

# A New Agenda ... Values, World Society, Modelling

<https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburtmathsocsci/home/a-new-agenda>

*A New Agenda* seeks to explore all aspects of society using all the academic disciplines paying special attention to values ... with special interest in modelling ... not disinterested in practice ... and aspiring to high academic standards.

## Commentary, October 2019

No. 70A

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### Get Mrs May's deal done?

Mr Johnson's deal has zero value. In the spring, Mrs May's deal had negative value. But John Curtice's remarks prompt a re-evaluation. If Johnson's deal does not succeed then, on October 31, Mrs May's deal could be the Condorcet winner\* (just as in the Weale UCL study\*) despite having low (medium) figures for first preferences. With an expanded set of options, Hague's one-sentence change to Mrs May's deal, or Kinnock's revision of Mrs May's deal, might be the Condorcet winner. Voting a second time, the Leave-Remain boundary zone would be the Condorcet winner (again)\*.

Majority voting, Commons voting, a referendum, a general election – all can be indecisive (in relation to specific options).

Good decisive procedures such as the Condorcet procedure are to be preferred. Note: The Condorcet winner is the option which defeats all others in pairwise competitions.

\*In these claims Condorcet is inferred from an inferred median voter – these inferences need to be checked using data on actual preferences – see YouGov Conservative leadership survey.

Sources: Opinium, Curtice in Times, Hague in Telegraph, BMG, Weale UCL, Commons, poll of polls, YouGov.

For more detail see sections below and also:

Albert Weale's UCL study: pages 6-7; slide 11

YouGov on Conservative leadership: pages 7-12; slides 12-16

Indicative votes in parliament: pages 12-14; slides 17, 18  
Kinnock's revision of Mrs May's deal: pages 15-16; slide 19  
in my paper and slides:

*Brexit and specific-option decisiveness:*

*the majority problem and alternative social choice criteria*

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoxNWJlODJhNmU1YzVjZjZk>

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<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0MGYyODgyZWUwNDJiMTNi>

## Johnson's plan

Editorial. "Is that light at the end of this Euro tunnel?" *The Daily Telegraph*, October 2, 2019: 19.

In the first week of October Prime Minister Boris Johnson sent a letter to the EU with proposals for Brexit. "The critical difference to Theresa May's deal is that there will be no fallback customs union with the EU, and Northern Ireland will have a choice on whether to leave or stay rather than remain in the "vassalage" that Mr Johnson says is inherent in the Withdrawal Agreement."

## Mr Johnson's deal has zero net value (opinion poll)

John Curtice discussed the recent Opinium poll in *The Times* today. The full data set is available online.

Source: <https://www.opinium.co.uk/political-polling-3rd-october-2019/>.

Curtis, John. "Delivery rather than detail gives Johnson the edge over May." *The Times*, October 7, 2019: 6-7.

The Brexit identity distribution is shown in Figure 1. The distribution is partially M-shaped and indicates a degree of polarisation. Note that diehard leavers are much more numerous than diehard remainers.

The median voter is a 'persuadable leaver'. Within the persuadable leaver category, the median voter is 62% towards remain – on the Leave side but fairly close to the Leave-Remain border.

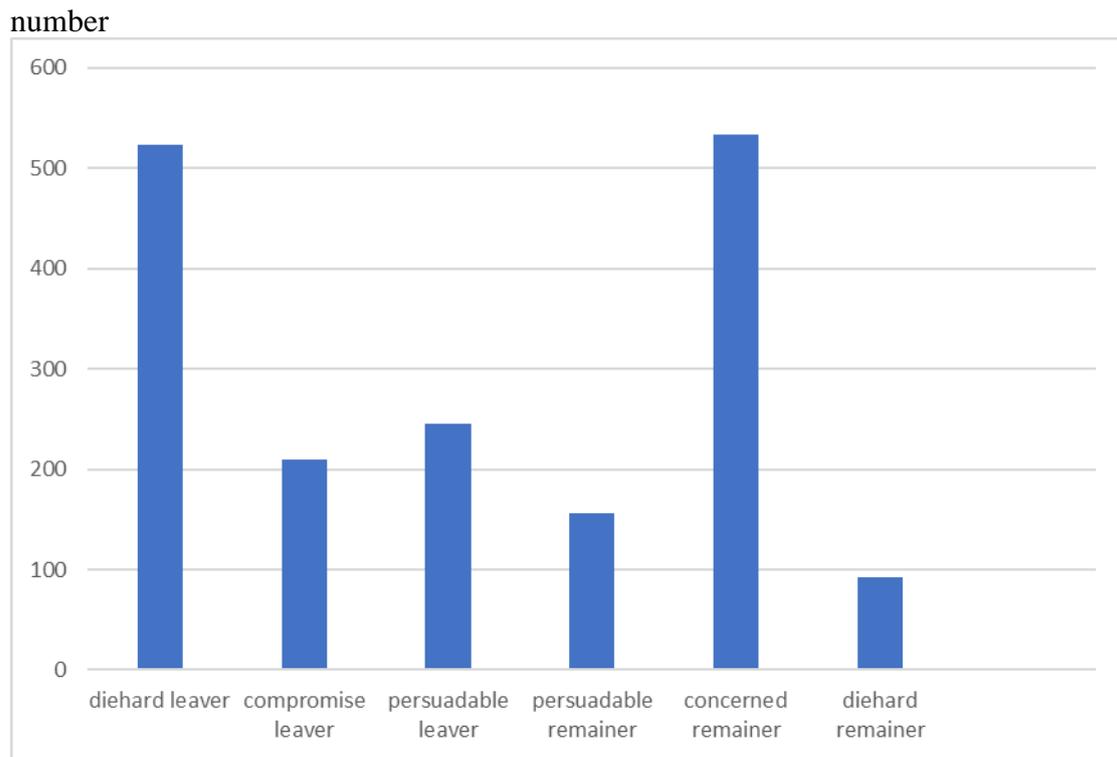
Source: <https://www.opinium.co.uk/political-polling-3rd-october-2019/>.

Curtis, John. "Delivery rather than detail gives Johnson the edge over May." *The Times*, October 7, 2019: 6-7.

It may be that the Opinium sample for this question overestimates the true figures for Leave. The balance in the Opinium sample for this question is 44% Remain and 56% Leave whereas recent poll of polls have shown 53% Remain and 47% Leave. In the latter case the median voter would be on the Remain side but fairly close to the Leave-Remain border.

Notice that the categories used here do not directly relate to specific Brexit options. For example how does 'diehard leaver' (30% of sample) relate to having no deal as the ideal preference?

**Figure 1** The median voter is a persuadable leaver



The sample was asked how good the Johnson plan was. Figure 2 shows the responses for different Brexit identity groups and for the total. The median voter is neutral about Johnson plan ('neither good nor bad') ... or perhaps has heard little or nothing about the plan. Rather few people think it very good or very bad.

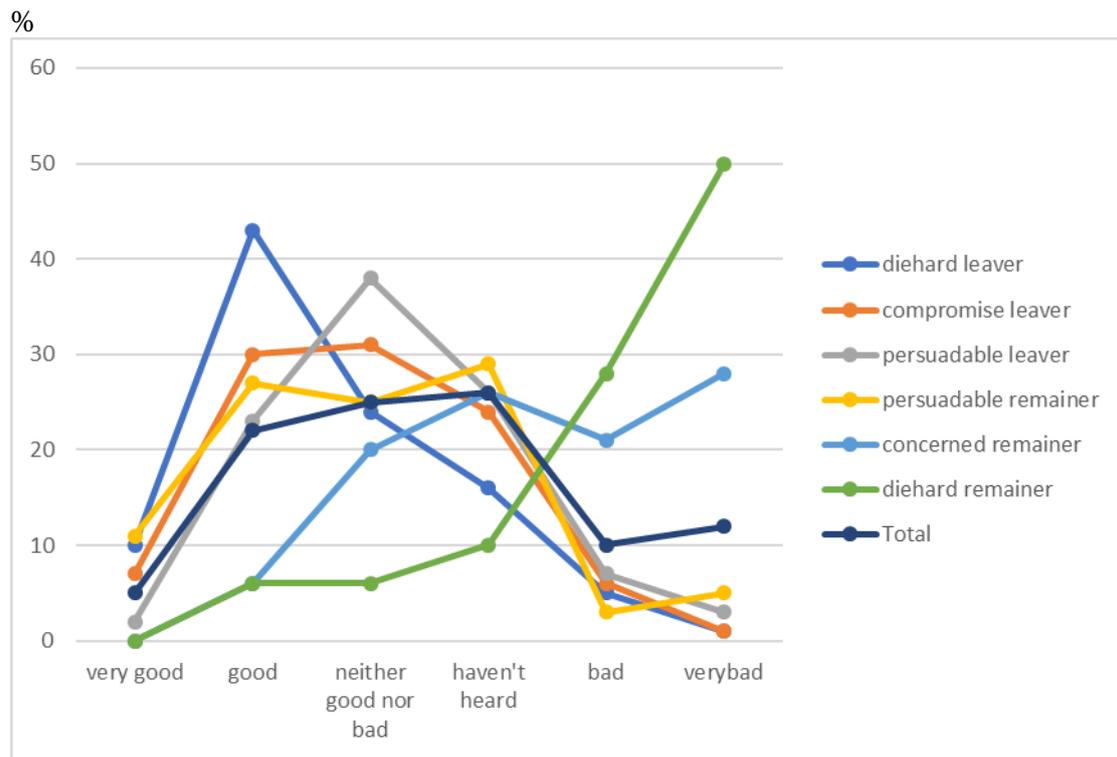
The mean goodness of the Johnson plan is very slightly negative: -0.02, giving a score of -2, -1, 0, +1 and +2 to the options.

The Opinium tables present what in my view is a less precise measure: the net good deal 27% and the net bad deal 22%, giving good-bad=+5%.

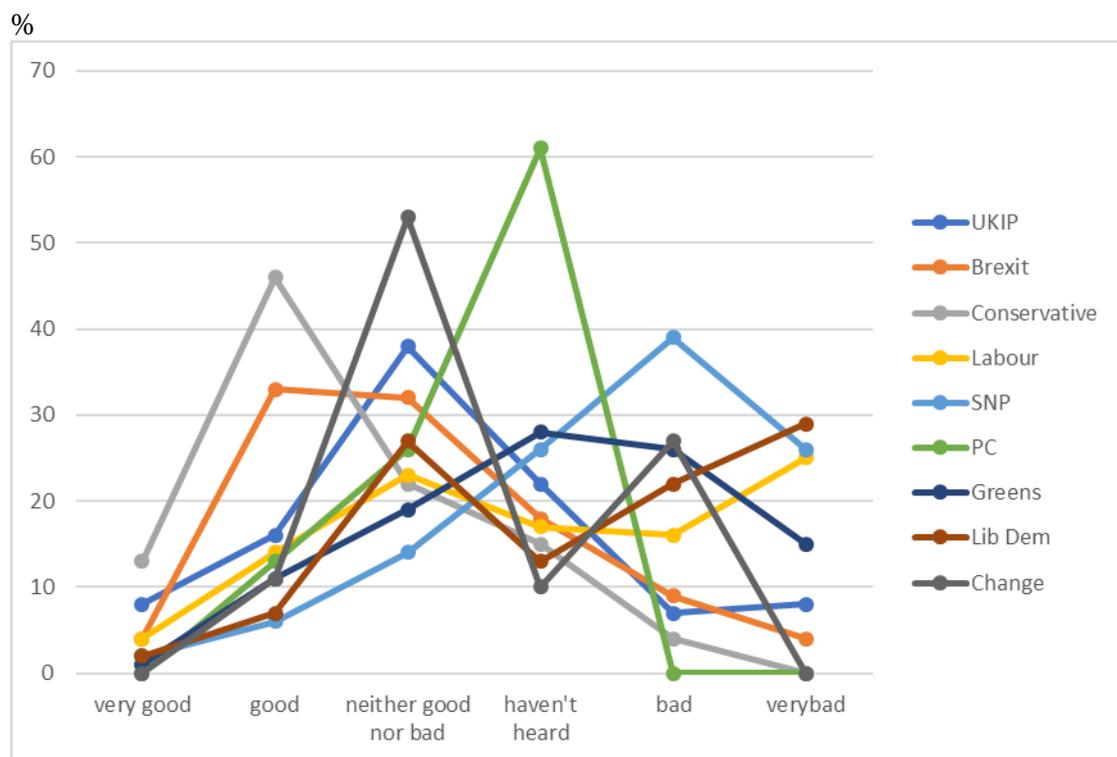
The profiles for the different groups are given. As one might expect the more Leave the group, the more favourable it is to the plan. However even in the diehard group only 10% think it very good.

Figure 3 shows the responses for different political parties. As one might expect the more Leave the party, the more favourable it is to the plan. However the Brexit and UKIP are somewhat less enthusiastic about it than the Conservatives

**Figure 2** How good is the Johnson plan? Brexit identity groups



**Figure 3** How good is the Johnson plan? Political parties



## Johnson's deal: would it lose to Mrs May's deal?

"Johnson looks set to succeed where May failed three times."  
Devlin, Kate. *The Times*, October 4, 2019: 8.

The table in *The Times* is clear about the likely votes in the Commons: Johnson's deal would be supported by 329 MPs with 310 voting against; whereas May's deal was supported by only 286 MPs with 344 voting against. Johnson succeeds whereas May failed.

Compared with Mrs May's deal, Johnson's deal will attract an extra 10 DUP, 18 Independent (from 4 to 22), 15 Labour (from 5 to 20). Johnson's deal will be opposed by 24 fewer Conservatives (from 34 down to 10), 3 fewer Independent (from 16 to 13), 10 fewer Labour (from 234 to 224) but opposed by 7 more LibDems (from 11 to 18) and 1 more SNP (34 to 35). Voting against both May's and Johnson's deals would be SNP, Lib Dems, Plaid Cymru, Green and Change UK.

However in both cases the outcome is determined by the procedure used by the House of Commons. If a different procedure were used then the outcomes might be different.

In particular consider a straight fight between the two deals. My hypothesis is that Mrs May's deal would win more votes than Mr Johnson's deal.

In general I have suggested elsewhere that *either* Mrs May's deal is the Condorcet winner *or* some softer deal is the Condorcet winner. Hence MOSS (May or Something Softer).

Albert Weale's UCL study: pages 6-7; slide 11  
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<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoxNWJlODJhNmU1YzVjZjZk>

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<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0MGYyODgyZWewNDJiMTNi>

## John Curtice on Mrs May's deal

In the spring, Mrs May's deal had negative value. But the following remarks by John Curtice's remarks prompt a re-evaluation.

"Many Leave voters took their cue about what to think about Mrs May's agreement from the adverse reaction of Boris Johnson and his fellow advocates in the pro-Leave camp."

Curtis, John. "Delivery rather than detail gives Johnson the edge over May." *The Times*, October 7, 2019: 6-7.

## October 31<sup>st</sup>: could Mrs May's deal be the Condorcet winner?

A recent ComRes poll asked people to agree or disagree with the following statements:<sup>1</sup>

If the EU doesn't agree to Boris Johnson's proposals for a Brexit deal, the UK should leave on 31<sup>st</sup> October without a deal.

Agree 42%      Dont Know 18%      Disagree 40%

If the EU doesn't agree to Boris Johnson's proposals for a Brexit deal, Article 50 should be extended again for a long enough period to enable a deal to be negotiated.

Agree 32%      Dont Know 24%      Disagree 43%

With 42% wanting no deal and 32% wanting an extension this leaves 26% to account for, possibly in the middle and possibly in favour of Mrs May's deal ...

In recent months BMG have asked:<sup>2</sup>

If no new Brexit deal is agreed by 31 October, which of the following would be your preferred option? (July)

If Boris Johnson is unable to negotiate a new Brexit deal by 31st October, do you think the UK should? (August)

[similar in October]

The options were:

Leave the EU without a deal  
Revoke the UK's notice of withdrawal and remain in the EU  
Hold a second in-out EU referendum  
Seek an extension to negotiations to try and reach a new deal  
Leave the EU with Theresa May's deal  
Don't know

How might the five main options be put in an ordering along the Leave-Remain dimension? as follows:

A:      no deal / extension / May's deal / referendum / revoke ?

OR

B:      no deal / May's deal / extension / referendum / revoke ?

Depending on A or B, the median voter prefers May's deal (in Case A) or an extension (in Case B) and so, making certain assumptions, is the Condorcet winner. Case B is more likely to reflect the situation than Case A. Figure 4 shows the preferences for the options ordered as in case B.

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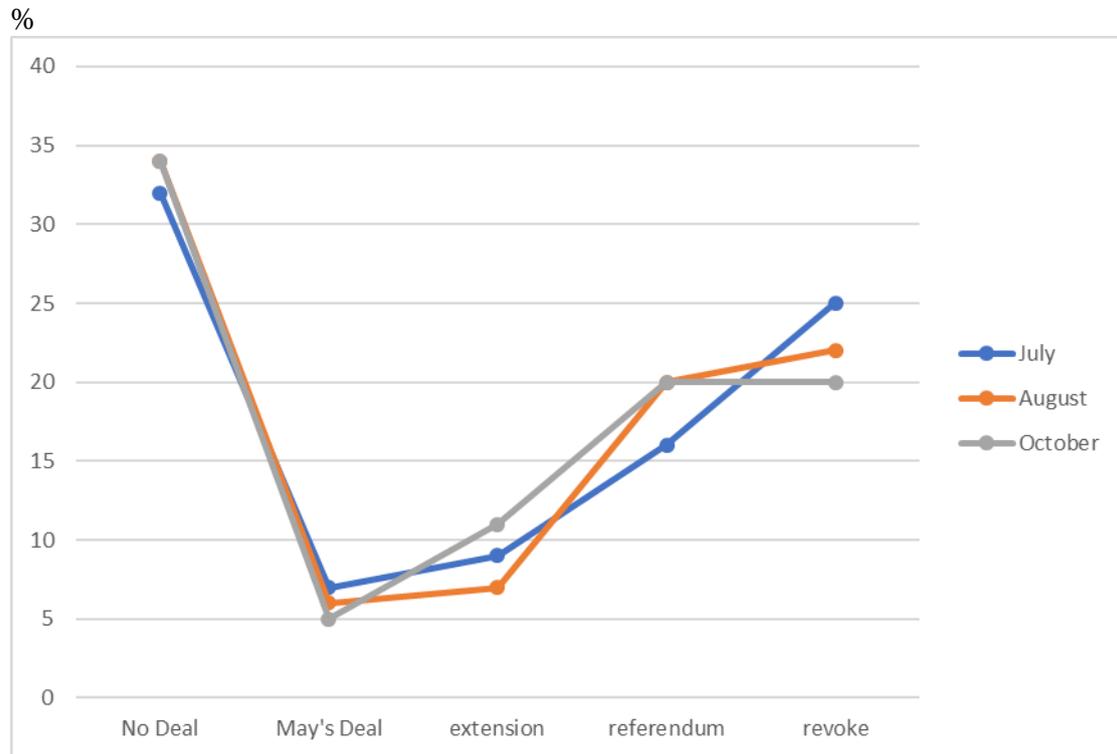
<sup>1</sup> Com Res [https://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Telegraph\\_Voting\\_Intention\\_Tables\\_Oct\\_2019.pdf](https://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Telegraph_Voting_Intention_Tables_Oct_2019.pdf);  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-no-deal-deadline-boris-johnson-eu-poll-voters-a9146196.html>.

<sup>2</sup> BMG: October 1-3 survey ...  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-no-deal-deadline-boris-johnson-eu-poll-voters-a9146196.html>.

... updating the  
BMG: July and August  
<https://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/the-public-is-still-split-when-asked-for-their-brexit-preference/>.

The (no deal + May's deal) percentages are 39%, 40% and 39%, respectively. Note that the (referendum + revoke) percentages are 41%, 42% and 40%, respectively. The median is at 45% or 44.5% (because of don't knows). Either side – May's deal or referendum - could become the Condorcet winner by gaining 5% or so from the extension option.

**Figure 4** Preferences in the case of reaching October 31<sup>st</sup> without a deal



### Modifications to Mrs May's Deal ... Hague, Kinnock

With an expanded set of options, Hague's one-sentence change to Mrs May's deal, or Kinnock's revision of Mrs May's deal, might be the Condorcet winner.

"In negotiations bogged down and blocked by complexity, it is sometimes a simple solution that leads to the breakthrough. There is just one of those available – to take Theresa May's deal but add a time limit on the Irish backstop. That would involve a major climbdown by all three players [Ireland, DUP and British government being the key players], but could be implemented with a single sentence."

Hague William. "The key Players need a Brexit deal. At this stage there's only one option." *Daily Telegraph*, October 8, 2019: 17.

Kinnock's revision of Mrs May's deal: pages 15-16; slide 19  
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...the slides

## UK opinion about the Johnson plan

The media have well-established positions on Brexit and responded accordingly:

Editorial. “Brussels has to start working with Boris.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 15.

Editorial. “This shabby plan is no way to break the EU deadlock.” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 42.

Government ministers urge support for the plan:

Morgan, Nicky. “I voted Remain but now I’m backing the PM on leaving – deal or no deal.” [Conservative MP; digital, culture, media and sport secretary] *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 7.

The business response:

Malnick, Edward. “CBI under fire for refusing help with Brexit planning.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 8.

Spencer, Michael. “I voted Remain, but it’s time for business leaders to back Boris.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 8.

Kilcoyne, Matt. “Here’s how to turn the PM’s refreshing brand of free-market rhetoric into reality.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 20.

What the future holds:

Barclay, Stephen. “The Government won’t back down on Brexit.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 15.

Daley, Janet. “Labour’s pro-deal faction now holds the key to Britain’s political future.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 18.

Hutton, Will. “There is only one route out of the Brexit maze and Jeremy Corbyn must lead the way ... Labour’s leader is not my natural bedfellow but I believe that he holds the key ... Swinson should not only say yes, she should publicly say that if Corbyn moves she will back him” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 46.

Malnick, Edward. “Ministers expect Johnson to lose Queen’s Speech vote.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 11.

Letters. “The Tories will be finished if the PM fails to deliver Brexit on time.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 15.

Also:

Cohen, Nick. “Europeans in Britain used to feel at home. Now they have their doubts. ... Promises to protect EU migrants in Britain and Britons abroad have been broken too quickly ... Brexit has shown that you have to be the right type of Anglo to enter the Anglosphere.” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 50.

Stewart, Rory. “Being a Tory MP was making me stupid. I’m glad I got out. ... This politics divides a country – pits rich against poor, north against south, people against parliament.” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 10.

## Northern Ireland opinion about the Johnson plan

The DUP have been persuaded to support the Johnson plan. However all other parties in Northern Ireland oppose the proposals. A joint letter was sent to The Times by Sinn Fein, SDLP, Alliance and Greens saying that the plan “showed blatant disregard for people and businesses in Northern Ireland”. The leader of the UUP, Robin Swann, said the plan “should be deeply concerning for all those who have the long-term economic and constitutional welfare of Northern Ireland and its people at heart.” Lady Hermon the Independent MP for North Down said that most people in Northern Ireland would be concerned about the plan. Also “Northern Irish firms balk at prospect of two borders.”

Elliott, Francis, Oliver Wright and Sean O’Neill. “Come on Arlene ... talks sway DUP.” *The Times*, October 3, 2019: 7.

Wright, Oliver and Brian Mahon. “Brexit doubts pushing Ulster loyalists towards reunification.” *The Times*, October 5, 2019: 12.

Wright, Oliver. “Proposed border fails test, say DUP’s rivals.” *The Times*, October 5, 2019: 12.

Letter [from leaders of four parties in Northern Ireland]. “Johnson’s new deal.” *The Times*, October 5, 2019: 28.

Devlin, Kate. “Johnson looks set to succeed where May failed three times.”

*The Times*, October 4, 2019: 8.

O’Neill, Sean. “Northern Irish firms balk at prospect of two borders.” *The Times*, October 3, 2019: 7.

Also:

Carroll, Rory. “Among the farms and hedgerows, border talk stirs up bad memories ... confused and worried by the prime minister’s latest proposals.” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 8-9.

Two key figures who were involved in the Good Friday agreement disagree about the Johnson plan:

Trimble, David and Roderick Crawford. “PM’s proposal is better than EU’s backstop betrayal.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 8-9.

Blair Tony. “The EU was crucial to securing peace in Ireland. This plan puts it in peril. ... The Good Friday agreement was born of the most painstaking talks I ever took part in. Now our prime minister threatens to rip it apart.” [the Belfast Agreement, 10 April 1998]. *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 41.

The following statistics on the 2016 referendum, the 2017 general election results and the opinion polling on a united Ireland are relevant.

Looking back to the 2016 referendum, 44% in Northern Ireland voted Leave and 56% voted Remain.

“We now consider the four nations: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. England and Wales both voted Leave. The population of England is much larger than the populations of the other nations and so its Leave vote of 53% is close to the overall UK Leave vote of 52%. Wales also had a 53% Leave vote. ... In contrast Northern Ireland and Scotland both voted Remain. Northern Ireland had a 44% Leave vote and Scotland had a 38% Leave vote.”

(page 8 in:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWV0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoyNDQ3ZmQwODFjNmViZjlkx>)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_European\\_Union\\_membership\\_referendum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_United_Kingdom_European_Union_membership_referendum).

In the 2017 general election the DUP gained 36% of the vote and 10 of the 18 seats.

Sinn Fein, SDLP, UUP, Alliance, Independent and Green won a combined total of 62.4% (29.4%, 11.7%, 10.3%, 7.9%, 2.0% and 0.9%, respectively).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_general\\_election\\_in\\_Northern\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_United_Kingdom_general_election_in_Northern_Ireland)

Support for the DUP was 36% in 2017 and is now 29% (August 2019).

<https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/northernireland.html>

Support in Northern Ireland for a United Ireland has been 17% in 2013; 25% in 2016 (mean of two polls); 36% in 2017 (mean of 3); 36% in 2018 (mean of five); and 39% in 2019 (mean of two). Opposition in 2019 was 45% (mean of two). Lord Ashcroft's poll is just one poll – so caution is needed.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Ireland);

<https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2019/09/my-northern-ireland-survey-finds-the-union-on-a-knife-edge/>;

#### Other references:

The UK in a changing Europe. Brexit analysis

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/analysis-2/>

The biggest obstacle to a workable backstop alternative lies not in the EU, but the UK

Katy Hayward

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-biggest-obstacle-to-a-workable-backstop-alternative-lies-not-in-the-eu-but-the-uk>

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/transitional-justice-institute/research/current-projects/brexit-and-northern-ireland-the-constitutional-conflict-transformation-human-rights-and-equality-consequences>;

<https://brexitlawni.org/>;

### EU opinion about the Johnson plan

“I work on facts and figures. On what is legal and operable. My obligation is to defend, calmly and firmly, the interests of the European Union, of its citizens, its companies, its regions ... And in leaving, the UK cannot ask us to change what we are.” [Michel Barnier]

Henley, Jon, Toby Helm and Michael Savage. “Blame Johnson for no-deal Brexit, says Barnier.” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 1-2.

Helm, Toby and Jon Henley. “‘We cannot change what we are’: Barnier stares down Tory threats.” *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 1-2.

The UK government would respond aggressively if it was forced to delay Brexit.

Malnick, Edward, Christopher Hope and Jamie Johnson. “Johnson to sabotage EU if forced to delay Brexit ... Farage could be ‘nuclear weapon’ as commissioner.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 1, 9.

Also:

Hugger, Justin. “Fears of no-deal on the rise across Germany’s car-making heartland.” *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 10.

[The EU will decide at the end of the week whether a Brexit deal is going to be possible, French President Emmanuel Macron has told Boris Johnson.](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-49953914)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-49953914>

President Macron said talks should now proceed swiftly to see if an agreement can “respect” EU principles.

Mr Johnson said the EU should not be “lured” into thinking there will be a delay to Brexit beyond 31 October.

However, a law requires him to request one if a deal is not agreed by 19 October. As part of a weekend talking to EU leaders, the prime minister told President Macron over the phone he believes a deal can be achieved, but that the EU must match compromises made by the UK.

A French government official said President Macron told Mr Johnson "that the negotiations should continue swiftly with Michel Barnier's team in coming days, in order to evaluate at the end of the week whether a deal is possible that respects European Union principles".

## **Language ... blame ... statistics**

### Demonisation

Sheridan, Danielle. "Stopping Brexit is like fighting the Nazis, says Lib Dem." *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 10.

### The blame game

"Boris Johnson is still gambling on winning his Brexit blame game."

Rawnsley, Andrew. *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 43.

"The EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, has said Boris Johnson's government will have to bear full responsibility for a no-deal Brexit."

Henley, Jon, Toby Helm and Michael Savage. "Blame Johnson for no-deal Brexit, says Barnier." *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 1-2.

Hannan, Daniel. "Leave voters can see what's going on here. They won't blame Boris if Brexit is delayed." *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 6, 2019: 20.

### Partisan appeal to statistics

Partisan writers sometimes claim that the statistics support their partisan viewpoint when a more dispassionate look at the numbers finds no or little such support.

"Britain voted Leave."	cited by Leavers
"Scotland voted Remain."	cited by Remainers
"Northern Ireland voted Remain."	cited by Remainers

The above statements are often cited by the respective groups in support of their cause. The statements are not false as such but are imprecise. The statements can be made more precise by prefacing them with the phrase "a majority of less than 60% in" ... and more precise still by giving the actual number.

"Remaining in the EU is what the British people actually want."

"Remaining in the EU is what Britain wants, says Varadkhar."

Rayner, Gordon. *Daily Telegraph*, October 4, 2019: 1.

The above statement is similar to the three previous ones

"Moreover, as the Irish prime minister has pointed out, recent polls now show a shift towards remain."

Keegan, William. "Brexit only belongs to the lawless 'party of law and order'." *The Observer*, October 6, 2019: 55.

Keegan provides no reference to support his claim that "recent polls now show a shift towards remain." The comprehensive record provided by John Curtice and his colleagues shows the trends over the last couple of years for a number of related questions. The percentages do not move much and in the case of the poll of polls have remained at 53% Remain and 47% Leave for a number of months.

<https://whatukthinks.org/eu/opinion-polls/euref2-poll-of-polls/> ;  
<https://whatukthinks.org/eu/opinion-polls/uk-poll-results/>;