negative effects of Brexit. This cluster is, however, smaller than the first leave-leaning group, suggesting this is of lesser importance to leave-voting MPs than 'opportunity'.

Criteria 1: Constituents, or 'the people'

Burrows clearly called upon the interests of the people to legitimise his position against a second referendum, arguing about the need to "get on with and make the

best of Brexit for all my constituents and for people throughout the United Kingdom" (31/07/2017). Allan described how the young people who "signed up to vote for the first time and people in my constituency, who had never voted and never been registered before" must not be ignored in the Brexit debates (Allan, 01/12/2017). Nigel Evans insisted that "those people who have come from the other 27 countries to live and work in the UK, and the status of the UK citizens living and working in the other 27 countries" were a vital part of the Brexit negotiations (Evans, N., 21/06/2017).

Criteria 2: Business; Trade

From the very beginning of the period of analysis, Allan called on the Government for assurances about trade in her constituency after Brexit, for example, that post-Brexit Britain would be a "great place to do business" (Allan, 18/10/2016) and that her constituency would "prosper from Brexit" (Allan, 22/03/2017). Nigel Evans, on the other hand, asked that post-Brexit trade deals take into consideration "British food and drink produced in his constituency" (Evans, N., 02/11/2017) and allow EU citizens to work in the hospitality trade, which is a significant part of his local economy (Evans, N., 01/05/2018). Concerns around food and drink businesses were mirrored by Murray, in relation to the effect of Brexit on her Welsh constituency (Murray, 26/04/2017).

The relevance of a typology of Brexit positions

With the six Brexit clusters and their key criteria established, most crucially the typology shows how parliamentarians are divided along leave/remain lines. Indeed, the only cluster to cross the divide involved those MPs who were uninterested in the issue of Brexit. MPs were themselves aware of this fact—McFadden outright stating that "this issue, almost like no other, cuts across party political lines" (09/01/2019)—upholding claims in the literature that "new identities [to be a 'Brexiter' or a 'Remainer'] cut across traditional party lines" (Hobolt 2018: 5). Much of the literature investigating new dimensions is based on analysis of voters, rather than the party in public office (see for example, Goodwin and Heath 2016; Clarke et al. 2017; Hobolt 2018). In looking at MP discourses, this study shows how salient a new dimension is for the party in public office, countering findings of van der Brug and van Spanje (2009), that voters are primarily affected by new voting dimensions. Equally notable are the wide variety of positions discovered that exist along the spectrum, between the leave and remain poles. This is highlighted most clearly through the leave-leaning clusters; MPs in cluster five were far more ardent and vocal in their support for Brexit than were parliamentarians in cluster six, whose positions, whilst leave-leaning, appear less fervent. The benefit and contribution of qualitative discourse analysis is particularly clear in terms of this finding—such results would not have been possible using quantitative methods.

The party-line-crossing nature of these Brexit clusters is more obvious in the case of the remain-leaning clusters, which include a more equal mix of Labour and

Conservative MPs. The leave-leaning clusters, on the other hand, only include one Labour MP—Kate Hoey—with all other Labour MPs falling into the remain-voting or 'disinterested' clusters. This is a reflection of the overall picture of Parliament on Brexit. As Table 1 shows, almost three quarters of Labour and Conservative MPs voted to remain—as did over half of Tory MPs elected in 2015 (Politics Home 2016). The general make-up of Parliament during the Brexit period also accounts for the greater number and greater size of remain-leaning clusters.

Given these salient findings, the typology has clear use in other contexts. Primarily, this typology could be used in future empirical research analysing the representativeness of MPs during the Brexit period. Building on research by the Party Member Project (PMP 2020), qualitative research could be carried out into the Brexit attitudes of party members to see how the clusters found here compare to attitudes at the grassroots. If the Brexit positions of voters differed greatly from those in Parliament, questions could be raised as to how representative the Brexit-time Parliament was after the historic and decisive Brexit referendum, which finally put the power in the hands of the people. Such research could help us understand where and how the remain-leaning Parliament and the (only just) leave-leaning public at the time of the referendum differ in their attitudes to Brexit.

This typology could also be usefully employed as a tool to deliberate how well the parties might fare in future Europe- or Brexit-related negotiations. We are not yet out of the woods and this typology could shed some light on what we might expect when Brexit rears its head in the future.

Conclusion

Brexit is one of the greatest political challenges that the UK has faced since the World War. II The resulting decisions have and will continue to affect the day-to-day lives of those living in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. This paper solidified a typology of six Brexit clusters; three on the remain side, two on the leave side of the debate and one of 'disinterested' MPs crossing the Brexit divide.

Ultimately, this article supports the growing literature on the increasing salience of a new Europe-related dimension, as views on Brexit defined the clusters that were found to exist. At the same time, this typology-building paper helps to fill in the gaps between the two seemingly polar-opposite ends of the European integration spectrum, bringing with it a greater understanding of the nuanced positions of MPs in Parliament during the Brexit negotiations. The differing attention paid to and importance of certain subjects for parliamentarians across the House elucidates, also, why a majority in line with the remain- and soft-Brexit-leaning Parliament never materialised.

MPs speak many different languages—as this typology shows—and without an understanding of this, voters have little hope of understanding the positions of their representatives on one of the most divisive issues in British political history. Here lies the greatest benefit of this conceptual tool—its use in evaluating the representativeness of MPs during the Brexit period or during future EU-related negotiations.

Only time will tell if Brexit has caused real and lasting damage to the patterns of party competition in the UK or whether the Tories' new majority and a Labour leader with Brexit views more akin to his party members will lead back to business as usual. Further systematic analysis is needed to understand these long-term effects, especially as the coronavirus pandemic competes for political attention.

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