

# THE CLASS WAR IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE CULTURE WAR

Posted on September 17, 2022



Today, the unitary ideal is dead, and factionalism is baked into any serious understanding of British

politics.

**Category:** [COMMENTARY](#)

**Tags:** [Britain](#), [class](#), [culture](#), [Mario Laghos](#), [United Kingdom](#)

It took five hours for the swingometer to break. In the early hours of the morning of the 19th of June, 1970, the results of the previous day's election were coming in thick and fast. But the swingometer, a pointed pendulum which goes this way or that to visualise a national swing in votes, was turning up all kinds of inconsistencies. The Conservative party was on track for a surprise victory—but inside the BBC studio, pundits were confounded by redoubts of Labour strength (the swing is ordinarily uniform across the country). Michael Barratt, the studio anchor fronting BBC's *Nationwide*, turned to his regional correspondents for an explanation. John Humphreys, the Manchester correspondent, struggled to account for the anomaly.

*There are lots of Tory gains, but what's fascinating us here is that there are in fact some marked regional variations, and this is that in the North West, Merseyside particularly, the swings to the Tories are far less than they are anywhere else... I can't really offer you an explanation for this, but possibly the Protestant working class have not come out to support the Tories in the way that they used to, because Liverpool was historically a Tory city.*

Sitting next to Humphreys was Winston Churchill MP, the namesake and grandson of the two-time Prime Minister, who offered up an altogether different explanation of the "crazy regional variation."

*It could be something to do with the very large [Irish] Catholic vote in Liverpool. There's been all sorts of malicious propaganda, certainly, some of it was circulated in my constituency, urging people to vote Labour because otherwise*

*the Unionist and Paisleyite hordes would be let loose by the Conservatives in good Nazi fashion to carry out a Final Solution against the Catholic minorities. 3000 of these [leaflets] were circulated in my constituency last Sunday.*

Irregular results cropped up in the [Black Country](#), too, where Jeffrey Preece reported a 9.5% swing to the Tories in the Brierley Hill constituency, but just a 1.7% swing in Smethwick. Preece told Barratt that “it seems to me significant that two seats like All Saints and Smethwick which are adjoining, and which each contain a strong element of coloured electorate, were held by Labour.”

And in Scotland, Hugh Cochrane carried a report of Tory underperformance, telling of a swing of just 3.1% to the Conservatives which won them a marginal seat but not much more. Labour had gained two seats, and lost one. “The Scottish figure is bound to be distorted, because this time, we have the biggest intervention ever by the Scottish National Party. They are contesting 65 out of the 71 seats in Scotland. Last time they contested around about 23 seats.”

The camera returns to Michael Barratt who swings about on his chair. Looking to London and the South East, he notes that votes are going to the Tories uniformly, excluding “odd exceptions, like Slough which was surprisingly held for Labour.” Bob Wellings, the regional correspondent then declared two Labour gains—in Walthamstow West and Acton—though there were 17 gains to the Conservatives elsewhere in the same region.

A clear picture was emerging—those of historic English descent were leaving Labour for the Tories in similar numbers, North, South, East and West. But those of migrant descent and those in the Celtic fringe were not—their interests, manifested in the casting of their votes, were divergent.

There is a value in the phenomenon of a universal swing—that is, a national body of voters leaning in the same or similar numbers in each locality towards or away from a political party. It demonstrates a certain universality of values. To vote as a whole showcases an

enviable cohesion, a shared sense of self-interest, and is indicative of high levels of societal trust. There are of course inescapable disagreements about values and interests within any group, between producers and consumers, the rural and the urban, bosses and the workers, commuters and drivers or even between and within one family and another. But the idea of the nation is that those who comprise it can broadly agree on a singular vision, and that's no easy thing to agree on, even for a small English-speaking island. But this kind of national cohesion, based on a powerful sense of shared identity and destiny, has been made impossible by the huge scale of post-war migration.

Today, the unitary ideal is dead, and factionalism is baked into any serious understanding of British politics. To watch that old election coverage is to see the assumptions which underpinned and enabled mass migration shattered live on air. Realisation washes over one BBC reporter after another that the complacent liberal belief that the sheer act of living in Britain is tantamount to *being* British might not have been entirely accurate.

The Scottish, who rioted when they were bound to England in 1707, were reasserting themselves. Liverpool's Irish-descended population had imported their internecine conflicts, and were casting their votes to express historic grudge and grievance. Afro-Caribbean and African migrants formed an anti-Tory cohort. The Conservative party is sometimes referred to as the party of Britain, because of its historic electoral hegemony, yet this newly arrived community overwhelmingly opposed it. And these blocs have only calcified over time.

If proof that the One Nation had died was needed, it can be evidenced by the 2019 election results. The then Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn attempted to unite the country, particularly the poor, working-class, and the middle-classes, with a bold economic offer. Launching his manifesto, the leader was backlit by his campaign slogan 'It's time for real change' and told an audience of party members and journalists that "When Labour wins the nurse wins, the student wins, the pensioner wins, the tenant wins, the young couples wins, we all win." It was, he said, a message of hope—but that hope was forlorn. This manifesto and his leadership took his party down to their worst defeat since 1935.

The Brexit fissure could not be bridged by Corbyn's offer of free broadband for all, or a huge cash pay-out to the WASPI women. Though many of his policies appealed to voter's wallets, he refused to address their socio-cultural concerns that they manifested in their vote to leave the European Union. Quizzed on his own Brexit position, Beth Rigby of Sky News asked Corbyn if he stood for Leave, or for Remain. The Labour leader's answer was a spectacle of delusion.

*The tenor of the questions that you gave me is that we have to carry on forever being divided, the tenor of what I'm saying is, let's get together on this, the British people have the final say, our government will carry it out.*

The incentives for working-class people to vote for Labour in this election were clear—public sector pay rises, nationalisation of utilities, increases in NHS funding—and yet white-working-class voters snubbed it in historic numbers.

But just as in 1970, the swing was not universal. Despite being routed nationally, Labour increased their vote in Bradford West—where Muslims make up over half of the voters—to 76%. They won 79% of the vote in Birmingham Hodge Hill—where as of 2011, 64.3% of the electors were of 'minority' background. But they lost the seats of West Bromwich East, and West Bromwich West, both historical Labour strongholds and overwhelmingly white and working class.

In Leicester, Labour held the central metropolitan areas, the East, West and South seats, but were trounced by the Tories in North West, and South Leicestershire, Rutland, Bosworth, and all the other surrounding areas which now form a sea of blue around a small red island. The Tories won in areas with the highest concentration of whites, and Labour won in areas with the lowest concentration of whites.

Voters in the same cities, from similar socio-economic backgrounds, cast their votes in opposition to one another—this really was the death knell of One Nation. Ballot boxes were

marked not in accordance with a shared, if abstract and contested, sense of national interest, but along cultural, ethnic, and clan lines.

There were some instances of ethnic minority voters moving toward the Tories. Brits of Indian origin shifted away from Labour because of Corbyn's support for Pakistan on the Kashmiri question, realising an ancient rivalry on the streets of English cities. Intra-factional factionalism is now emerging as a force to which would-be PMs must pander, as large swathes of England now take great interest in, and lobby for, particular positions on conflicts in the Asian sub-continent.

Today, the Scottish National party control 44 of the 59 Westminster seats in their country. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has declared her intent to launch a Catalonia-style wildcat independence referendum. Despite a democratic defeat meted out to independence in a 2014 referendum, support for separatism still ranges from between 45% to 50% in the polls. The British establishment is privately conceding that it's a question of when, rather than if, the union dissolves.

In Liverpool, that historically Tory city, there now numbers not a single Tory councillor, let alone an MP, mayor, or so much as a park warden who is affiliated with the hated party. The Liverpoolians made headlines when they booed the England football team in the Jubilee year, an act not surprising coming from a people who regularly proclaim that they are 'Not English, but Scouse.' The Tories have been decimated here for the same reason as in London: there has been a dramatic demographic shift.

It's a tall order even for a group of English-speaking Christians of broadly the same ethnicity to live in harmony on a small island. So, to imagine that adding millions of immigrants from the most distant lands and with the most divergent cultures into the mix and then believing that all can join together with the promise of free broadband is a farce.

The historically English white-working class are voting for the Conservative party—the party their forefathers railed against. Those of Irish descent in the North West of England

vote Labour, and are joined by migrant communities who predominate in metropolitan areas from one side of the country to another. In Scotland, the birthplace of the Labour party, the Scottish National Party is hegemonic. Swing voters do still exist, of course, and urban progressives will throw their lot in with reactionary Muslims come election time, but these are exceptions to the rule. That rule is that Britain is no longer a country, but an archipelago of disparate and unconnected peoples, ideals, wants and wishes. People ask how in England statues of national icons can be torn from their plinths, why tens of thousands of girls can be raped by gangs, or why there are sweatshops staffed by slaves hiding in plain sight in our major cities. The tragic answer is that this isn't England anymore.