The remoulding of British politics: Explaining political change in Britain 2010-2020.

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Contents

A selection of other publications:

Prentice, James. 2022. '*Labour's lost decade: Why Labour loses.*' Hastings: Capture Politics.

Prentice, James. 2020. *2019 election: Why the Tories won and Labour lost*.' 1st ed. Hastings: Capture Politics

Prentice, James. 2020. '*The Decade of Realignment: Explaining political Change in Britain 2010 - 2019.*' Falmer: University of Sussex.

Prentice, James. 2017. *Still Alone: Social Capital in the UK 2005-2015*. 1st ed. Hastings: Capture Politics.

Prentice, James. 2019. *2017 General Election: The Coming Realignment*. 1st ed. Hastings: Capture Politics.

Prentice, James. 2018. *Give Me Liberty!* 1st ed. Hastings: Capture Politics.

Prentice, James. 2019. *Trendification or Gentrification? A Coastal Case Study*. 1st ed. Hastings: Capture Politics.

Common Abbreviations: BES – British Election Study, ECMS – Essex Continuous Monitoring Survey, BSAS, - British Social Attitudes Survey.

Acknowledgements:

Section 1: The book's reasoning.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The last five years of British politics has greatly altered the political landscape. On the 23rd of June 2016, the UK voted to Leave the EU, and to be more specific parts of England and Wales voted to Leave. Since this historic vote took place seismic political change has taken place. This period dominated by the EU question has claimed the scalps of another two Conservative Prime ministers. No longer do Cameron's Conservatives run the country and now a very different Conservative Party has emerged, Johnson's party. Pre-Brexit the Conservative Party focused on battling Labour in liberal urban areas, seeking to win the middle Englander swing vote. Yet, now Johnson appears to have changed the party's strategy to one that seeks to win disaffected working-class voters based in former Labour heartlands. Labour also changed, it became more inward-looking and did so accordingly to a new base. In the 1980s the party looked inward towards its industrial working-class roots, yet post-2016 it became more focused in liberal cosmopolitan city-centric areas. Under Corbyn, the party targeted younger graduate voters and directed policy towards satisfying such communities. Labour's vote would go up in constituencies that reflected this demographic, but at the same time, they would lose ground to the Tories in more traditional seats, with a fair few changing to the Tories in the 2019 election.

This alteration of the two main parties' support bases would have been quite unthinkable just a decade ago when I first started studying British politics in 2011. Yet, this monumental change has occurred seemingly within a very short time period. As most of these developments took place post-2016 it is often assumed that Brexit is the cause of this new divide, but as this book will show these developments are most likely a culmination of longer-term trends. It is tempting to think that in all likelihood individuals' changing of allegiances stems from their decision in

June 2016, however it is probably more likely that the causes of Brexit went on to shape future political outcomes, such as the 2017 and 2019 elections. This book takes a longer-term approach in order to understand the exact causes behind this reshaping of British politics. The study also uses a statistics focused approach in order to identify trends that demonstrate the importance of these longer-term trends in altering the course of British politics. Therefore, the purpose of this book is to explain the political change in Britain during the 2010s and its likelihood of enduring.

The book's Structure:

This book firstly outlines past literature the book bases itself on and then develops its theory. It identifies what long-term trends have caused such wide-scale political change and the possible reasons behind its cause. The second section of this book then tests this theory by outlining how new issues have risen up the voters' agenda and examines long-term trends on these new important issues. This section argues divisions on these new issues that formed gradually over time were significant in making it possible for UK politics to realign. This section ends by outlining how the rise of such new divisive issues may have weakened old allegiances and made the electorate more volatile, again creating ripe conditions for seismic political change.

The third section analyses the causes behind the critical moment of Brexit. It examines voting patterns during the referendum campaign and highlights how the longer-term divisions witnessed leading up to 2016 were very much reflected in the differences between Remain and Leave voters. Moreover, it highlights how such divisions were present in the minds of the public during the 2016 campaign and how such divides probably partly caused different parts of the electorate to take different sides during the EU referendum campaign. The section finishes by outlining the geographical distribution of the Remain and Leave vote and argues that these trends show deep long-term divisions, of which have partly been caused by socio-economic phenomena that have created long-term changes which have benefited some, whilst harming others. This mainly will focus upon how globalisation may have created winners and losers,

and from this created deep social divisions, of which were finally translated into political divisions in June 2016.

Section four goes on to demonstrate how this political divide did not end with Brexit but carried on into the 2017 and 2019 elections. Rather than the new political divides being created in June 2016, the book argues that these elections reflect the longer-term political developments outlined earlier in the study, rather than just the Remain/Leave divide created in June 2016. This section first analyses the 2017 election. It highlights how increases in both the Labour and Conservative Party vote represented divisions that were present in the 2016 referendum. It demonstrates how the rapid increase in the Labour Party vote came from those who had very similar views to that expressed by Remain voters and the Conservative Party's vote came from individuals that expressed views very consistent with Leave voters. Moving onto the 2019 election, the book outlines how the Labour Party's losses, and the Conservative Party's gains, very much reflected the Leave side of the EU debate. This again will highlight how divides that created the Leave vote in 2016 went onto dramatically remould party support. The chapter will finish by outlining how the change in the geographical bases of support for the two main parties reflect the geographical divide found in the 2016 referendum, again indicating divides that shaped Brexit continued to shape important political developments.

Section five of the book concludes by stating the extent to which this book's theory can explain Britain's political change in the 2010s. It outlines how the book's theory can explain significant political developments across the last decade. It will argue that long-term trends caused by globalisation, such as economic dislocation and an increase in immigration, has gone on to shape new political divisions. This section will then go on to explore if these new political divisions are set to last through analysing the impact of covid19. This book will argue that although this divide was heavily present in the 2019 election over time it does have the potential to fade away if the Conservative government is judged not to handle the pandemic and its

economic implications well. Moreover, the ageing electorate created from the 2016 EU referendum will gradually be replaced by another generation who could be more sympathetic to other messages and liberal left-leaning parties.

Before going any further, it should be noted that when referring to political change in Britain this book is mostly referring to England and Wales because Scottish and Northern Irish politics, whilst part of the UK's political system, does possess different party system structures. As a result, this book's findings won't be as generalizable to Scottish and Northern Irish outcomes as to English and Welsh outcomes.

The book's concept:

The concept central to this book is that of political realignment. Therefore, the question this book seeks to address is what is the extent the UK political system realigned in the last decade, 2010-2020? The approach of the book will be to analyse data of political opinions and voting behaviour in a way that will test the extent to which there has been a wide-scale political change in the UK within the last decade. The more tests that produce positive results, showing signs of a realignment, the more confidently the study will conclude that a realignment has indeed occurred.

This book's question firstly arose out of my initial analysis of the result of the 2017 General Election (GE). In the aftermath of this election, some commentators were surprised how Labour was able to close a large deficit to produce a shock hung parliament result (Pasha-Robinson 2017). Initially, the result felt impossible to explain under traditional models used to analyse British politics. However, when considering models used to explain political change in other types of party systems the 2017 election outcome started to make much more sense. This idea developed into my MA dissertation undertaken at the University of Essex. This analysed the potential that the 2017 GE had fundamentally changed the future direction of British politics,

which is what the concept of political realignment historically has measured. This study replicated the 'Critical Election' argument used to test if the 1997 GE was a realigning election, and seeks to replicate it in the context of the 2017 GE (Evans and Norris 1999). My dissertation concluded that an electoral realignment had fully occurred within British politics, but a full realignment had not yet occurred fully as party system change had not yet emerged.

This initial research suggested to me that it was possible that the British political system may undergo a full realignment that would alter the way parties compete and succeed in elections. From this, statistical evidence started to emerge around deep generational divides in voting patterns, similar to the divisions displayed over Brexit (Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley 2017). As a consequence, I continued to explore more data sources and between the 2017 and 2019 elections more evidence emerged that the UK could be undergoing a full realignment. One particular development that made this book possible was the inability to get Brexit through the House of Commons by the 29th of March 2019. This led to past loyalties, which already had partly fragmented, to fully fragment by the time of the 2019 EU elections (Green 2019). As a result, the increased voter volatility again raised the possibility of a partial realignment found in 2017 developing into a fully-fledged one in 2019. Moreover, in academic and media discourse there was increased speculation that the UK had undergone a full realignment, (Sackur 2017; Sanders 2017; Surridge et al. 2017; Goodwin 2019; Gamble 2019; Singh 2019; Sabbagh 2019). This encouraged me to investigate the potential the UK had fully realigned during the 2019 election through analysing constituency results and the British election study (BES). This book is a culmination of all this thinking and research.

The designed outcome of this study is to create a series of statistical models that tests the extent to which there has been a full realignment. If all the chapters in this book show appropriate evidence, as defined by this book's hypotheses, the study will conclude that a realignment has occurred.

<u>History of the realignment concept:</u>

This book's subject is the political science field of psephology. Within this field, this book focuses on the concept of political realignment. The literature on political realignment broadly implies that democracies can go through large-scale change that alters the basis of party competition (Denver, Carman and Johns 2012). This theory outlines a process of how politics changes within a country for the long term, which in turn explains how countries change (Dalton et al. 1984). The process of political change occurs through large-scale social changes which culminates in a scenario where political leaders adapt by altering policy, or which voters they appeal to, or both (Burnham 1970; Clubb, Flanigan and Zingale 1980). Social change usually takes a generation to occur, which is why realignments have occurred periodically through both UK and US politics (Norris 1997; Burnham 1970). This change is usually the result of developments that are the result of political decisions taken a generation before the realignment occurs. Alternatively, sometimes these developments can even be beyond political control and are a result of wider economic trends, as identified by Anthony King when analysing party system changes (Bale 2017).

The process of realignment broadly envisages a situation where traditional voting patterns start to break down as loyalties decline, and political dealignment starts to grow. Once political dealignment is complete, democracies then go through a period of destabilisation where voters depart from their historic voting behaviour, which often produces surprising and close election results (Bartle and Allen 2011). This stage is known as a period of volatility. Traditionally in UK politics this has resulted in coalitions and hung parliaments, with governments struggling to survive and implement policy (Denver and Garnett 2014). Realignment then potentially can occur when one party secures a majority with its new base, subsequently forcing other parties to change their strategy, thereby changing the political system.

Historically, political realignment was thought of as a sociological process created separately from political party development and electoral behaviour. One of the first theories published on this subject was Lipset's theory of political cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). This theory builds upon Downs' theory of a left/right political spectrum and insists voters can re-position themselves within multiple dimensions, also known as political cleavages (Downs 1957). This, in theory, can only occur on important issues that cut across the political divide (Mair 1997). This is because later research discovered that consistent positions, needed to alter long-term behaviour, only tend to occur on people's most important issues (Zaller 1992). As these issues cut across the left/right political divide spatial models can be altered to add a line going down the middle, thus creating four quadrants, meaning multi-dimensional politics develops (Stokes 1963). These new issues usually arise outside the political arena and are developed by significant socio-economic shifts, which political parties then latch onto, which then impacts how voters cast their ballots (Webb 2000).

This theory fits in well with UK political history, which has been guided by various sociological divides that have occurred sparingly in a political system's history (Rose and McAllister 1990). Firstly, there was the divide between the protectionist landowning class and pro-free trade liberals (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). This resulted in the collapse of the Tory Party and the dominance of the Liberal Party. Secondly, with the emergence of trade unions, wider enfranchisement and the social consequences of industrialisation the class divide emerged, which enabled Labour to replace the Liberal Party and the old religious divides (Cook 1975). Finally, this class divide existed until the emergence of Thatcherism, when politics was realigned around a consensus surrounding global economics. This was associated with globalisation, deregulation, lowering taxation and economic competence (Miller 1990).

Research in the 1980s used newly available datasets to reveal how values and political allegiances started to change in individuals who became more socially mobile (Inglehart 1970).

From this, supporting evidence emerged showing that in the USA and the UK a generation who benefited from rising prosperity began to have different values to their parents (Inglehart 1985; Nie and Verba 1976; Butler 1963). One differing value was the growing emphasis on quality of life factors, such as freedom, both in terms of civil rights and economic freedoms (Nie and Verba 1976 Särlvik and Crewe 1974). As the post-war consensus began to break down due to economic stagnation, parties found it harder to rely on electoral bases the previous generation had bequeathed them. For example, in the UK children who had benefitted from increased wealth and opportunities, which their parents did not have when growing up, grew more distant from their parents in support of the post-war consensus. For instance, levels for trade union memberships differed between generations (Särlvik and Crewe 1983; Butler and Stokes 1974). Consequently, when significant economic troubles developed in the late 1970s, this new generation of former left-leaning voters was less aligned to Labour and the unions, and some drifted towards Thatcher and the Conservatives (Evans 1993). The consequence of such social change was a political change of dealignment, causing left parties to move to the centre to become electorally competitive (Clarke 2004).

Due to its ability to explain important historic events in British political history this theory, therefore, has been argued to summarise political change in British political history (Crewe 1992).

Realignment literature states that such political change has occurred periodically because they tend to occur through generational changes, meaning that a correlation between age, public opinion and voting patterns slowly starts to materialise in successive elections (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976; Rose and McAllister 1990). This pattern strengthens as one generation replaces another with each passing election, finally culminating in a critical election where the electorate realigns around these new cohort divides (Key 1955). Critical elections usually occur in times of crisis which force a change within the electorate who have grown tired of old loyalties (Rose

and McAllister 1990). Such generational changes that have been identified are large scale economic changes. For example, in the USA the Great Depression was identified as a time of change, with voters switching from the Republicans to Roosevelt's Democrats (Clubb, Flanigan and Zingale 1980; Burnham 1970). In this example, the economic boom in the 1920s brought a sudden and sharp increase in living standards which, when eliminated by the Great Depression, brought about a re-evaluation of voters' traditional voting loyalties (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). Traditionally loyal Republican voters who had grown accustomed to higher affluence became more post-materialist and expected these higher living standards to continue (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976). When the reverse occurred many became disillusioned with the Republican laissez-faire approach to the crisis which failed to work. As a result, when Roosevelt offered economic reform packages many of these voters switched to the Democrats who became their loyal voting base for the next generation of elections (Campbell 1964).

Another example can be found in 1970s Britain which followed a similar pattern to that of 1930s America. Post-war Britain experienced sustained economic affluence, which produced increased emphasis on post-materialist quality of life values (Inglehart 1985). The oil shock then brought stagflation and an economic crisis to Britain, which was made worse by successive trade union strikes. As the Labour government failed to deal with economic problems, characterised by lowering living standards and union strikes, the generation who had become more accustomed to higher living standards started to change their allegiance in successive elections during the 1970s (Särlvik and Crewe 1983). Voters whose parents may have remained loyal to Labour themselves did not feel this same loyalty and changed their allegiance (Särlvik and Crewe 1983). This change then led to Labour being in opposition for a long time, causing a crisis on the left (Bogdanor 2018).

Moreover, there are political decisions which lead to generational changes that later realign political systems. One such realignment can be said to have occurred in the USA with

politicians' decision to expand higher education after World War Two. This led to a generation that experienced a more diverse community and was exposed to more liberal ideas than their preceding generations (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976; Inglehart 1970). Moreover, this generation also experienced higher affluence, cementing more liberal and post-material attitudes. This resulted in a generation that had more liberal views than their parents, which when the civil rights movement emerged caused a weakening in allegiances (Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). Children of Republicans started to grow more distant from the Republicans' stances on equality and war. As one generation replaced another and racial inequality issues created political and constitutional crises these younger voters abandoned their Republican upbringings and gravitated towards the Democrats, culminating in a critical election with the elections of presidents Kennedy and Johnson (Clubb, Flanigan and Zingale 1980).

Another example of political decisions leading to social changes which created a realignment can be said to have occurred in 1920s Britain. With the emergence of mass industrialisation and the enfranchisement of all male voters religion began to become less prominent in voters' minds and occupational class divides rose in prominence (Cook 1975). As this trend became stronger as more voters entered the electorate and one generation replaced another this resulted in voters switching from the Liberal Party to the Labour Party (Cook 1975). This realignment lasted for several elections after the critical election of 1924 where the first Labour government was elected, resulting in a class divide that dominated British politics for decades (Butler 1963). This class divide broke down in the 1980s with increased affluence causing new middle-class voters to move away from Labour and towards the Conservatives (Särlvik and Crewe 1983; Butler and Stokes 1974). This caused electoral competition to be focused around these middle-England centre-ground voters and looked to have been a permanent change.

The main change which this book focuses upon is the implementation of the Washington consensus that put Britain into a globalised economic world, which further integrated the UK

into the European Union. This consensus led to economic policies of embracing globalisation, deregulation, privatisation and lower levels of taxation, much of which New Labour came to accept (Stiglitz 2013). The book will particularly focus upon the idea that the creation of a globalised economic world has created winners and losers, and from this has created new political tribes (Kriesi 2014). Globalisation has also been theoried to increase the influence of the EU over the UK and also helped increase levels of migration (Betz 1993). Crucially, much past literature has shown this to be essential in making new realignments possible (Dalton et al. 1984; Elff 2009; Wolinetz 2009; Norris and Inglehart 2019). The greater the effect these new non-economic issues have the more the electorate will be deemed to have changed from voting on traditional economic issues to new issues, and from this realigned (Evans and Chzhen 2013).

This book explores the possibility that this model of British politics broke down in the 2010s and was replaced by a new model that could continue to shape British political outcomes.

<u>This book's definition of the realignment concept:</u>

With the emergence of modern computing, the behavioural revolution occurred and new theories took over, such as valance theory. Despite valence theories, which assert that voters' assessment of parties' and their respective leaders' competence best explains voting behaviour, becoming the dominant focus of election research (Whiteley et al. 2013) other academics did continue work with the realignment thesis. Rather than abandoning the realignment concept altogether, academics worked on creating a more detailed definition of realignment so future change could be better analysed under the realignment thesis. For example, such research addressed the lack of an agreed definition for realignment (Evans and Norris 1999). Therefore, researchers subsequently attempted to create a theory that could encompass enough factors that could adequately measure the concept of political realignment and tested the extent the 1997 election could be called a realigning election (Evans and Norris 1999). This research

culminated in the book 'Critical Elections', of which this book takes its definition of realignment, so to avoid conceptual stretching.

This book sought to create a more concrete definition of realignment by merging long-term explanations with short-term ones. It did this by building upon a theory published by V.O. Keys which highlighted analysis where some elections in American political history produced large-scale and long-lasting political change, known as a critical election (Keys 1955). This theory was subsequently later further developed by analysing case studies to explore which statistical tests could effectively identify which previous elections could be described as a critical one. Such work used America as a case study due to the large amount of electoral historical data that this country has recorded both at a national and local level (Burnham 1970). Other work also attempted to draw relevant statistical tests that could effectively identify the process of realignment (Clubb, Flanigan and Zingale 1980). As the theory was applied to more countries outside the USA, alternative statistical tests were generated (Clubb, Flanigan and Zingale 1980). The UK for example had statistical tests that differed from methods identified originally in America. For example, America focused more on geographic aggregate changes and the UK focused more on individual-level voter changes (Miller 1991; Flanagan and Dalton 1984). As a result, the concept of a critical election, the core component of a realignment, suffered from conceptual stretching.

Consequently, academics spanning different fields of political science decided to come together to analyse the extent to which the 1997 GE was a realigning election (Evans and Norris 1999). This led to the production of a book that created a much less contested conceptual definition that utilised many different political science approaches to explain political change (Evans and Norris 1999). For instance, Budge analysed parties' manifesto content by exploring the possibility that party positions had dramatically changed, highlighting the potential of extensive party system change (Budge 1999). Webb and Farrell analysed party membership ideological

changes, to gauge how intra-party democracy may be changing, and if this would likely cause a change in the party system (Webb & Farrell 1999). Curtice analysed changes in regional voting patterns, while Evans researched class trends to investigate the potential of wider social electoral realignment occurring (Curtice 1999; Evans and Norris 1999). Finally, other academics such as Norris and Franklin focused on earlier theories emphasising the importance of new issues, which could create the emergence of new cleavage divides that consequently generate realignments (Franklin 1999; Evans and Norris 1999). This theory found that there were too many tests that the 1997 GE failed to meet within the three categories explored, consequently, it was concluded a realignment had not occurred (Evans and Norris 1999).

Overall, this book covers all three main theories: patterns of party competition, electoral changes and a new issue cleavage, thus creating a broader and more detailed analytical framework. This definition has been accepted as a sound theoretical framework with which to test the extent a realignment has occurred, and consequently, the theory has not changed since.

The three main components are fully defined as:

New issue alignments:

This book will define 'new' issues as falling outside the domain of economics and public service provision. This is because the last period of dealignment, which oversaw the breakdown of class-based politics, placed heavy emphasis on economic competence and public service provision as the most important issue (Clarke et al. 2011). Therefore, a new issue that can cause a realignment away from this consensus is most likely not to be thought of solely as an economic issue, even if it has economic origins. Moreover, this issue will need to cross left/right dividing lines to generate enough cross-party appeal to force a breakdown of traditional voting behaviour. This is because historical analysis has discovered that for new issues to be strong enough to break down traditional partisan loyalties they must cut across old political divides

(Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Dunleavy 1985). These issues were first conceptually defined as cross-cutting issues (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). It has been suggested that in a contemporary context such issues could be immigration and the EU (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Moreover, some academics have explored how these two issues are both expressions of wider discontent and might be perceived to be linked by voters (Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel 2018; Goodwin and Dennison 2015). This means when combined they become even more prominent in voters' minds, which results in the new issue being strong enough to be a cross-cutting issue that can change partisan loyalties (Szczerbiak 2017; Goodwin 2019). Because of this past research, this book will define new issues as non-economic issues, which focuses on the themes of immigration and the EU as cross-cutting issues.

Sociological alignments:

Sociological alignments are defined as clear and distinct social group divisions displaying a divergence of opinions. Moreover, these social divides need to have been altered or replaced with, new social divides for a realignment to be possible (Miller 1991). Previous sociological divisions have been religious divides, regional divides and economic class divides (Field 1997; Pattie and Johnston 2005; Robertson 1984). The last realignment occurred in the late 1970s where it has been argued a consensus formed around centre-ground politics, open markets, economic competence and public service provision (Clarke 2004). Therefore, for a realignment to have emerged, it is likely that the old left/right divide has gradually faded and new social divides have emerged over new vital issues. Socio-political divides are defined as different social groups having contrasting views on these new non-economic issues, such as younger people having contrasting views to older voters (Wolinetz 2009). Consequently, it would be expected to see social groupings' views change from one of division to greater uniformity on economic questions, while on the other hand witnessing wider gaps between different social groupings on questions surrounding topics of immigration and the EU. These divides will have

emerged gradually since the last realignment around differing reactions to the consequences of that alignment (Peck 2016). These new divides have not emerged from nowhere or by coincidence, but are instinctive reactions to changes that have been influencing many Western democracies for a generation, which are shaped around feelings of winning or losing from such change (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008). These are reactions for and against globalisation which has increased immigration and the influence of EU institutions over national governments, challenging ideas of sovereignty (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004; Kriesi 2014; Norris and Inglehart 2019). This theory is known as 'culture shock' where different groups in society react in contrast to changes that are perceived to alter society (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008). One often researched culture shock is that of immigration where research has found that groups who have had more exposure to immigration historically tend to be more accepting of immigration compared to groups who have been less exposed, who are cultural conservatives (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008; Duffy 2015; Norris and Inglehart 2019).

In the context of this book, the culture shock is defined as greater immigration coming from increased globalisation and EU influence over UK society (Pabst 2016). Groups who have been more exposed to immigration, typically younger people living in more urban areas with greater connections to universities and higher education, are defined as the group less likely to react negatively to the increased immigration the UK has experienced (Duffy 2014; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Meanwhile, groups who have been less exposed to immigration, older people living away from university influences and more rooted in their local area, tend to be more cautious about the cultural change the UK has experienced with increased immigration (Duffy 2014; J. Curtice 2019). It is these instinctive reactions to recent influential events which have provided cues for voters to react against once favoured politicians and their traditional party, encouraging voters to gravitate towards historically opposed parties (Pabst 2016; Goodhart 2017). For example, groups that have reacted more negatively towards changes over the EU

and immigration may have drifted from being traditional Labour voters towards conservative options who had similar views on immigration, causing traditional left voters to vote for right-leaning parties (Achterberg and Houtman 2006; Mackie and Emma 2017; Downes and Loveless 2018). These value divides, therefore, have created heuristic devices that have altered voters' perceptions of British politics which has resulted in new voting patterns that follow these differing social groups' reactions to cultural change (Runciman 2016; Pabst 2016; Norris, Pippa 2018).

Academics have theorised such new value divides as one of cultural liberalism against cultural conservatism (Kriesi 2014; Pabst 2016; Goodhart 2017; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Cultural liberalism is defined as being more accepting of trends of increased EU powers, immigration and the globalisation of markets; for instance, cultural liberals, will prioritise the common market in any Brexit deal and oppose Brexit (Pabst 2016). Cultural conservativism in contrast tends to be more cautious in accepting EU power, immigration and often has a more communitarian view of the world, meaning they may reject globalisation (Pabst 2016). This is the divide different social groups will gather around, with younger highly qualified individuals tending to have more culturally liberal views, in contrast, cultural conservatives will tend to be older and less qualified (Kriesi 2014; Swales 2016). Cultural liberals are predicted to vote for left-liberal leaning parties, whilst cultural conservatives are projected to increasingly vote for right-authoritarian parties. In the context of the UK, such views might lead individuals to reject the EU and prefer gaining immigration controls to vote for the Conservative Party, whilst those taking the opposite view being more likely to vote Labour. (Pabst 2016).

Changed party competition:

The first element of political party realignment is parties themselves changing. This change typically involves alteration of the social and geographical bases of support the parties have

(Wolinetz 2009; Johnston 1985). Historically, academic literature has analysed this by analysing aggregate-level change and how the flow of the vote may be changing (Brandenburg and Johns 2014). This type of electoral movement will have altered party competition, meaning that the type of voters changing allegiance will have changed.

This means that the type of swing voter that can decide election outcomes will have altered (Norris 1997). This critical voter would have changed in terms of social demographics (Norris 1997). Typically, since the last realignment, the median voter has been described as middle-class with, weaker political allegiances than their parents, and primarily will want to vote for who is deemed to perform best on delivering economic prosperity (McDonald 2019; Clarke 2004). For party competition to have changed the social demographics of the median voter also should have changed away from this stereotypical middle England demographic (McDonald 2019), towards a new social base, such as the old working-class base of Britain. Further to this, the geographic location of these voters should have also changed, meaning that old key marginal seats will have been replaced with new ones that have different characteristics and demographics to the old key marginals (Johnston 1985).

According to past literature, party change goes further than just electioneering, instead, it reflects a change in the ideological nature of the party (Mair 1997; Bale 2017). A party responds to the realignment not just through altering its election strategies, but the position it takes as well, such as altering its general manifesto direction (Budge, Ezrow and McDonald 2010).

With all parties changing their position this brings the opportunity for a change in the level of polarisation, potentially altering the structure of the party system itself. This is known as Party system change (Sartori 1990; Mair 1997). This refers to the direction of party competition changing, such as moving from a centripetal model, where centre-ground positions win the day, to a centrifugal model, where clearer more distinctly ideological approaches win.

This book takes the pre-2017 GE definition of the UK's party system as one of alternating patterns of pre-dominance which is based around centripetal competition structures (Quinn 2013). As a result, for a realignment to have materialised there must be potential for the UK party system to have diverged from this former centripetal type. This means that the structure of the party system should have changed to one where parties compete away from the political centre in order to secure their base, which is also known as a centrifugal pattern of party competition (Sartori 1990). In the British context, this would result in former possible coalitions, such as the Lib-Dem and Conservative 2010 - 2015 coalition, becoming unworkable due to ideological polarisation (J. Curtice 2019). For example, Curtice suggested the Conservatives in 2019 had to win the election outright due to the ever-decreasing coalition potential of the party, due to the deepening polarisation in parliament surrounding Brexit (Clinton 2019).

This is especially important when considering past literature has identified party system change often occurs with fluctuations in parliamentary party polarisation (Stokes 1963; Mair 2006; Budge, Ezrow and McDonald 2010; Green 2015) In order to test this, the study will identify if party competition has become more polarised.

If increased polarisation is found to exist within the party system then the study would need to identify what new system had emerged in its place. In an extensive historical and literature review, Norris has identified a possible new system, a two-bloc system with one dominant party (Evans and Norris 1999). Whilst these systems are rare they often occur in majoritarian systems that are undergoing large levels of political change (Norris 1997). Such examples include Japan with the LDP 1955 to 1989, in India with the Congress Party until 1977, Israel with Labour 1948 to 1977, Mexico when the PRI who retained control of government for 60 years and the Social Democratic Party in Sweden from 1932 to 1976 (Norris 1997). A predominant party having control of government formation with the opposition following multi-party competition

structures particularly follows Scandinavian party system history. If the UK has a clear dominant party of government and the opposition follows multi-party traits this could indicate the emergence of Scandinavian bloc trends (Sartori 1990). This system has a bipolar structure where left-wing parties compete with each other, vice versa with the right and centre parties fail to maximise their base and perform less well (Berglund and Lindstrom 1979; Sundberg 1999). This system can produce one dominant party in one bloc, leaving them control of government formation for large periods of time, with many opposition parties fighting amongst themselves on the other side of the bloc (Berglund and Lindstrom 1979; Sundberg 1999). This type of analysis would also identify if the party system may have become more centrifugal than centripetal, all indicating a more comprehensive party system change (Sartori 1990). In the context of the UK, it would be expected the left-bloc would have higher competition levels and the main left party, Labour, will therefore be squeezed and lose out in this system, with the main right party, the Tories, being the beneficiary of this development.

In order to confirm a realignment has occurred, this book will demonstrate evidence supporting wide-scale political change as defined by the above three definitions of political realignment.

Chapter 2: The Realignment, how did it happen?

This chapter outlines the theory upon which the book bases itself. In the last chapter, it was stated that this book focuses on the concept of realignment. This chapter tells the reader how this change is theorised to have occurred. This chapter argues that long-term changes created by globalisation have created winners and losers, of which have formed into distinct new opposing political groupings. These new political groupings have formed into two blocs, which broadly can be described as a new culturally liberal vs culturally conservative divide. These opposing blocs have latched onto parties on opposing sides of the divide, thus remoulding political parties' support bases. The book argues that those on the culturally liberal side have realigned around liberal-left wing parties, primarily Labour, but also the Lib-Dems and Green Party as well, all be it in smaller numbers than compared to Labour. Alternatively, those on the culturally conservative side flowed towards the Conservative Party, with a select few opting for the Brexit Party, and even fewer choosing to stick with UKIP. This book's theory argues that this phenomenon developed over a long time and culminated throughout 2019, fully emerging in the 2019 election. Therefore, the book argues that traditional left-wing supporting seats turning blue in the 2019 election can be explained by this book's theory.

This chapter also sets out the theoretical models the book bases its statistical tests upon, therefore outlining the theories this book is exploring in more detail. Once this is done the chapter finishes with outlining hypotheses that state what the book should go on to find if its theory is correct.

Theory on how electoral realignment has occurred:

This study theorises that a realignment has occurred through significant social-economic change, which is a consequence of the last realignment, where both sides accepted global economics. This acceptance of neoliberal fiscal policies led to long-term social changes, of which are shaped around those who have won and lost from globalisation developments (Goodwin and Dennison 2015; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2018; Kriesi 2014). The most notable change is the decline in the proportion of the working class in western democracies (Tilley and Evans 2017). This has meant that this social grouping's political leverage has declined, and parties consequently have a reduced incentive to base manifesto content around these groupings' demands. Furthermore, there is growing evidence that party manifestoes represent these groups' preferences less as a percentage of overall content (Tilley and Evans 2017).

Moreover, globalisation may have created further social developments where some social groups have become economically more insecure (Oesch 2008). This level of insecurity might have led to increased concerns over immigration (Citrin et al. 1997). On top of this, there is evidence that increased economic openness, leading to higher migration numbers, can suppress wage growth capabilities for the economically insecure groups most concerned with immigration (Dustmann, Frattini and Preston 2013). Meanwhile, while globalisation has potentially left these declining social groups more economically insecure it has given more opportunities to others (Teney, Lacewell and De Wilde 2014). One such group is younger graduates, who on average can expect to see higher wages, more secure work and better job opportunities than other groups (Jarvis 2018; Major and Machin 2018). Therefore, there is a cohort change effect where some social groups have declined in numbers, causing a loss of influence, while other groups have experienced quite the opposite trend. As a result, groups

disadvantaged by these changes witness a great deal of social and economic change, over which they feel unable to have much influence over (Goodwin and Milazzo 2017).

With this, individuals who have culturally more conservative views tend to feel politically powerless and consequently feel that their preferences are threatened. These groups are broadly known as the left-behind groups and tend to have similar predispositions on issues like immigration because of the cultural changes described above (Zaller 1992; Goodwin 2018). On the other hand, groups that have benefitted from change tend to be more supportive of the consequences of the global economic system that has dominated British society since the 1980s (Goodwin and Denninson 2015). Past research has found that cultural conservatives tend to be older and have fewer qualifications, whilst liberals tend to be younger and have accessed university-level education (Inglehart and Norris 2019). Therefore, society has developed two distinct sets of social groupings that are more predisposed to have directly opposite positions, creating a divergence in values that cut across traditional left/right divides (Achterberg and Houtman 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Kriesi 2014). These values then became infused into British political discourse as new issues rose up the agenda, primarily immigration after new countries joined the EU and became eligible for access to freedom of movement, creating a widespread expectation that parties should tackle the immigration issue.

While this development occurred mainstream party positioning remained focused around centre-ground party competition structures, characteristically fighting battles around economic competence and policy, meaning new issues were left under-represented (Clarke et al. 2016; Laver 2001; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2016). Labour, in particular, can be thought to have become more middle-class, and from this less representative of working-class people. The effect was that voters became disillusioned with the mainstream parties and looked for third parties to fill the vacated space (Meguid 2005). This is broadly known as Niche Party theory, where third parties gain traction due to a highly compact centre that mostly focuses only on

economic matters, leaving space for new parties to make inroads on non-economic issues (Ezrow 2008; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004). As these parties continued to grow in influence this, in part, led to a referendum being called on EU membership, and consequently Brexit. Brexit represents more than just an individual's views on Europe, but rather a much more fundamental value divide (Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley 2017). Voters felt compelled to re-evaluate their positions as the Brexit event forced parties to address the issue as it quickly became the number one issue in British politics. The Conservatives backed a harder form of Brexit, with Labour offering a softer more middle-ground option, in order to appeal to both, Remain and Leave voters. This development led to a change in historical voting patterns as voters were forced to choose between two competing visions of a Brexit deal that would shape Britain. As some voters' traditional party took an opposite policy to their preferred Brexit outcome this caused them to vote for the other mainstream party, consequently creating voting patterns that broke past political behaviour.

Moreover, former UKIP voters felt the party was no longer relevant as their flagship policy had been achieved (Cutts, Goodwin and Milazzo 2017). Along with this, the Lib-Dem's strategy as an anti-Conservative Party was damaged by the coalition (Quinn, Bara and Bartle 2011), meaning people who traditionally aligned with third parties now looked towards one of the mainstream parties, again forcing a clear choice. This follows the logic of Duverger's law where people knew they were voting for a governing party and therefore had to choose which governing party's version of Brexit they wanted (Duverger 1959). Brexit represented different preferences involving multiple attitudes to economic openness, to immigration and how best to manage local industries. Brexit, therefore, created a new cleavage covering a range of policy issues that appeal to social grouping predispositions. This new cleavage can broadly be described as a cultural liberalism versus cultural conservatism divide. Rather than thinking of this as an identity divide the assumption made here is that this new divide is based around values

which can be thought of as an ideology shaped largely by a mind-set. This is a divide of thoughts around culture. In more detail, this can be described as communitarianism vs individualism, Briton vs cosmopolitan (also known as the somewheres' vs the nowheres'), traditional vs progressive, nation-statist vs globalist, sovereigntist vs internationalist (Pabst 2016; Goodhart 2017). Those on the cultural conservative side instinctively react against changes globalisation has brought, whilst those on the liberal side embrace them (Carreras and Bowler 2019). This divide is argued to have continued to shape party positioning and electoral behaviour, therefore representing the potential for long-term change and a full realignment.

This book argues that the above described process has indeed caused a realignment to occur within British politics, meaning both the voters and mainstream political parties have greatly altered. These long-term changes are thought to have developed since the start of the last realignment, of which occurred in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. This long-term trend finally culminated in political change towards the end of the 2010s and therefore has remoulded British politics into a new type of political system. This book will test this theory by examining the extent that opinions on new issues, of which have arisen from the recent political consensus around globalisation, have affected the probability to vote for one of the two main parties. This is the main test this book seeks to conduct, if this is met then it can be argued that British politics has been remoulded in recent times.
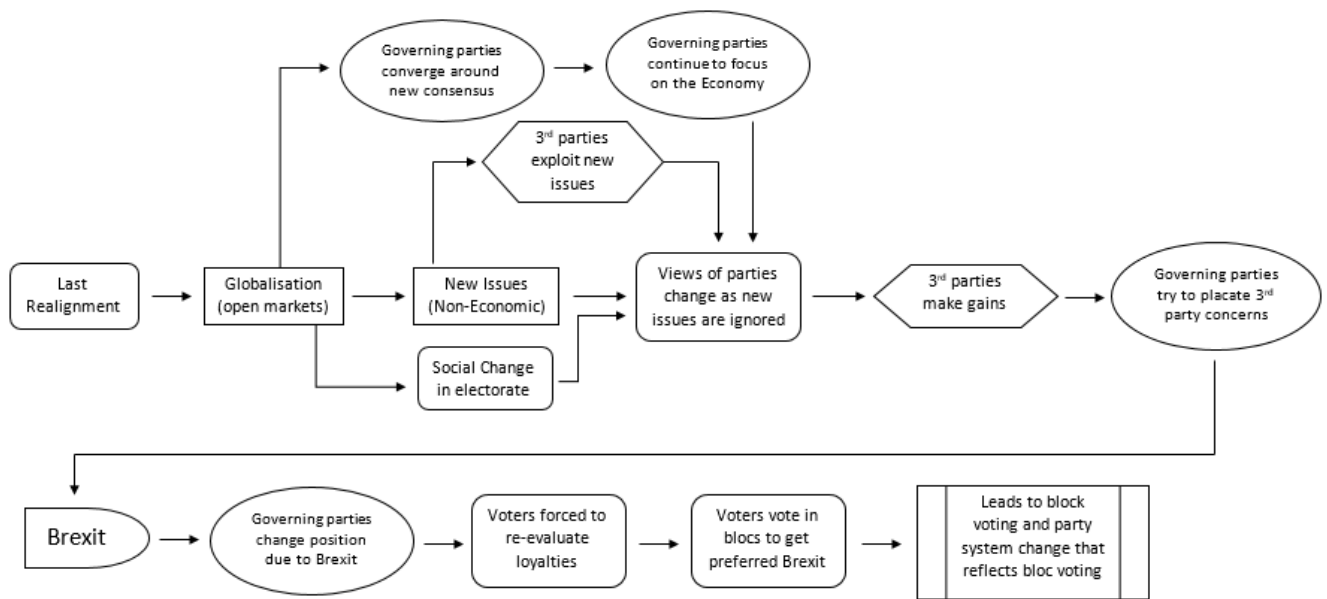
Diagram 2.1: Summary of my theoretical model this book uses.

How the theory will be tested:

X: Views on Brexit/Immigration → Y: Probability to vote Conservative/ Labour.

Diagram 2.1.1: basic summary of my theoretical framework this book uses, **2010 and 2015 elections.**

Left parties compromise and accept globalisation, migration flows change. (EU migration). - - - - - -> **X:** Immigration (represents the new cultural divide), old economic divides decline. → **Y:** Electoral Realignment (represented by change in probability to vote for Labour/Conservative).
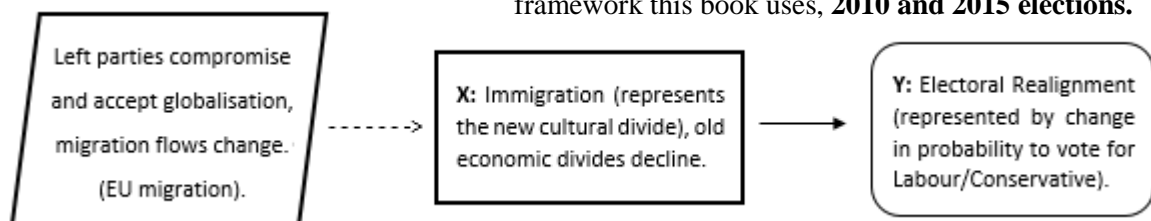
Diagram 2.1.2: basic summary of my theoretical framework this book uses, **2017 and 2019 elections.**

Globalisation, de-industrialisation, immigration – splits voters socio-demographically. Helps create Brexit - - - - - -> **X:** Brexit (represents the new cultural value divide), old economic divides decline. → **Y:** Electoral Realignment (represented by change in probability to vote for Labour/Conservative).
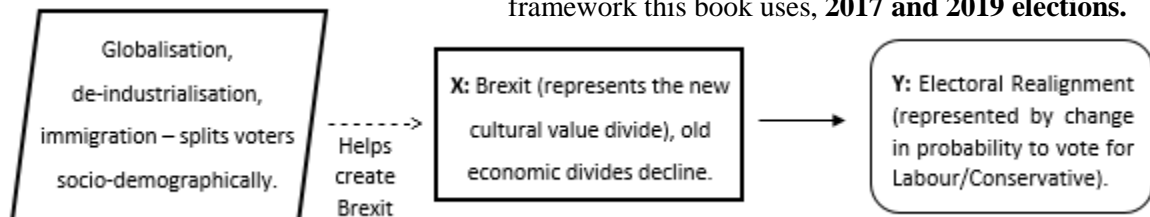
As stated in the introduction, there are three components to a realignment, therefore this book must use its main theory to create models that explain how each component of realignment took place. From these models, hypotheses can then be generated that will state what needs to be found for each component of realignment to have occurred.

This book's theory on how new issues have arisen:

The first component of realignment is the rise of new issues that cause a new divide, especially one that cuts across the traditional left/right divide. This book theorises that new issues have caused value divides, of which have remoulded voters' allegiances. It particularly focuses on explaining how economic issues may have become less prevalent in the minds of the electorate due to other factors, such as immigration and the EU increasing in saliency (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018; Meguid 2005).

This book theorises that new issues have arisen through two social and economic developments. Firstly, new issues may have arisen due to natural societal developments that have caused value changes in passing generations (Inglehart 2008). Secondly, these value differences between groups and generations may have then been exacerbated by globalisation (McKay 2019; Carreras 2019). These value changes have led to a weakening of socially conservative views, which typically concern questions of equality and perceived morality, and have been replaced with value divides surrounding questions of cultural change, such as concerns around immigration, sovereignty and an individual's perceived place in the world (Goodhart 2017).

According to Inglehart's work, the UK should have experienced a value change through one generation slowly replacing the generation before them. A value change will occur as fewer younger people respond as socially conservative (Inglehart 1970; Inglehart 1985). This is because as each generation becomes more exposed to greater levels of affluence, university-level education and globalisation younger groups begin to have different experiences to their

parents and more people are prepared to accept others socially different to them, such as with race or sexuality (Inglehart 2008). However, as socially conservative views have moved on a new value divide has emerged surrounding questions of culture, national sovereignty and independence of nations (Kriesi 2010a; Surridge et al. 2017; Inglehart and Norris 2017; Webb 2018). This value divide may have originated as a rejection of a consensus political parties formed around centre-ground globalised economics where some groups felt unrepresented and excluded from economic affluence (Bornschier 2010; Eatwell and Goodwin 2018). As a consequence, some groups have rejected the post-materialist value system where people gradually are seen to become more liberal, which can be defined in terms of the acceptance of open societies and economies, as not all groups have shared in this affluence (Kriesi 2010a; Eatwell and Goodwin 2018; Poguntke and Schmitt 2018). As a result, some groups still hold onto traditional attachments, such as their local community, a shared sense of traditional culture, support for a localised economy and a general desire for their local area not to change. From this, such groups and communities have developed strong views on change in their local communities. This can be summarised as a feeling of a lack of ability to shape their local communities, a rejection of influences from outside their local community, a willingness to protect perceived national culture and a resistance against things that may change their local communities further, such as immigration.

These communities are more post-materialist in the sense that they too share fewer visible signs of traditional social and moral conservatism, such as prejudice against certain minorities, however, they are a different type of conservative. They are instead cultural conservatives and are reacting against the consequences of policies that have been needed to sustain the affluence that has created post-materialist times. Often communities who have these stated strong reactions are in fact protesting against a series of outcomes they dislike, thus voicing political, economic and societal dissatisfaction (Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel 2018). Such a particular

policy that provides a strong reaction is globalisation which has reduced control over local industries and opened some communities to larger levels of immigration (Odmalm and Bale 2015). Another outcome these localities react against is economic consequences, such as de-industrialisation, which leads to younger skilled people going elsewhere for work, consequently leaving left-behind areas with ageing populations that are less able to adapt to rapidly changing economics (Colantone and Stanig 2018; Jennings and Stoker 2019; Nandy 2020). Communities that have not been as exposed to affluence and post-materialist value changes, who therefore hold onto traditional notions of culture more, logically react against such developments as they become more concerned with economic and cultural insecurity (Goodwin 2018). They perceive the increased insecurity being rooted in global institutions as beyond their control, such as with increased net migration originating through the EU. As a result, these issues soon start to climb up the agenda for these people. This is where new issues start to replace older ones and value divides on these issues start to become more important than traditional debates around economic management and competence.

This has been theorised in other past academic literature, such as within the book 'Culture Shock'. This book produces a vast literature review highlighting how many academics have found evidence for groups with traditional views of culture being naturally more cautious towards cultural change (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008). This book particularly highlights how immigration causes much resistance amongst these traditional groups, who are categorised as collectivist groups (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008). Immigration quickly rises up the agenda due to the highly emotional feelings against cultural change these groups have. Immigration generates highly charged opinions as it is perceived as a threat towards cultural, economic, political and societal stability. Immigration, therefore, represents change across many fronts of an individual's perceived culture. If an individual values more of a collectivist view of society then this type of change is strongly reacted against, causing the issue of

immigration to rise up the agenda (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008; Pabst 2016). The reaction in these communities becomes stronger the faster-paced the change is and the less exposed these communities historically have been to migration changes (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008; Goodwin 2018). These viewpoints are in stark contrast with groups who more commonly live in more cosmopolitan liberal larger towns and cities, who are defined as having individualistic attitudes, where people tend to react against anti-immigration sentiment. This is because people who have been much more exposed to affluence, university education and globalisation's impact, and experience greater diversity and change within their communities, tend to be less cautious towards cultural changes (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2008; Pabst 2016). This divergence becomes ever stronger as globalised trends of economics cause de-industrialisation in many towns that do not benefit from open trading networks, which in turn causes their young populations increasingly to move to the liberal cities to find work (Jennings and Stoker 2016). As a result, two groups, increasingly based around sociological divides, form directly opposite values, which can be broadly described as a culturally liberal vs culturally conservative cleavage divide and both prioritise the issues of immigration and the EU and think they need to be debated more (Pabst 2016). The book argues as these issues rise up the agenda they transcend traditional left/right boundaries, meaning parties struggle to represent some of their traditional voting base, causing voters to switch parties, thus remoulding political support across the country (Achterberg and Houtman 2006; Pabst 2016; Evans and Norris 1999).

Affluence → Post-Materialis... → Free market reforms to sustain → Neo Liberal economics/ globalisatio

Brings mixed economic Benefits for different groups

Brings increased Immigration

Demands for more migration controls ← Concerns around immigration ← Some groups react against change

Some groups accept or are more use to

Lack of action on migration causes the issue to become more salient → The debate around migration increases and Intensifies → Cosmopolitan groups react against anti-immigration tones → Many people have strong opinions on the immigration debate, the issue becomes the most salient in UK politics

Diagram 2.2: Diagram summarising new issue alignment theory:

Diagram 2.2.1: New issue alignment theory summary and its operationalisation:

Time effect: sustained affluence, implementation of globalisation, growth of middle class, parties converge in the centre to adapt to the growing middle class who favour economic reforms. ------> X: Age & Qualification divides → Y: Views on Brexit/Immigration
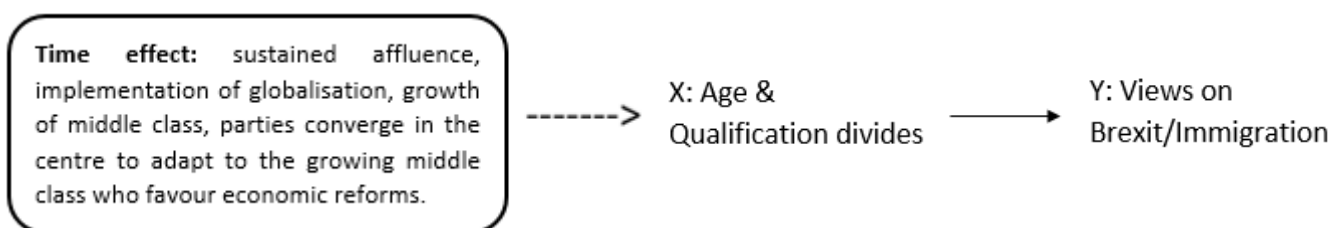
The changes to the electorate:

As outlined at the start of this chapter, understanding how the electorate has changed their political allegiances is essential to understanding how political change developed across the last decade of British politics. As stated earlier, parts of the electorate are theorised to have changed their allegiance due to long-term trends that have created new divisions over non-economic issues. Those who have reacted against socio-economic changes, the cultural

conservatives, are theorised to have increased the Conservative Party's support, whilst those who have embraced such changes, the cultural liberals, are thought to have increased Labour Party support. Therefore, it is thought that those who feel migration has become too high, believe migration to culturally and economically harm the UK, feel the EU erodes British sovereignty and believe leaving the EU to be a beneficial thing will have become more likely to vote for the Conservative Party. In contrast, those who are less anxious about the changes migration has brought, perceive migration to bring benefits, feel Britain's position in Europe needs to be protected and believe Brexit likely will harm the UK became more supportive of left-liberal parties, especially Labour.

This book now goes further than this and theorises that these groups now perceive politics very differently because of this new divide. This perception divide has also become a major dividing line between these two groups as it has encouraged them to perceive politicians, and their respective parties, very differently. As these negative and positive perceptions occur so differently between these contrasting groupings it is argued this now affects the probability of such groups backing one of the main parties over the other one.

Perception divides:

This is argued because as new issues have arisen this has changed voters' assessments from judgements that are economically orientated to ones that are shaped around positions on non-economic issues. Consequently, this alters voter perception (valence) models which have a strong ability to explain variations in short-term voter assessments and voting behaviour (Clarke 2004). This is argued as past research has demonstrated that a voter's most immediate concerns shapes their political opinions quite significantly. Historically, valence theories in UK political history have accurately been based around voter perceptions of economic performance (Clarke 2009). Events such as the 1992 ERM crisis resulted in the Conservatives losing their lead on economic credibility, which resulted in Labour being more likely to win elections

(Clarke 2004). Valence theory has instead been impacted by how leaders are going to act on issues that do not have shared political ends, such as immigration and Brexit. As with all valence models, voters are not necessarily aware of the intricate details of politicians' policies on these issues, but instead rely on signals from leaders. For example, leaders who send signals that they are pro-implementing Brexit and pro-tougher migration controls would be more likely to gain votes from culturally conservative leave voters. Alternatively, political leaders who demonstrate they are anti-Brexit, pro-a second referendum and are more relaxed about migration numbers will be more probable to gain votes from more culturally liberal inclined individuals. Therefore, political signalling in UK politics has become focused greatly around party leaders' positions on these key issues, rather than on judgments around their ability to manage the economy. Therefore, as long-term trends have made it possible for these issues to become prominent in British politics long-term trends are now impacting upon short-term judgments of voters. For example, long-term trends that have shaped views alongside remain and leave could now be impacting upon leadership performance assessments, and from this alter voting patterns. An individual who voted leave could increasingly be basing their performance assessments upon their perception of a given political leader being willing to deliver Brexit. For example, a leave voter who thinks a leader will not implement Brexit could be less likely to vote for that party despite historically being aligned to that leader's party. Therefore, the rise of non-economic issues may have altered short-term judgements, and from this altered voting patterns, causing a remoulding of the British political system.

X: Views on Brexit/Immigration $\longrightarrow$ Y: Probability to vote Conservative/ Labour.
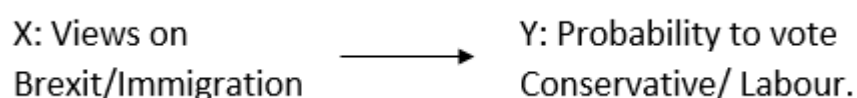
Diagram 2.3 – A summary of how voters' views on new issues will be tested. Culturally conservative views will increase the probability of voting for the Tories, whilst culturally liberal views will increase the likelihood of backing Labour.
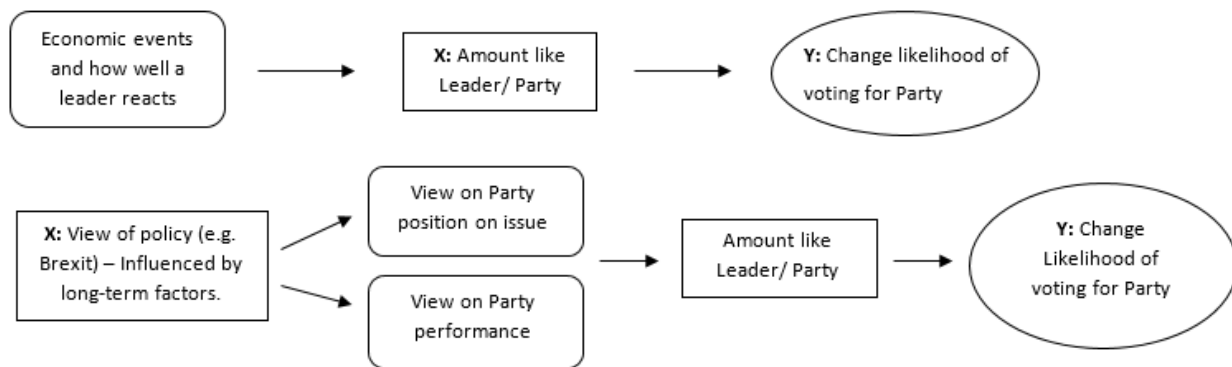
Diagram 2.3.2: The new voter perception model compared to old voter perception model (change in how valance theory worked, particularly relates to the 2019 election).

Changing party competition:

This book argues that UK party competition remoulded after Brexit created political shifts. The traditional left/right electoral landscape has been overlapped with a cultural liberal/conservative political divide which has impacted parties' positioning in recent elections. This process accelerated the more voters focused on the newer cultural divide, causing parties to reposition themselves across this new divide.

This book argues the period between the 2017 and 2019 election were particularly important in changing both voters' and parties' loyalties. In the 2017 election, party competition started to change with voters aligning themselves around the traditional two main parties in a way that reflected a spectrum of what voters wanted to gain from the coming EU negotiations. Those that wanted to maintain trade ties and closer relationships with the EU tended to opt for Labour to pursue a softer, or No Brexit, option. Meanwhile, those that wanted stronger migration controls and less connection to the EU opted for the Conservative Party who had a harder Brexit position. On top of this, when no conclusion to Brexit was delivered by the deadline of March 2019 voters started to shift their allegiances once again, but this time across a more nuanced spectrum of what specific outcomes people wanted from the Brexit process. These views

ranged from revoking Article 50, a second referendum, preventing any Brexit deal from passing into law, supporting a Brexit deal renegotiation, passing Johnson's revised deal and pursuing a No Deal Brexit. It is very difficult for one party to represent such a plethora of opinions, which consequently led to multiple parties being able to have distinctive Brexit positions, with parties taking harder stances away from the centre-ground. This created a scenario where across England there were four parties polling with a significant share of the vote, potentially creating multi-party politics and a change in the party-system.

This book theorises this political phenomenon has developed in a specific way that has created bloc voting, which has created a new UK party system known as a two-bloc party system. As stated earlier, this bloc system has formed around the cross-cutting cleavage of Brexit, but it also may have formed around broad value-based questions that divide culturally liberal and conservative people (Kriesi 2010b; Teney, Lacewell and De Wilde 2014). Brexit positions might also latch onto diverging opinions on a set of values which were once thought of as settled questions. For example, a coalition of concerns about globalisation, immigration, erosion of national sovereignty and declining local communities might have latched onto the Brexit camp. Meanwhile, those who feel the UK benefits from globalisation, EU market integration and immigration may have latched onto the Remain camp, consequently forming a two-block electoral system. This theory follows on from the book's main argument where the winners vs losers of globalisation are reshaping party competition by creating large groups of culturally liberal and conservative voters who transcend the old left/right political divides (Kriesi 2010b; Bornschier 2010; Wolinetz 1979).

Within bloc party systems parties have to choose between the two blocs to maximise their appeal, as these two cultural camps diverging values make it hard to appeal across the new electoral divide. In order to secure the majority of their chosen voting bloc, they must be seen to have a clear policy on how to settle Brexit and they must appear able to deliver this clear

policy. Therefore, basing policy away from the centre rather than towards it might be a more rewarding strategy for Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, who traditionally have benefited from centre-ground competition. Moreover, the Liberal Democrats, who historically have been squeezed in the centre, will be able to take votes off Labour from their harder stance on Brexit, meaning Labour will be squeezed instead (Bartle and Allen 2011; Quinn 2017). Therefore, as the parties are rewarded by positions further from the centre-ground the parties are theorised to have polarised leading up to the 2019 election, and parties stuck in the middle of a divided electorate are the ones thought to lose out, as they will lose from both sides of the new divide.

X: Opinion of party's voters on immigration and Europe. → Y: Party positioning on new divides.

Party Competition Theory, 2019 GE, Multi - Dimensional Party Positions

Socially Conservative/ Authoritarian & Leave/

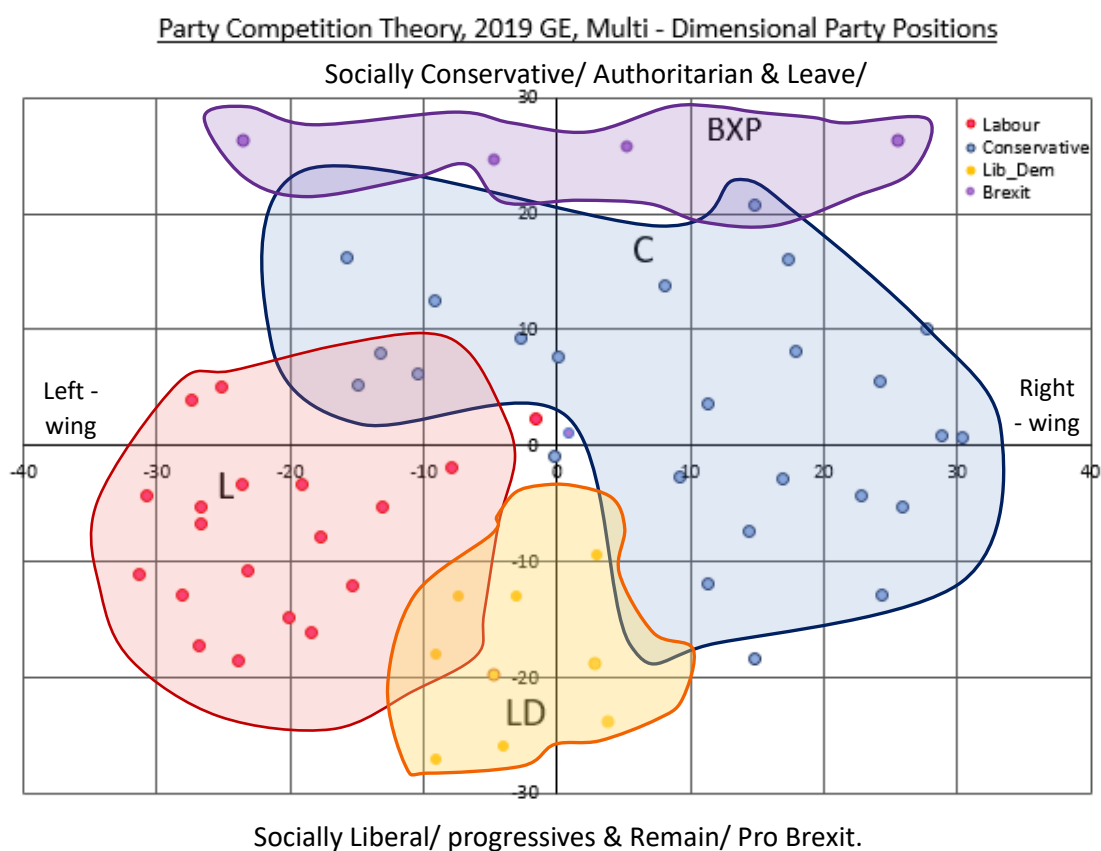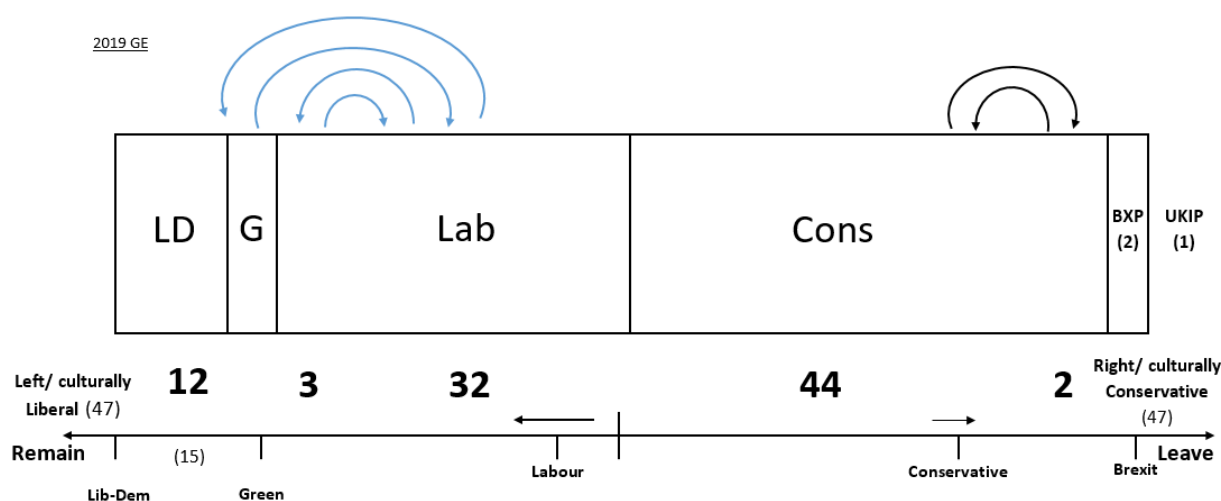Socially Liberal/ progressives & Remain/ Pro Brexit.

Figure 2.1: A Multi-dimensional model for the 2019 GE. **Note:** The diagram on this page shows that under this new competition structure parties that take more central positions on the culturally liberal/conservative divide are squeezed and lose votes, in this case, Labour.

2019 GE

| LD | G | Lab | Cons | BXP (2) | UKIP (1) |

Left/ culturally Liberal (47) **12** **3** **32** **44** **2** Right/ culturally Conservative (47)

Remain (15) Leave

Lib-Dem   Green   Labour   Conservative   Brexit

Characteristics of 2019 Bloc Voting.

- Party competition is centrifugal.
- Flows of the vote might go from larger to smaller parties.
- Voters and parties place themselves on a Remain/ Leave spectrum.

- Labour's vague position might have caused a loss of vote share going to a mixture of smaller Pro- and Anti-Brexit parties.

- The Conservative's clear Leave with a revised deal position keeps enough leave voters on-side to produce the largest single vote share for one party.

- The Left bloc is more congested and volatile, making it a less stable base for Labour than compared to the less congested and volatile right bloc which is a more stable base for the Conservatives.

Figure 2.2 shows the bloc system this book theorises has emerged. It shows that centre positions on the new cultural dimension are punished as these positions get squeezed. In this model Labour is predicted to be squeezed in the 2019 election and lose votes to parties on both sides of the new divide, culturally liberal voters to the Liberal democrats and culturally conservative voters to the Tories.

Hypotheses for the book:

Electoral Destabilisation

The first data-analysis section of this book will establish the extent to which the conditions needed for a realignment to take place were present leading to the critical Brexit moment. This section will analyse how new issues rose up the agenda, how the electorate became greatly

divided over these new priorities and the extent to which the electorate were ready to break from old allegiances and change their voting behaviour.

The Rising importance of Non-Economic issues.

The voters must show a change in priorities as the electorate will likely only change the way they think about politics and vote when their immediate concerns change (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Zaller 1992; Mondak 1993; Whiteley, Clarke and Goodwin 2016).

H1: Non-economic issues have risen in importance of voter's list of most immediate concerns which has caused traditional economic issues to decline in importance. These new issues will be more concerned with broader values rather than specific material concerns.

Why is this hypothesised? Past literature states the emergence of new issues are needed before large scale political system change is likely to occur (Evans and Norris 1999; Key 1955). New issues and value changes are needed to create intersecting cleavages that create possibilities for old voting patterns to be broken (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Moreno 1999). From these new issues voters begin to reassess their party allegiances and if enough of these voters change their traditional voting pattern then a realignment becomes possible at the next election, known as a critical election (Key 1955; Evans and Norris 1999). Therefore, for a realignment to have occurred in UK politics within the last decade new non-economic issues must have replaced the traditional centre-ground economic debates that characterised the political competition structures of the Blair and Thatcher era (Bara, Budge and Weale 2006; Webb 2000).

What needs to be found? In the section investigating long-term trends leading up to Brexit, this will be displayed through people's most important issues being non-economic orientated more often than being economically orientated. Non-economic issues are projected to have risen in importance in between elections and been heavily present during the general elections of 2015,

2017 and 2019, especially when compared to the key issues during the 2010 general election. Such non-economic issues which will be explored are the topics of EU integration and immigration.

This book will test this by using the BES, the Essex Continuous Monitoring Survey and polling organisation's data to track voters' most immediate demands. It will track the percentage of responses that come under non-economic concerns, such as that of immigration and the EU and compare this to the percentage of responses that can be seen as economic, such as concerns over the performance of the economy and public services.

New issues – New divides:

H2: Secondly, there will be a divergence of opinion on new important cross-cutting issues amongst specific groups within the electorate which will create a new political divide that has the ability to alter long-term voting behaviour patterns (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Shamir 1984).

Why is this hypothesised? This is predicted because past research has shown that for political systems to change new issues need to arise that cut across the old divide, in the British case the left/right divide (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

What needs to be found? Both the migration and EU issues will not show electoral divides across left and right-wing groupings, but they will show a steep divide amongst liberal and authoritarian groups. Furthermore, long-term trends on these issues will show a divergence of opinions. For example, opinions on immigration will show deepening divisions between different groupings. Culturally liberal groupings will be less hostile to the changes in migration numbers and the perceived affect increased migration has had on the UK. Conversely, culturally conservative voters will act more hostile to changing migration trends and the perceived effect it has had upon the UK. Regarding the issue of the EU, cultural conservative

groupings will display sceptical positions towards EU membership, whilst culturally liberal groupings will mostly support the UK's position in Europe.

Decreasing allegiances:

Thirdly, there will be signs of a dealignment in traditional voter behaviour, making voters more volatile (Dalton et al. 1984; Särlvik and Crewe 1983).

H3: Increased voter de-alignment will have caused levels of volatility to have increased to historically high levels, which signals the potential for significant electoral change to have occurred within the last decade.

Why has this been hypothesised? Past literature has emphasised the great importance of high levels of electoral volatility before large scale political change, and from this, a full realignment can occur (Crewe 1985; Pedersen 1979). Consequently, before a realignment can be said to have occurred within the last decade there must be supporting evidence that highlights large levels of electoral volatility showing voters increased willingness to change political parties (Norris 1990; Norris 1997).

What needs to be found? If this hypothesis is correct we would expect to see an increase in volatility that displays similar, or greater, levels of high volatility not seen since the last realignment, which occurred in the 70s.

This book will test this by comparing volatility in this decade to levels of volatility in previous decades in British electoral history.

Realignment appearing

This study theorised that divisions over new issues finally culminated into new political groupings during the 2016 referendum. As a result, the book argues that it was divisions over

new important issues, immigration and Brexit, that was partly responsible for the UK leaving the EU. Crucially, this meant the vote to Leave laid these divisions bare, and once this occurred a realignment could later occur. Therefore the book hypothesis:

H4: Divisions over new issues will have affected voters' decisions in the EU referendum. Those with culturally conservative views will have been more likely to have voted Leave, whilst cultural liberals would have been more probable to have voted Remain.

Why has this been hypothesised? For an electoral realignment to have been created around new groupings in the 2017 and 2019 elections they must first have been created. Past academic work has theorised that these divisions were partly created in the 2016 EU referendum (Pabst 2016), thus this book searches for these divisions at this time point.

What needs to be found? Individuals with views that can be described as anti-immigration and Eurosceptic will have voted to Leave the EU more often than not. Moreover, individuals with such views will have been mathematically more probable to have voted to leave the EU. In contrast, those with more positive views towards migration levels and its potential effects, and also could be described as pro-European, will have voted Remain in large numbers. They also would have been mathematically more likely to have voted Remain. The vote to Remain and Leave will also be found to have been geographically distributed to the pattern the winners and losers of globalisation theory projected should be the case, with older less qualified areas voting Leave in greater numbers and younger more qualified areas tending to back Remain in much higher numbers.

Electoral realignment:

Electoral Change 2010 – 2020:

Electoral change refers to a vital process in realignment, parts of the electorate changing their political allegiance.

Changing historical voting patterns is needed to have occurred before a realignment is likely to occur as for the parties' support bases to change voters must be willing to change from their historic allegiances. Moreover, parties will only be more incentivised to change the way they compete for votes if they think many voters are willing to move away from their party (Webb 2019).

H5: An electoral realignment has been created by new issues that have been impacted by socio-political divides. This is broadly known as the process of cleavage change, where the parties' bases are remoulded according to a new political divide.

Why is this hypothesised? Much past academic work theorising and testing realignment in political systems have highlighted the importance of electoral change occurring before a full realignment can take place (Norris 1997; Evans and Norris 1999; Franklin 1999). Therefore, past literature has found that an electorate changing the way they think about voting for parties is an essential step that needs to be taken before a full realignment can take place (Evans and Norris 1999). Such work has particularly noted the importance of a new cleavage divide emerging before a political system is likely to fully realign (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Moreno 1999). New cleavage divides typically come along when new important issues intersect with the traditional Downsian left/right divide (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Moreno 1999). As a result, the last decade must be seen to show the emergence of new issues strong enough to create a new cleavage divide within British politics. As stated earlier, these new issues are theorised to revolve around the topics of immigration and Brexit (Inglehart and Norris 2019).

What is needed to be found? New issues should have influenced the voter's likelihood to switch political parties in recent elections. For example, opinions on immigration and the EU/Brexit

will have increased the likelihood of an individual deciding to vote for Labour or the Conservative Party. Moreover, there should also be clear political divides around these issues, meaning contrasting opinions will split voters on either side of the two-party divide, thus forming a two bloc party system (Bornschier 2010; McLaren 2012; Goodhart 2017; Ford and Goodwin 2017). For instance, those with sceptical views towards migration and the EU will have been increasingly likely to vote for the Conservative Party, whilst those less anxious about such issues will have increased support for the Labour Party. Moreover, those with culturally conservative views will be much more likely to perceive the Conservative Party, and their respective leader, more favourably, with culturally liberal voters perceiving Labour, and their leader, to be much more favourable. Furthermore, voters switching parties will be found to do so according to this new divide, where those who display culturally conservative views on the migration and EU question will have moved from Labour to right-Eurosceptic parties, such as the Tories and Brexit Party. Alternatively, those with more liberal views on such issues will have left the Tory Party for left-liberal parties, such as Labour and the Lib-Dems. If this is found then it can be said that these new non-economic issues have split voters along a new cleavage divide that has had the ability to break traditional voting divides.

Finally, there will be a clear change of political geography within the UK. Therefore, the book also expects to see a consistent change in constituencies that flowed to the Labour and Conservative Party in the 2017 and 2019 General Election. For instance, constituencies that represent culturally conservative demographics, older areas with voters having obtained fewer qualifications, increasingly will back the Tories, whilst contrasting areas increasingly will back Labour. It would also expect to see a change in the areas where the winning party gained seats in the 2019 general election, which again occurred in the last realignment where Thatcher won many northern seats during the 1983 election. For example, some traditional Labour seats in

the North will turn blue, whilst some southern seats historically dominated by the Tories will turn Red.

This book will test this by showing how different social groupings diverge on these new non-economic issues and how these issues affected voting behaviour leading up to, and within, the 2017 and 2019 general elections. It will do this by analysing BES datasets. The book will also analyse if a new demographic and geographical divide has emerged by analysing constituency results from UK general elections from 2010-2019.

Party competition change

Party system change has two elements in its process. Firstly, there should be increased or decreased levels of fragmentation of voters, which is indicated through the level of polarisation in how voters think and vote (Sartori 1990). Secondly, there should also be either increased or decreased fragmentation between the parties, this time indicated through the level of polarisation between the parties (Mair 1997).

Voter and party polarisation:

H6: Party Competition has been altered through voter polarisation, which has created bloc voting. From this, party competition will have changed from traditional centripetal Downsian competition to centrifugal competition, marking a new type of party system within British politics.

In order to better compete in this new system, parties will have ideologically drifted apart from one another as centre-ground positions are not as much of an electoral payoff as they once were (Sartori 1990; Karvonen and Kuhnle 2001; Webb 2019). Therefore, voter polarisation leads to a change in party positioning and party electoral strategy.

Why is this hypothesised?

Supply needs to meet demand. In order for new issues to be able to create political change at least one party must offer a clear position on these new issues (Quinn 2013; Bale 2017). Although the electorate may have changed by focusing on new issues if a party does not give these grievances any supply through changing their party's position then electoral change will likely not occur (Dalton et al. 1984; Evans and Norris 1999). Therefore, for a realignment to be possible, even when new issues are found to change voters' priorities, parties must be found to change their positions alongside this.

What needs to be found? Within this hypothesised bloc party system the parties will mostly seek to maximise their vote share through appealing to distinct parts of the electoral bloc, in this case, the Remain culturally liberal bloc or the Leave culturally conservative bloc. As parties adapt to this new reality they begin to accept the loss of some traditional voters in return for securing new voters once considered to be a lost cause (Key 1955). Therefore, this study will find that the parties' ideological positions will have changed, particularly they will have grown in distance from one another.

What needs to be found? Party's manifestoes will be assessed to be more extreme along this new cleavage divide of cultural liberalism and cultural conservatism. As the main parties' manifestoes become more extreme on opposite sides of this new cleavage divide the parties quickly increase their distance, in terms of their overall party position, than compared to the election before this new cleavage divide took place.

This will also be identified through analysing party electoral strategy to identify if general election campaigning tactics reflect a changed strategy which aims to secure their new voting base.

Section 2: Long-Term developments.

Chapter 3: New issues, New Divides.

This section of the book outlines how long-term trends allowed the British political system to undergo seismic change during the latter part of the last decade. It tracks how the traditionally dominant issues of the economy, taxation, government spending and public services (e.g. the NHS) were overtaken by different concerns. These concerns were largely non-economic and very much focused on debates that involved the topics of migration and Europe. This section also outlines how these issues crossed the traditional left/right divide, and therefore gave an opportunity for the parties and electorate to realign themselves. This section of the book also demonstrates how as these new issues rose up the electorate's agenda they also divided the public across different social groupings, providing an opportunity for a new political divide to form as these issues were left unaddressed. This section finishes by highlighting that these new political divisions caused the electorate to increasingly reconsider old allegiances, thus making realignment possible in the critical political moments from 2016-2019.

Trends in voter's immediate concerns:

2004 – 2014 (the period leading up to the EU referendum):

Using the ECM surveys this book codes similar phrases and responses on people's most pressing issue into issue categories. After analysing the data, figure 3.1 shows that immigration has been the number one issue, outside times of economic crisis, since the 2005 general election. This would suggest that after the UK committed to further EU integration, with the

Eastern bloc joining and the then Labour government allowing freedom of movement for these countries, immigration became a large concern for voters. Therefore, as the numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe increased the proportion of the electorate who felt migration was an issue that needed to be addressed increased. This supports the book's main theory which argued that a sense of cultural change the migration issue created helped change what voters were thinking about, and from this possibly which party they may be more inclined to vote for. Furthermore, this gives some credibility to the theory that has argued such matters had been important to voters for some time before the rise of UKIP occurred, therefore showing the electorate became likely to change their voting patterns gradually. This indicates that political change may have occurred slowly due to long-term trends that globalisation has brought us, in this case, the rise in different types of migration.
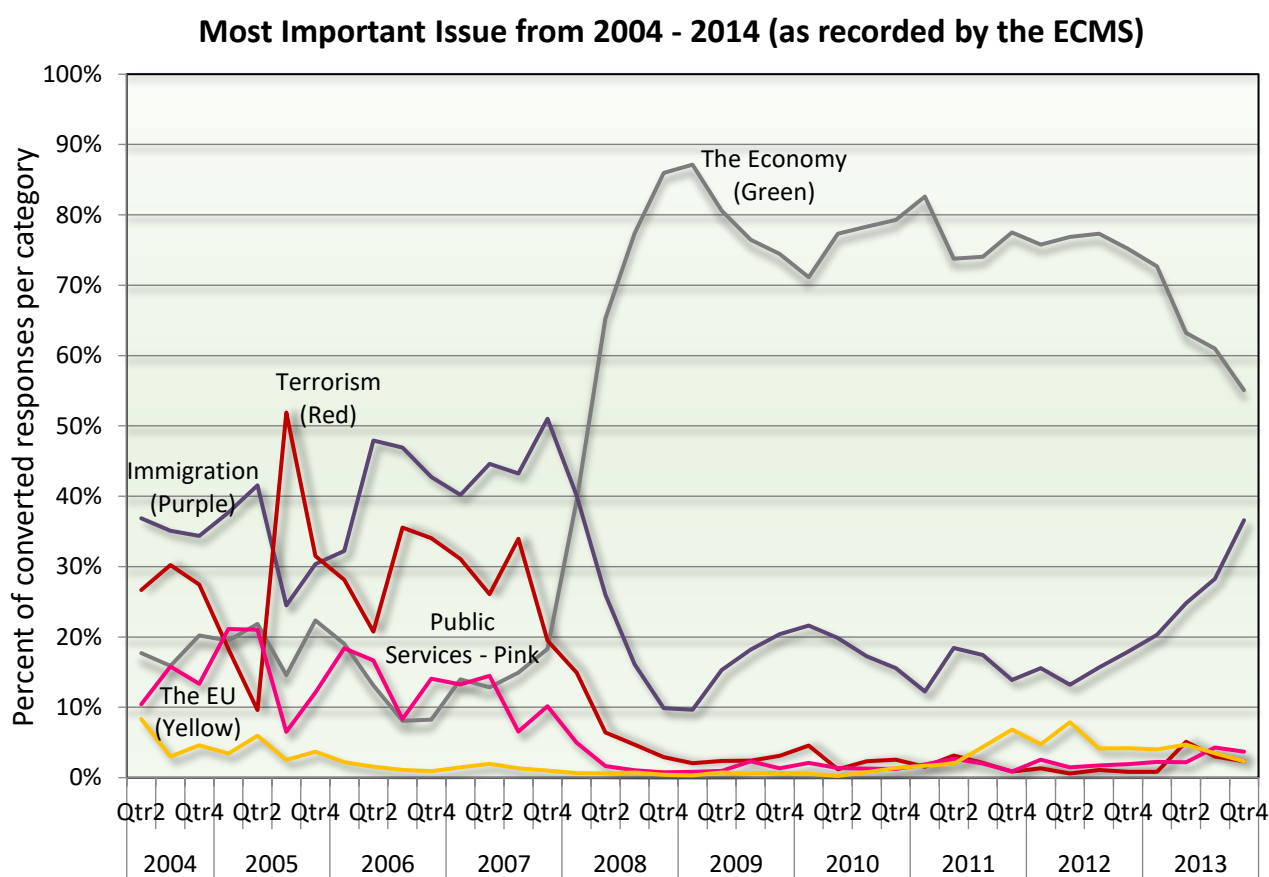

Figure 3.1: The most important issue facing the UK according to the voters, trends from 2004 – 2014. Source: Essex Continuous Monitoring Survey. Note: whilst Eastern EU migration was

partly responsible for this increase in migration concerns it should also be stated non-EU migration had its effect. EU migration went up 2.12m, whilst non-EU migration increased 2.09m. Out of EU migration, Eastern EU migration increased 1.61m (the EU8 = 1.1m & the EU2) = 0.51m) and western EU migration (the EU 14) increased 0.44m. Therefore, whilst Eastern EU immigration increased rapidly so did other types of immigration, meaning opposition to migration could be a rejection of perceived wider cultural change.

The timing of the changes in figure 3.1 are very important as it very much confirms the central theory to this book. To summarise, as some Eastern European states joined the EU, and therefore gained freedom of movement, this increased migration flows of these peoples in the following years. As the UK did not impose the same transition controls on migration flows as other countries did, some parts of the UK did experience rapid population shifts. A group of voters not being used to such levels of immigration may have reacted strongly against this change, and as a result, became more concerned about the issue. As the issue remained largely unaddressed by the main parties, with immigration levels continuing to be very high a year on year, more voters began to feel immigration was the most pressing issue facing the country.

Crucially, with immigration overtaking the economy as the most important issue by the summer of 2014, it is not unrealistic to estimate that immigration was a very important, if not the most important issue, leading into the 2015 general election. It should also be noted that these concerns were not related to the debate surrounding the EU, as concerns around the EU remained small throughout 2004-2014. This indicates that the EU only became a dividing issue after the referendum. This also suggests that rather than concerns being focused around the EU leading up to Brexit such thoughts might instead have been related to concerns an increasing number of voters had surrounding immigration. This shows that the non-economic issue of immigration might have partly triggered another important non-economic issue that would follow, that of Brexit. This all highlights the possibility that concerns outside those of economic

management might have been important in driving political outcomes throughout large periods across the last 15 years of British politics. Crucially, this means that as the UK's electorate made big political decisions that changed the course of British political history these new issues were likely to be very much present in the minds of the voters. Therefore, an argument could be made that the decision of the electorate to focus on these issues may have been partly responsible for UK politics being remoulded in the last decade.

The 2015 general election:

Year	Average, migration	Average, Health	Average, Economy	Average, Crime	Average, Environment	Average, Europe	Average, Education
2010	50.00	21.86	77.29	24.07	8.71	5.93	15.64
2011	46.97	28.72	77.00	24.21	6.90	12.93	14.79
2012	46.04	27.44	78.24	19.72	6.96	20.32	14.08
2013	52.97	31.20	70.57	14.47	7.37	16.80	13.63
2014	54.08	35.17	53.13	11.58	10.00	17.13	14.67
2015	51.00	44.67	47.67	9.50	8.67	17.83	15.50
5 yr AVG	50.05	30.26	69.91	17.98	7.88	15.53	14.48

Table 3.1: UK, Most important issue per year, ECMS data.

Going into the 2015 election, the electorate now clearly stated immigration to be a bigger priority than management of the economy, despite the quite weak and slow economic recovery that has taken place. YouGov polls, figure 3.2, showed that going into the 2015 election the biggest issue was immigration. It also confirms the ECMS trend where immigration became to be seen as more important than the economy for the duration of the coalition government.

Furthermore, it also supports analysis of the 2015 BES that found immigration was considered to be a more important issue than the economy throughout the election (Bale and Webb 2015). Vitally, this supports the contention that these new issues rose up the agenda to such an extent that they overtook economic concerns. It also highlights the potential that the nature of the political debate may have changed enough to make different divisions on these new issues more important to a greater number of voters during an election. Importantly, the 2015 election

was dominated by discussion around the immigration issue, with Labour infamously addressing the issue in the "edstone" and on mugs purchasable on the Labour Party website. UKIP focused on the issue far more than their flagship policy of having a referendum on the EU and very much targeted Labour voters who had increasingly grown concerned about the issue. Therefore, during this election, as voters made their decision they very likely were thinking about how they felt about the migration debate. This would indicate that the losses Labour suffered, which helped the Tories gain their first majority in over two decades, may have partly stemmed from voters' focus on migration numbers. This also supports other work that has shown Labour may have lost support gradually over successive elections since 2005 due to increasing concerns about immigration (Ford & Goodwin 2014).

IPSOS MORI's poll trend on the most important issue between the 2015 election and the 2016 referendum
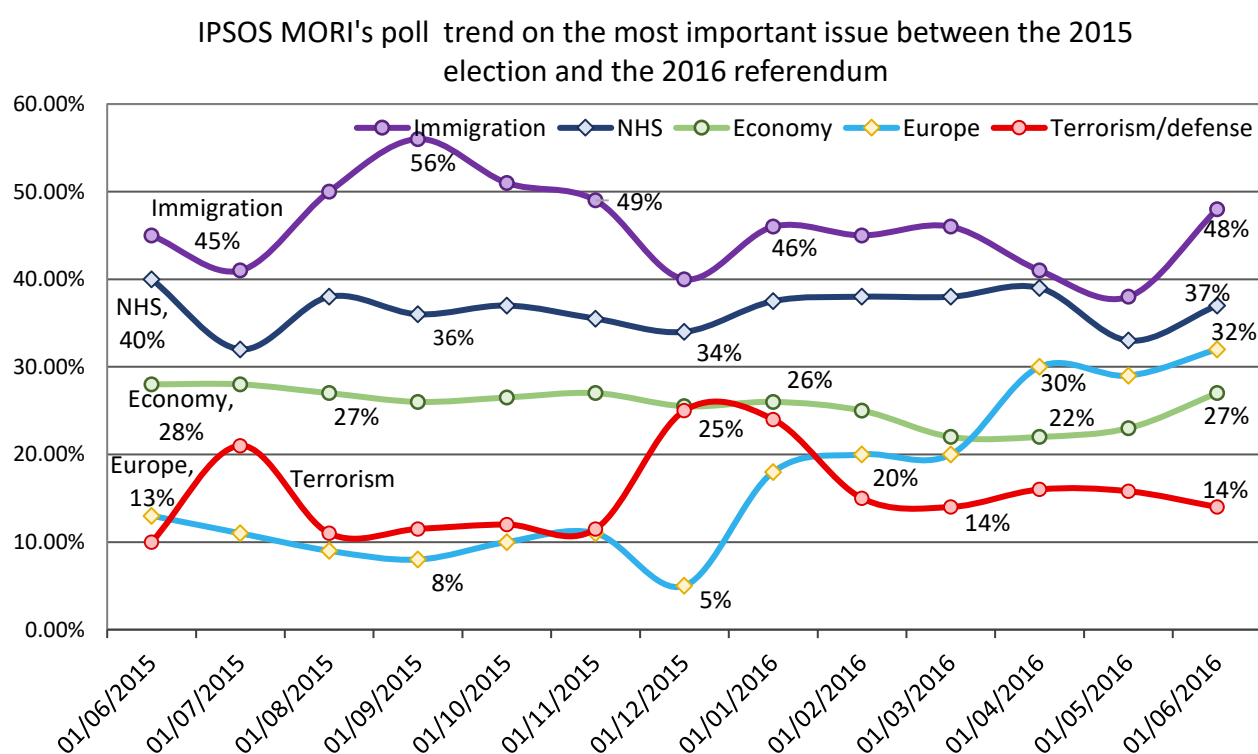
Figure 3.2: UK, Most important issue, IPSOS MORI, 2015-'16. It shows that immigration was consistently the biggest issue in the 2015 referendum and leading up to the 2016 EU referendum.

The Aftermath of the 2015 general election and 2016 EU referendum:

In the year that led into the 2016 referendum, Ipsos-Mori recorded voters stating their most pressing concern. The most cited concern was the issue of immigration, indicating it continued to be the dominant issue leading into the critical point of the EU referendum. Figure 3.3 shows that at some points immigration was placed as the biggest issue facing the country by over 50% of the respondents. Moreover, the issue of Europe rose up the agenda from a very low score of around 10% from the point after the general election, well outside the top 5, to being a top-five issue by the summer of 2016. In fact, by the time of the EU referendum, roughly a third of the electorate now felt the issue the EU issue was something that had become a huge problem facing the country. Crucially, this was higher than the number of voters stating the economy was the biggest issue, with only roughly a quarter of voters giving this response. This, therefore, means that at the time of the EU referendum there were two clear non-economic issues voters were more likely to prioritise over the economy, indicating this historically important issue was now less of a priority. This critically shows that leading up to one of the most important political decisions of modern times non-economic issues were clearly shaping voters' thoughts.

Figure 3.3 also therefore highlights how the calling of the EU referendum caused many more voters to focus upon new issues, especially the issues of immigration and Europe. The EU referendum very much brought these issues to the forefront of British political discourse and the Remain campaign's effort to get voters thinking about the economic costs of Brexit did not appear to work. Moreover, during the 2016 EU referendum the issue of immigration, according to YouGov, was clearly the highest priority the public had. This again provides evidence that opinions on these new issues might have influenced what voters' thoughts were when deciding how to vote. This therefore, raises the possibility these new issues were starting to shape political outcomes exactly at the point this book theorises the new political divide emerged.

Crucially, both the 2015 general election and the 2016 EU referendum might have been partly determined by the new political divide this book theorised has occurred. Vitally, this means that the 2017 and 2019 elections may have actually reflected changes in the electorate that had occurred before the 2017 election was announced, indicating that British politics only greatly changed in the latter part of the 2010s due to longer-term changes. As we shall go on to see, the electorate became much more focused on the issues of immigration, and especially the EU, after the calling of the Brexit referendum. This is vitally important as the new political divide may have been created due to voters changing their focus onto new issues. This change in focus may have brought individuals to reconsider which party reflected their concerns on their most pressing concerns, and from this may have started a process where many voters reconsidered their party loyalties.
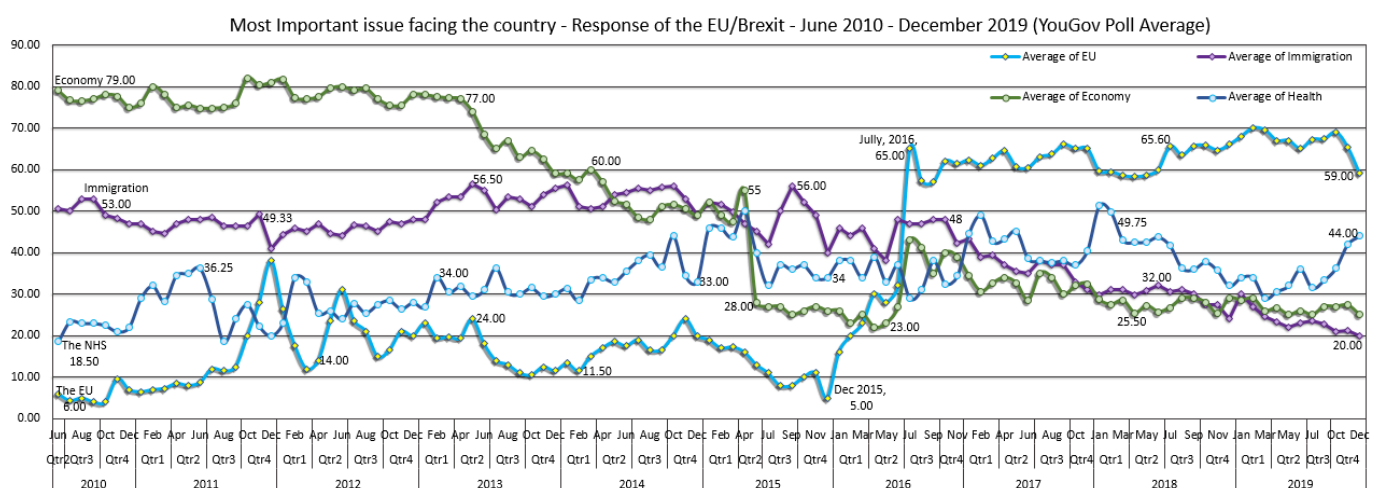
Figure 3.3 The most important issue facing the country. Source: YouGov polls. It shows the 2010-2019 trend of voters' reported biggest issue-priority, according to YouGov polling tracking. The graph shows how immigration, outside times of economic crisis and Brexit deadlock, tended to be thought of as a more pressing issue than compared to the economy. Brexit also clearly outranks the economy in the electorate's top concerns post-2016.

<u>Post-2016.</u>

2017 election:

Mii Rank	Wave11 – Pre-Campaign		W12 – During-Campaign		Wave13 – Week Post-Campaign	
	Mii	% of Responses	Mii	% of Responses	MII	% of Response
1	Brexit	46.27	Brexit	36.90	Brexit	38.17
2	Immigration	10.09	Terrorism	12.89	Terrorism	11.54
3	NHS	9.98	NHS	10.32	Immigration	7.65
4	The Economy	6.45	Immigration	10.03	NHS	7.22
5	The Election	5.21	The Economy	6.57	Governing Country	5.63
6	Terrorism	4.52	The Election	4.73	The Economy	5.59

Table 3.3: Voters self-identified most important issue (MII), BES 2017 data.

Table 3.3 demonstrates that the three biggest issues for the respondents of the BES survey were firstly, the EU, secondly, terrorism and security and thirdly, immigration. All these are non-economic issues, suggesting non-economic issues being people's primary focus carried on post-Brexit. This is important as it can be stated that non-economic issues were likely part of the voters' thinking process when casting votes in an election that produced large amounts of electoral change. The 2017 election produced substantial increases for both the Labour and Conservative Party, and as the book shall later demonstrate these gains were partly due to assessments around how the parties would handle the Brexit issue. Therefore, thoughts around the increasingly important European issue post-Brexit can be argued to have shaped important political events and remould the parties' bases in a critical election. This crucially highlights how the electorate changing their focus onto new non-economic issues may have contributed to the start of a realignment process, of which culminated fully in the 2019 election.

June 2017 to December 2019:

Figure 3.3 shows that respondents' most pressing concern replaced thoughts on migration with another new non-economic issue, that of Brexit. In the months leading to the December 2019 general election, the issue of the EU was selected as the most important issue facing the country

by two-thirds of the electorate. Moreover, despite migration's decline in salience the issue of migration was still thought to be of great importance by a fifth of the electorate and often outranked thoughts surrounding economic matters in this time period. Therefore, as the Brexit stalemate lingered on non-economic issues and cultural concerns became more prominent, suggesting that Brexit did little to ease the new cultural divide facing the mainstream parties.

Pollster	EU/Brexit	NHS	Economy	Immigration	Crime
Ipsos Mori	68	32	22	20	24
YouGov	59	44	25	20	22
DeltaPoll	52	37	22	24	26
Opinium	52	59	22	21	16
Panelbase	54	66	26	28	16
Average	57	47.6	23.4	22.6	20.8

Table 3.4: Voters' stated biggest issue during the 2019 election: Various polling organisations.

Table 3.4 shows when focusing on polling conducted during the 2019 general election it can again be stated the EU was voters' biggest concern, this time by over 10%. The economy was reported as a crucial issue over half less than Brexit. This again reveals the possibility that new issues had overtaken old dominant topics to such an extent they could change what voters were thinking about when casting their ballot, and do so at critical political moments.

Overall, trends across the decade show a clear and steady rise of non-economic issues rising up the agenda of voters' highest priorities. Although this trend accelerated after economic recessions abated it then accelerated even further as Britain decided to hold an EU referendum and experienced a long EU referendum campaign. After Britain voted to leave the EU this trend only developed at an even stronger pace, especially as the Brexit process encountered stalemate in parliament. The rise of non-economic issues was so great that concerns around economic issues, which have historically dominated British political discourse, declined enough to be considered as no longer the main, or even a top three, issue. Therefore, if these issues can cut across historical divides caused by economic positions, the left/right dimension, and also divide

the public into new political groupings then these long-term trends indicate a realignment was possible in 2019. The book now goes on to explore the extent to which the new dominant issues divided the public into new socio-political groupings that had differing priorities and were no longer aligned by the left/right divide.

New debates bring a different divided electorate:

The development of new issues becoming incredibly important to the electorate crucially occurs at the same time the electorate diverged on cultural issues. This section of the chapter shows that whilst some parts of the electorate had embraced the changes globalisation brought others had grown very anxious about such changes impacting their communities. Therefore, it can be argued that approaching critical political moments, such as the 2016 referendum, different sections of the electorate separated on key issues, meaning this could potentially determine voting choices. This would again indicate a potential for the voters to change political allegiances based upon opinions on these new important issues, thus increasing the chances for a remoulding of British politics in elections post-2016.

Immigration and its social divisions:

Leading up to the critical Brexit moment different parts of the electorate gradually diverged over the immigration issue. Younger groupings with more qualifications can be stated to have accepted the increased migration globalisation has brought to the UK, whilst contrasting groups, such as older groups with lower-level qualifications, have rejected such changes. Therefore, some groups have accepted cultural changes migration is perceived to bring, whilst other groups have not, and think that such trends needed to be stopped. As we shall see later, these contrasting views are important as they partly help shape the EU referendum result, and alter voting patterns in subsequent elections.

Net-Migration: The importance of growing numbers:

Migration should decrease? Trends (Age)	AVG 1995	Young 1995	Old 1995	AVG 2015	Young 2015	Older 2015
More settlement	5.41%	10.18%	3.03%	14.44%	31.57%	9.52%
About same	46.56%	50.76%	36.24%	29.37%	43.14%	22.29%
Less settlement	47.74%	39.06%	60.14%	56.19%	25.29%	68.18%

Migration should decrease? Trends (Quals)	AVG 1995	L Qual 1995	H Qual 1995	AVG 2015	L Qual 2015	H Qual 2015
More settlement	5.41%	3.08%	10.99%	14.44%	5.85%	28.85%
About the same	46.56%	42.18%	54.48%	29.37%	13.26%	42.21%
Less settlement	47.74%	54.40%	34.53%	56.19%	80.89%	28.94%
DK	0.29%	0.34%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Table 3.5-3.6: Should migrant numbers decrease? Trends by social categories, Source: British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) data. It shows how over time contrasting social groups became more divided over the question of immigration flows into the UK.

Tables 3.4-3.5 show that in a twenty year period that saw an increase of migration there was also an increase in feeling net migration should be lowered. However, this does not tell the full story. It is crucial to note that different generations have had quite different reactions to the increase in net migration flows. There are now fewer young people with demands that migration should be reduced, whilst contrastingly older groups have experienced an increase in feelings migration should be reduced. The divergence was also witnessed amongst groups with different qualification levels. Groups with a higher level of qualifications, especially those with university experiences, have grown to be much less likely to state that they wish to see lower net migration levels. Therefore, according to the BSAS, trends of views on net migration have gradually altered and became more divisive along sociological lines. Therefore, as globalisation brought further EU integration and greater levels of migration it is quite clear that different sections of the electorate have reacted quite differently, thus creating a divergence and potential for new political divides when such subjects increased in salience.

This finding is also found in the British social attitudes survey (BSAS) question which asked how beneficial had migration been to the UK in the ten years after the EU gave Eastern European access to the single market. Figure 3.4 shows that when looking back to the last decade of migration groups with different education experiences grew apart from each other over the impact of migration. Those with higher levels of education are much more likely to feel recent migration has been a good thing compared to groups with fewer qualifications. Alternatively, groups with fewer qualifications are much more likely to view recent migration flows as something that has harmed the UK. Further, younger groups were more likely to embrace this new type of increased migration whilst older voters greeted it with considerably more caution. This all again suggests that rising numbers of new types of migration very much divided the electorate, enabling it to become politically divisive.

Responses to how good or bad voters felt immigration had been from 2001-2011, BSAS
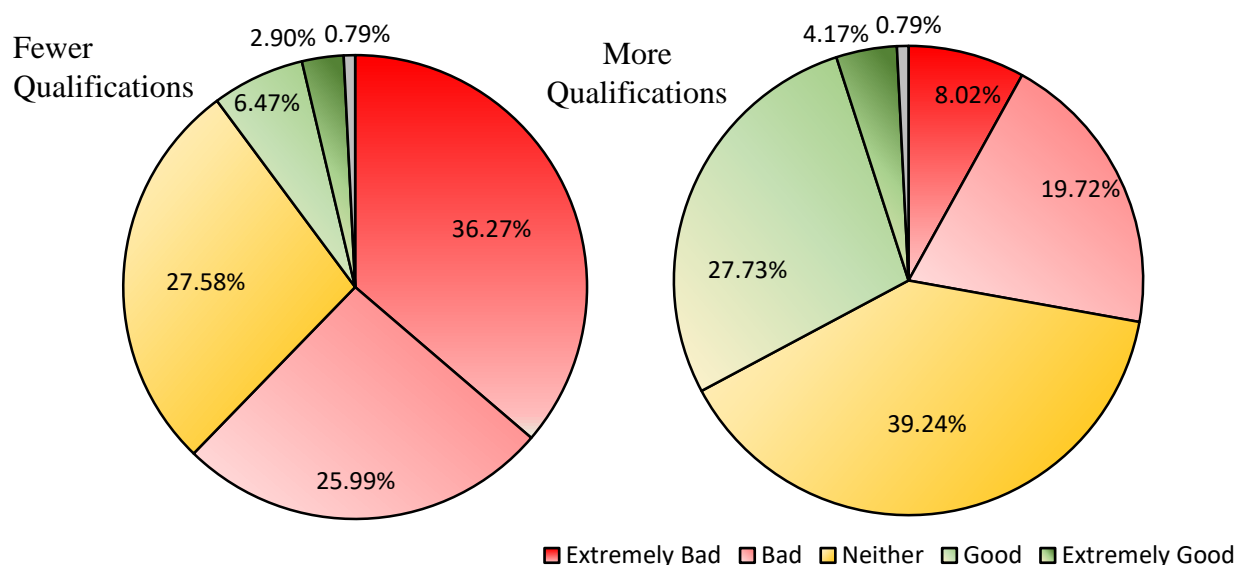
Figure 3.4: The voters' opinion on how good increased migration flows had been for the UK, 2004. Source: BSAS 2011. It shows that different social groups have reacted very differently to the period which witnessed an expansion in net-migration levels. Older cohorts and individuals with low-level qualifications as their highest qualification generally speaking reacted much more negatively towards the increase in migration than compared to younger cohorts and groups with a degree-level education.

Figure 3.5: shows how increased immigration from the former Eastern bloc states, such as Poland, began to divide contrasting social grouping, with some groupings being more relaxed about these migration flow changes than other cohorts.

It is also important to note that the divergence around immigration appears to coincide with the time the Eastern European states gained access to the single market. This book's theory stated that the divergence over migration views could h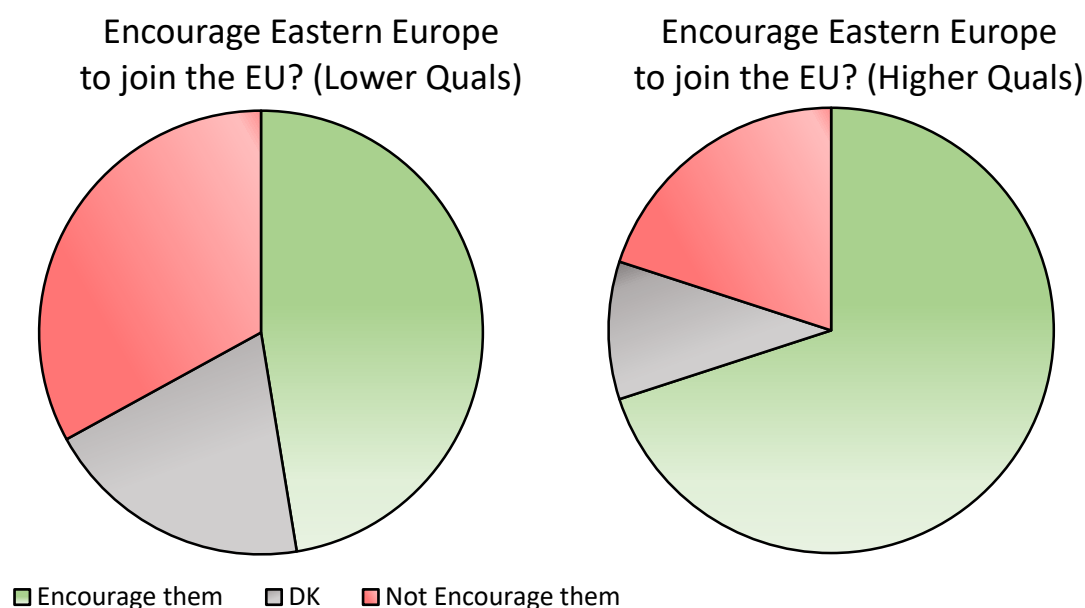ave originated through a culture shock as many voters were not accustomed to large levels of migration from this part of the world. In 2004, the BSAS asked the question of how supportive the public was of allowing the Eastern European states to join the EU. In this period of British politics, there was not much disagreement on the average view of migration according to the BSAS and BES. However, on the issue of Eastern European states, and the migration coming from it, there was much disagreement. Figure 3.5 shows a clear division between cohorts, where younger and highly qualified groupings were clearly much more likely to be supportive of EU expansion than contrasting groups. This would indicate changes to the type of immigration created a new political divide as well as increasing migrant numbers.

Immigration and its perceived UK cultural impact:

Migration brings Cultural Benefits (by Age)	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019
Agree (AVG)	42.2%	35.4%	39.5%	41.9%	49.3%
Neither (AVG)	19.4%	30.4%	14.3%	15.2%	16.4%
Disagree (AVG)	38.3%	34.2%	46.2%	42.9%	34.3%
Agree (Young)	42.88%	41.05%	52.50%	61.83%	65.88%
Neither (Young)	17.50%	31.00%	15.70%	14.16%	13.55%
Disagree (Young)	39.62%	27.95%	31.80%	24.01%	20.57%
Agree (Older)	44.46%	27.67%	31.94%	33.47%	40.61%
Neither (Older)	20.48%	31.00%	12.60%	15.13%	17.35%
Disagree (Older)	35.06%	41.33%	55.46%	51.40%	42.03%

Migration Culture Benefits, by EU position	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019
Agree (AVG)	42.2%	35.4%	39.5%	41.9%	49.3%
Neither (AVG)	19.4%	30.4%	14.3%	15.2%	16.4%
Disagree (AVG)	38.3%	34.2%	46.2%	42.9%	34.3%
Agree (Remain)	50.00%	57.00%	62.42%	67.12%	73.18%
Neither (Remain)	19.77%	24.34%	14.06%	14.28%	13.41%
Disagree (Remain)	30.23%	18.66%	23.52%	18.60%	13.41%
Agree (Leave)	26.04%	19.21%	14.73%	15.22%	23.60%
Neither (Leave)	19.17%	29.33%	12.35%	15.28%	18.37%
Disagree (Leave)	54.79%	51.47%	72.93%	69.50%	58.03%

Table 3.6-3.7 Responses to the question is migration into the UK culturally beneficial? By age and EU divides (BES data).

It was not just numbers of immigrants that raised disagreement amongst the electorate. There also has been growing disagreement surrounding the cultural impact increased immigration is thought to of had on the UK. According to BES data, the average response to this question has ebbed and flowed, with the average being similar in 2005 and 2019. However, one thing which has not remained constant is the sociological division on this issue. Tables 3.6-7 show that in 2005 different age groups were very much in agreement on the cultural impact of immigration. However, with successive elections, the generations became much more distant from each other on this issue. Younger generations became much less likely to feel that immigration undermined UK culture; they instead felt it was more likely to enrich it. During the same period,

older voters increasingly disagreed and felt immigration was beginning to harm UK culture, suggesting they felt immigration levels had gone too far. This would again indicate that globalisation's impact on local cultures within the UK has been received very differently by different demographics, and therefore has had the capacity to create new political divides.

The theory that these diverging trends have formed new political groupings is supported is the pro-EU vs Euro-sceptic divide. Pro-EU groups have become less concerned with the cultural impact of immigration. Meanwhile, those identifying as wanting to cancel EU membership have become more concerned with the cultural impact of immigration. Therefore, this divergence shows how new political tribes may have emerged as divisions around immigration grew and the issue rose in importance. If this issue started to affect voting patterns, then it is possible that divergences concerning views on immigration could have reordered political allegiances. If this is found, as the issue became more salient parties may have shifted their positions on this issue in order to address voters' concerns on this salient policy issue. From such movements, British politics may have realigned.

Immigration and its perceived national economic impact:

The BES has frequently asked about the extent to which individuals think that the migration coming into the UK was improving the national economy. There was an increase in the number of people who thought that immigration flows were adding to the UK economy. However, this increase was by no means uniformly spread amongst different groups. Most of the increase is due to certain political groups becoming much more staunchly pro-immigration. Both Leave and Remain groups start off fairly close to each other in their views, however with successive elections these groups have diverged. Voters who associate themselves with the Remain position have become much more likely to see immigration as economically beneficial and Leave voters are now over 40 percentage points less likely to agree with this position. This trend is carried across to other sociological groups, all be it not as strong as the Remain/ Leave

divide. People with more qualifications compared to people with fewer qualifications have been quite apart on this matter for a long time, with disagreement gradually growing. Younger groups compared to older groups clearly diverged as well. Older social groupings have increased in their concerns that migration flows are harming the economy, whilst younger cohorts have drifted in the opposite direction, with now very few having this view.

Moreover, this exact trend is replicated by trends within BSAS data when asking about immigration and its potential effect on the economy. Here again, there has been a widening gap between sociological groupings. Therefore, the amount of agreement that can exist on the immigration issue amongst these groups has clearly diminished over time. This suggests that these new issues did have the capacity to cause sociological divisions as they rose in importance. This would again indicate that contrasting sections of the electorate have reacted differently from one another to the cultural change globalisation has brought to the UK, and from this new political divides may have been formed.

Immigration and Crime:

There are also other indications that these groups have moved apart on feelings concerning migration. When focusing on questions that encourage voters to take a positive or negative stance on the effects of immigration, the gap between the social groups has widened. The BSAS has asked such questions with one question focusing on the feeling that migrants coming into the country take jobs from British people. Since 1995 there has been little change in the average response to this question. However, different social groupings have grown apart from one another. Higher educated groups have become less likely to agree with the statement that migrants take British jobs, whilst those with fewer qualifications have become more likely to agree with this statement. There was also a very similar trend for age demographics with younger and older people differing in their responses to a much greater extent with each passing decade. Further to this, other statements on migration produced similar responses. Focusing on

the statement that migrants increased crime rates, it can be said that although there was little change in the average response of agreeing to this statement there has been a divergence amongst different social groupings. Again, there is a scenario where younger people have grown in distance from older groups, who are much more likely to feel that migration has increased crime. There is again a similar relationship regarding qualification groupings. Significantly, this all again supports the book's theory which asserted these new issues had created new political divides on new salient cultural issues.

Feelings that Immigrants take jobs, by qualification group

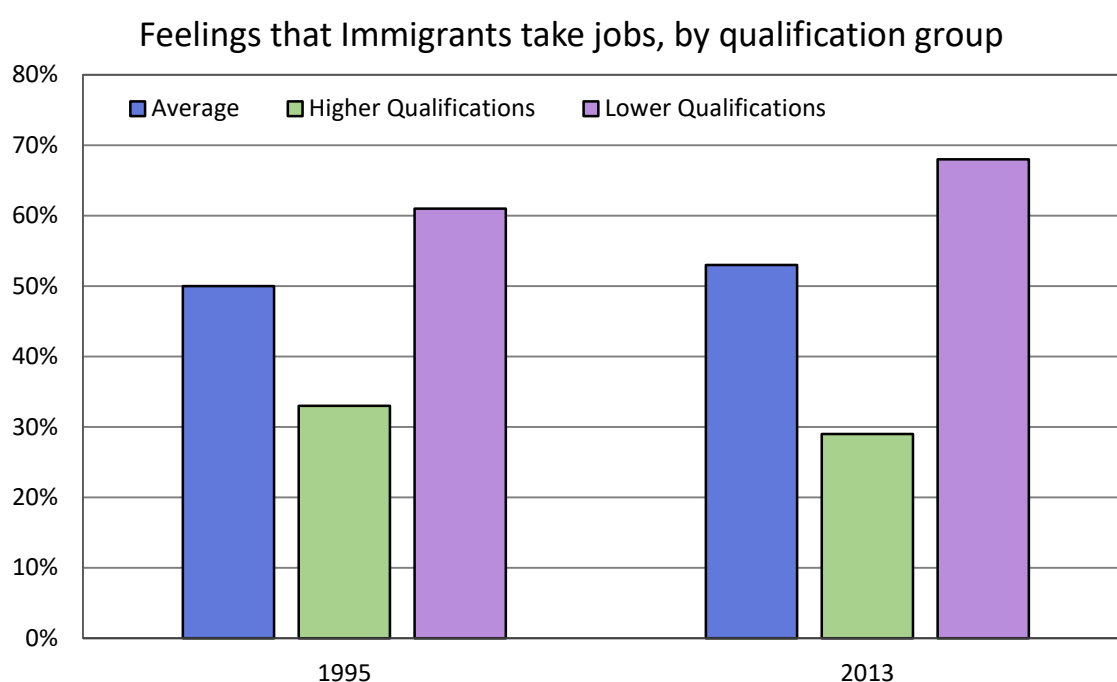Figure 3.6: The change in responses to the question that asked voters' opinion on the extent they felt immigration took jobs away from people in the UK. Sources: BSAS 1995 & 2013. It shows that those with low qualifications increasingly felt that immigration was creating excessive job competition, thus potentially partly explaining why this grouping became more opposed to immigration post-2000.

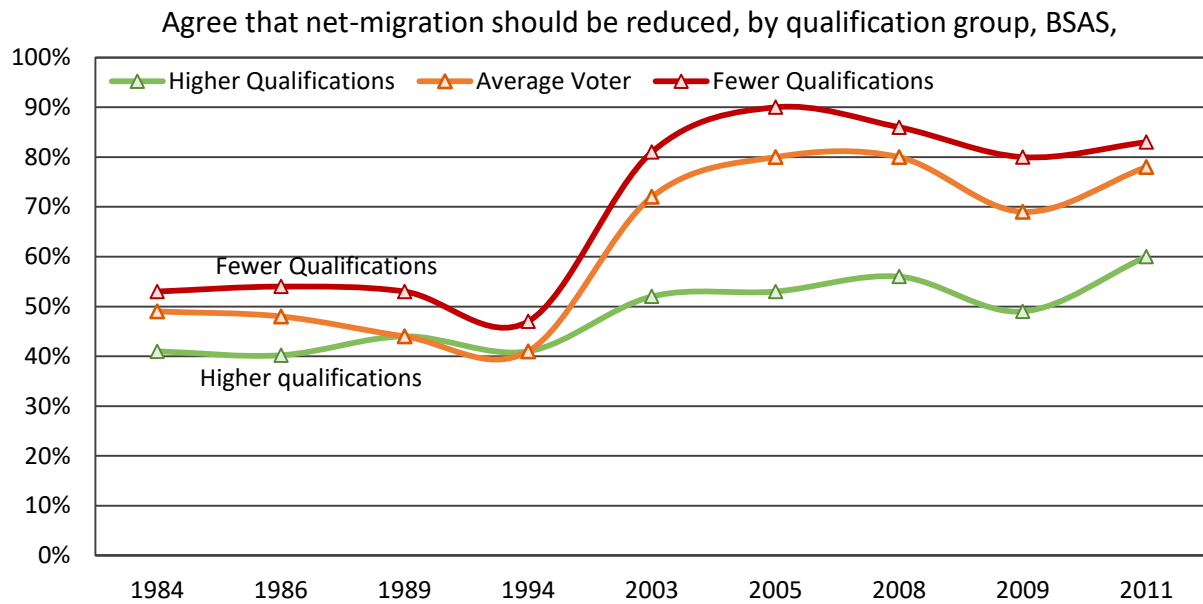Agree that net-migration should be reduced, by qualification group, BSAS,

Figure 3.7: The divergence in qualification grouping's thoughts around the question of whether net migration should be reduced. It summarises the immigration divergence quite well. Initially, there was mostly agreement on this issue where a roughly 50/50 split existed between the options of reducing migration and keeping it the same. This started to change after the mid-1990s where some social groupings began to state they wanted migration to be reduced much more than others. Groups with different education backgrounds diverged quite strongly around the time of the sharp increase in migration, which occurred around 2003 onwards. Groups with fewer qualifications had more people expressing the view they wanted migration from the EU to decrease and the gap between these people and groups with higher qualifications grew over time. This was also the same for views on how migration impacted the UK's culture and economy. This all made the migration issue into a politically divisive one.

The gradual European divide.

The second new important issue to rise up the agenda was that of the EU, and following the 2016 EU referendum the issue of how to deal with Brexit. Interestingly, this issue has also experienced a divergence.

The issue of Europe mostly had agreement in 1975 with roughly two-thirds backing "Yes" to common market entry. As Crewe and King wrote in their analysis of the referendum, this did not cause major political change for two reasons, the scale of the victory and the clear political support from most leading politicians behind one side of the campaign (Crewe et al. 1976). According to the BSAS, this issue continued to produce quite clear agreement until the mid-1990s when political agreement unravelled amongst leading figures, especially leaders in the Conservative Party. From this point onwards, the clear lead for Remain has gone and the issue becomes much more divisive. Alongside this, the issue begins to rise in prominence leading to the EU referendum in 2016. Therefore, figure 3.8 shows by the time the 2019 general election took place the issue had for some time been quite divisive, with remain and leave both very close to 50%. As a result, this once uncontroversial issue had become quite divisive. Moreover, the very two aspects that were identified to have stopped the issue causing a realignment in 1975 were now not present in 2016, meaning this issue now had the potential to reshape British politics.

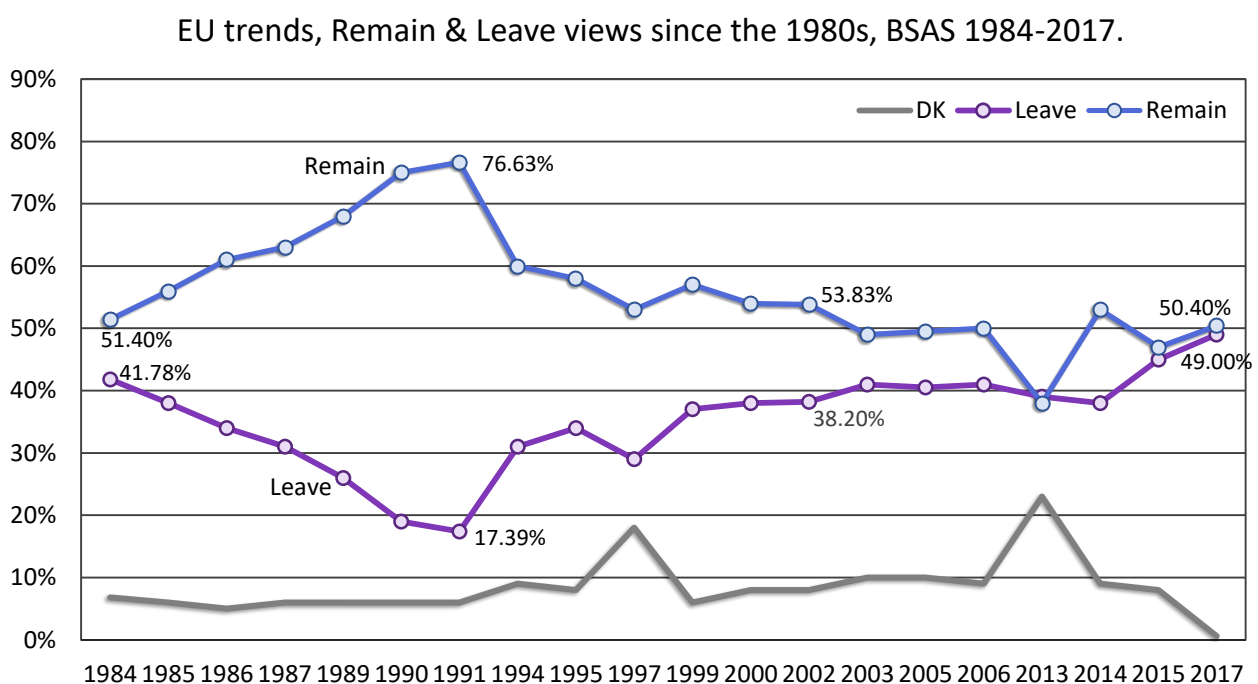EU trends, Remain & Leave views since the 1980s, BSAS 1984-2017.

Figure 3.8: The divergence on the question of EU membership. Source: BSAS. It shows the divergence over the European question over the last three decades of British politics.

According to BSAS data, a once fairly uncontentious issue became a major dividing line by the critical point of Brexit, and this did not change leading into the 2017 and 2019 elections.

Leave/ Remain vote by Social Groupings:

The social divisions that grew on the EU issue followed the same pattern as that of immigration. Voters who fitted into younger demographics initially started off as not that much more likely to be on the Remain side, however, they became much more likely to back remain as the EU referendum approached. After the referendum, this trend only intensified. In contrast, voters who fitted into older demographics initially were not that much more Pro-Brexit, but again as the EU referendum approached they became much more Pro-Brexit. Data analysis of the BES shows that social divisions did dramatically accelerate after 2013, indicating divisions were emerging on these new issues before the EU referendum was announced, and possibly before the 2015 election was over. Crucially, these social divisions also mirror the growing social divisions over the issue of immigration. Again, we witness younger groups were more relaxed, whilst older voters expressed more concerns. This suggests that social divisions may have not just been related to a single issue, but instead to a broader set of values which led these contrasting social groups to come to very different conclusions.

Further to this, voters were not just divided by the generation gap. Another demographic dividing line is that of qualifications obtained, particularly those that have gone through the university system compared to those who have not. Figure 3.9 demonstrates that there has been a clear divide between these two groups, with those who have higher levels of qualifications tending to be significantly more likely to have backed the Remain option. Meanwhile, those with fewer qualifications have been consistently more likely to have wanted to Leave the EU for a long time. Again, here the EU can be said to be a large dividing issue that has had the

capacity to separate old political allegiances into new social groupings the parties could latch on to.

Crucially, this all indicates that these new divisions could form new political groupings which could alter the basis of party support. Therefore, as the EU issue rose in prominence this may have created a new political divide that was capable of altering British political competition. Further, long-term trends regarding opinions on the EU issue also highlight how globalisation's impact may have divided the British electorate. As the former Soviet bloc states regained independence and developed their markets EU expansion became possible. With this, the EU expanded and also sought to centralise in order to make an expanding single market function and deliver wider growth to the Eurozone. As the purpose of Europe changed contrasting groups in society appear to have reacted very differently to this development. Those groups thought to have benefited from such centralised institutions and market forces appear to have become staunch Remainers, whilst contrasting groups have expressed an increased willingness to leave.

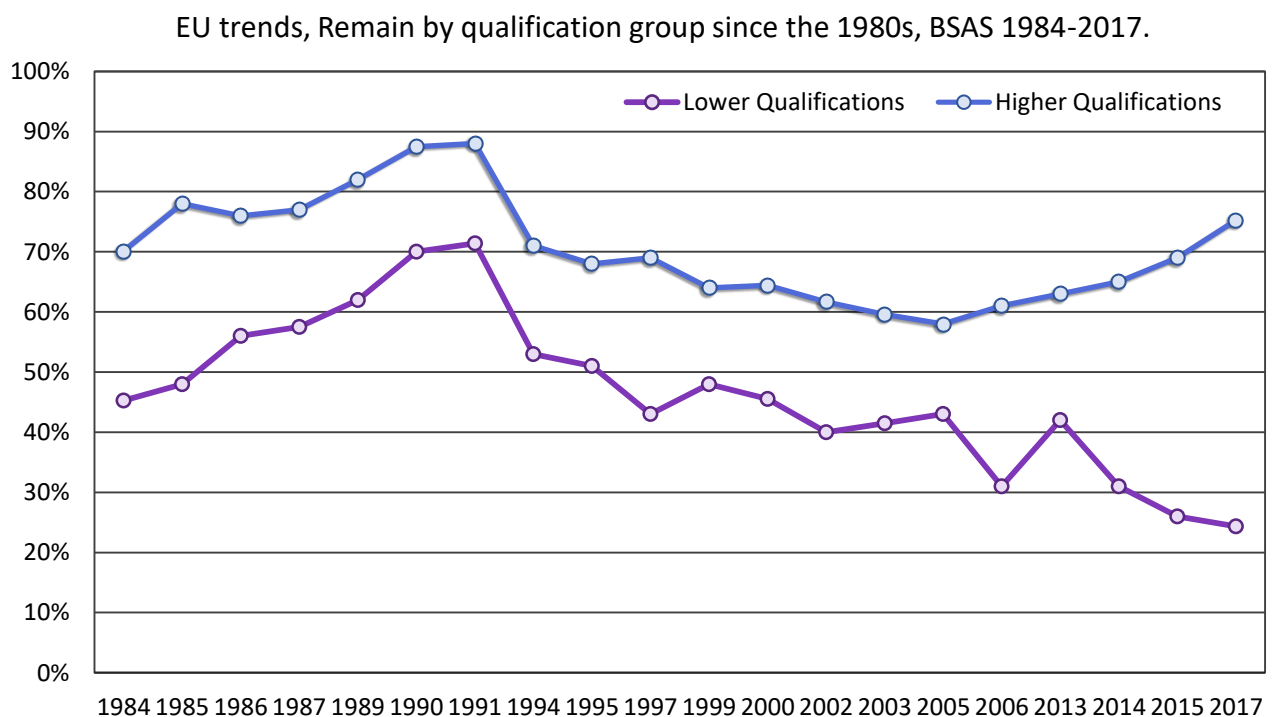EU trends, Remain by qualification group since the 1980s, BSAS 1984-2017.

Figure 3.9 EU membership and qualification grouping's divergence. Source BSAS.

The figure demonstrates how the qualification divide increased on the European question as well as the immigration issue. This divide was again found to be quite strong at the critical moment of Brexit, meaning that this political divide might have been significant in altering the course of British politics.

EU Government approval:

EU approval	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019
Approve (AVG)	40.7%	38.7%	48.6%	43.3%	45.2%
Neither (AVG)	27.7%	23.3%	5.3%	13.8%	11.4%
Disapprove (AVG)	31.6%	38.0%	46.1%	42.9%	43.4%
Approve (Young)	42.9%	47.3%	44.8%	68.4%	61.3%
Neither (Young)	17.5%	35.1%	31.6%	7.1%	19.4%
Disapprove (Young)	39.6%	17.6%	23.6%	24.5%	19.2%
Approve (Older)	34.0%	33.0%	40.4%	34.7%	37.2%
Neither (Older)	23.4%	17.9%	4.0%	9.9%	8.2%
Disapprove (Older)	42.5%	49.1%	55.6%	55.5%	54.7%

Table 3.8, EU approval by social group, BES.

Further to these developments, EU approval ratings mirror divisions found in other questions regarding thoughts on the EU and immigration. Younger people became much more likely to approve of the EU's performance, whilst older groups tended to become more sceptical of the EU's ability to deliver. This also appears to be the case with the qualification divide, with those exposed to higher levels of education being far more positive about the EU's performance than compared with those who have fewer qualifications, who widely disapproved of the EU's performance. This social division again being repeated on yet another variable indicates how new divisions may have been emerging across a set of issues, of which the issues of immigration and the EU particularly tapped into. This divide can broadly be described as the cultural liberal/conservatism divide where different social groups have placed themselves into opposing sides of the spectrum that instinctively respond differently towards the perceived effects from immigration and the EU.

A wide ranging EU divide:

Amount of EU Integration	AVG 1984	Young 1984	Older 1984	AVG 2014	Young 2014	Older 2014
More Integration	35.60%	35.54%	31.35%	4.70%	8.65%	3.62%
About Right	32.91%	41.14%	28.52%	20.44%	29.25%	15.10%
Less Integration	22.68%	17.24%	27.54%	62.08%	37.83%	72.93%
UK focus on foreign policy should go	AVG 1984	AVG 2014	Young 1984	Young 2014	Older 1984	Older 2014
Closer to EU	46.98%	42.77%	48.87%	48.97%	47.30%	41.48%
Middle Ground	22.73%	13.26%	19.39%	29.51%	21.68%	12.10%
Go Elsewhere	19.39%	39.27%	20.97%	17.20%	20.21%	42.36%
Effect of EU on UK Economy						
Stronger Economically	31.03%	25.23%	44.91%	30.20%	12.20%	54.78%
Neither	39.02%	43.11%	30.57%	26.90%	26.50%	21.91%
Weaker Economically	20.43%	20.51%	17.86%	32.40%	51.10%	17.08%
Effect of EU on UK Influence	AVG 1995	L Quals 1995	H Quals 1995	AVG 2013	L Quals 2013	H Quals 2013
More Influence	17.09%	14.06%	20.43%	31.16%	19.55%	43.20%
No Change	43.91%	41.98%	50.36%	36.01%	40.25%	33.20%
Less Influence	39.00%	43.93%	29.21%	32.80%	40.20%	23.60%

Table 3.9: BSAS, Views on other EU related questions:

Table 3.9 and figure 3.10 highlight other social divisions found on the EU issue in BSAS datasets. Again, there were social divisions found on all the issues. For example, gradually older people had grown much more likely to demand the UK stopped integrating with EU institutions. Younger people were much more likely to favour keeping foreign policy focused on EU institutions and grew apart from older groups who felt foreign policy should focus on building alliances elsewhere, such as with the USA. Younger people, and those with higher qualifications, grew apart from contrasting social groups in feeling that the EU made the UK economically stronger. Conversely, older groupings drifted from younger cohorts in feeling that the EU undermined the UK's influence in the world. Crucially, this shows how the EU divide did not just represent leave vs remain views but reflected instinctive reactions across a range of questions that relate to the EU and immigration. Importantly, all these findings reinforce earlier discoveries, thus increasing confidence that these new issues did divide the electorate considerably over time, making the creation of new political groupings possible.

From this, the two main parties could target different groups of voters to widen their voting base, meaning that wide-scale political change became possible in both the 2017 and 2019 elections. Therefore, in theory, as voters began to prioritise these issues the social divisions around these issues started to become more significant in shaping political outcomes.
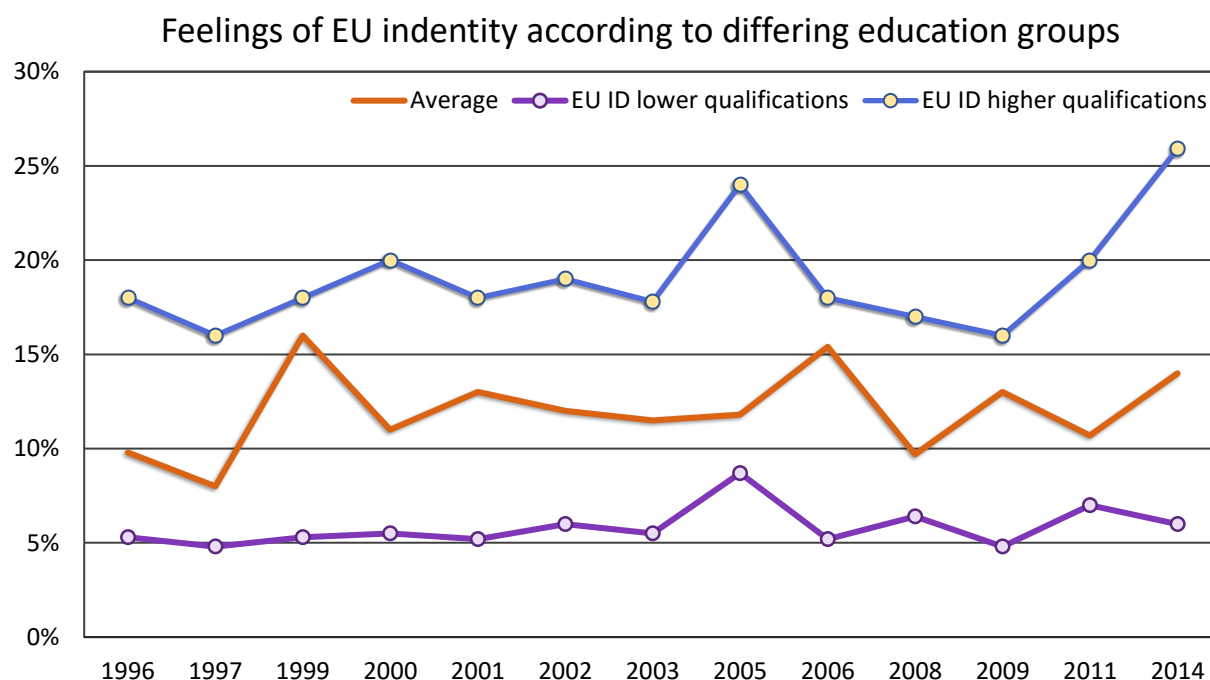
Figure 3.10: Trends on those who identified as European, by qualification groups. Source: BSAS 2996 – 2014.

Differing Priorities emerge:

These social divisions appear to have affected what different parts of the electorate most thought about and what policy issues they felt the government should prioritise. Figure 3.12 shows voters who most cared most about migration tended to be from specific social groups, indicating that some groups wanted action more than others. Breaking down trends on voters' most important issue by social group, it is clear individuals with fewer qualifications had more concerns about immigration than compared to other groups. Consequently, they likely prioritised the issue to a much greater extent than others. This group prioritised the issue of

immigration enough that it became a much more common concern than that of the economy. Meanwhile, groups with more qualifications prioritised the economy much more than they did immigration, even as migration levels rose. This suggests that these different groups simply had different priorities and one social grouping was much more relaxed about immigration, and as a result, demanded politicians dealt with different issues. These differing priorities were not limited to groups with contrasting education experiences, figure 3.11 shows it transferred into different age demographics. Again, the cohort, older people, who had more concerns over the potential effects of migration prioritised immigration over dealing with economic matters as the recession abated. Conversely, younger groups were much less focused on the issue of immigration and their biggest concern was the economy. Further, table 3.10 outlines how the EU divide partly split different groups' priorities. Remainers in 2012 were much more focused on securing the economic recovery, whilst Leavers were significantly disproportionately more focused on the migration issue. This again highlights how social divisions may have been created by differing priorities and attitudes on these new issues.

Policy issue stated to be most important	Vote-leave EU	Vote-stay EU
The Economy (Debt, Jobs, Tax, Pensions)	52.48%	90.64%
Immigration (Illegal + Asylum)	37.36%	5.81%
The EU	7.69%	0.64%
Public Services (NHS, Education)	1.38%	2.58%
Terrorism (Nat Security)	1.10%	0.32%

Table 3.10: Most Important Issue, according to EU Vote (2012–ECMS data)

Therefore, as the mainstream parties failed to address these new issues voters may have reconsidered their allegiances and started to change past behaviour. It may have been from this point where British politics started to remould.

Most Important Issue from 2004 - 2014, Age Difference
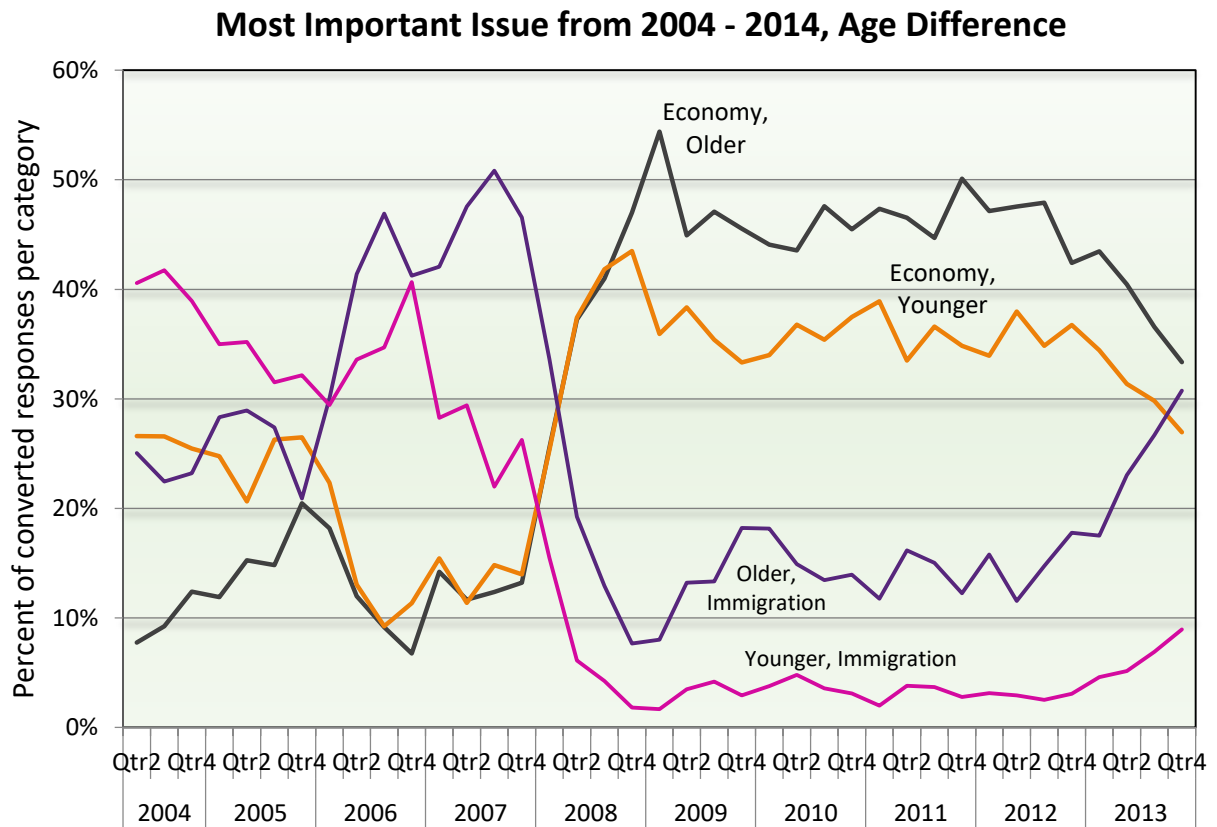
Figure 3.11: The voters' highest priorities by age group, Source: 2004 - '14, ECMS.

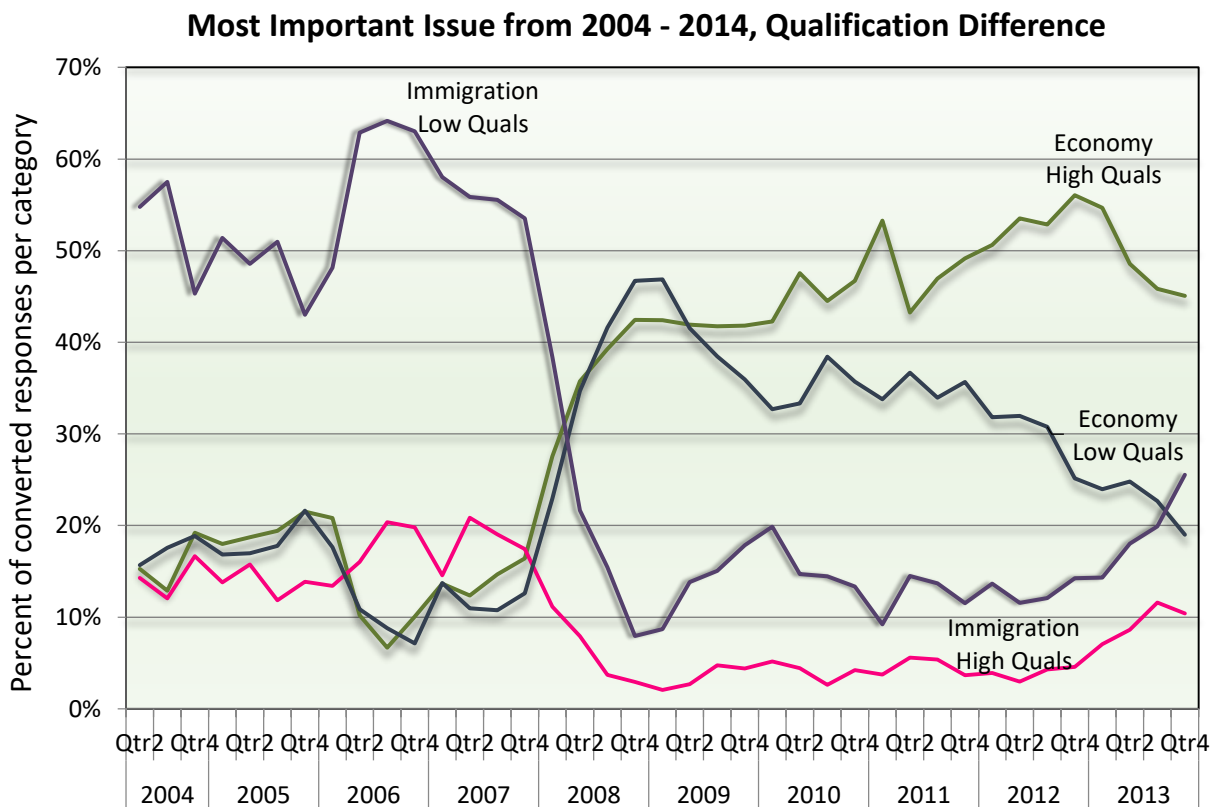**Most Important Issue from 2004 - 2014, Qualification Difference**

Figure 3.12 demonstrates how outside times of economic crises the qualification gap divided

different social grouping's priorities and political thoughts. Those with a university-level education tended to focus on economic matters, whilst those with non-degree level qualifications tended to think about the increase in immigration.

An electorate redistributed:

The book's theory asserted that the new issues that rose up the agenda will cut across the left/right divide. This cutting across of the traditional divide will therefore reposition the voters and make it easier for parties to target voters who historically have been out of their reach. Significantly, as these new issues became dominant in voters' thought processes, if these issues did redistribute the electorate across a new political divide it is likely that this new divide will have shaped voters' decision-making. Therefore, this would raise the potential that this new political divide was responsible for the large changes in voting patterns witnessed in the 2017 and 2019 elections. Crucially, if found, this would mean that the new political divides outlined throughout this chapter partly caused the reshaping of British politics.

Immigration:

Firstly, focusing on migrant flows figure 3.13 shows there is no clear-cut difference between left and right in terms of views regarding what Britain's net-migration level should be. This would suggest that on the most controversial part of the migration debate, that of numbers, the left/right divide does not appear to divide people. Therefore, the divide which had historically placed individuals into Conservative and Labour camps did not reflect how individuals were distributed across the immigration question, thus making it possible for these parties to target voters who traditionally had been out of their reach.

Fig 3.13: BES 2017: Allow more or fewer immigrants, Left-Right scale
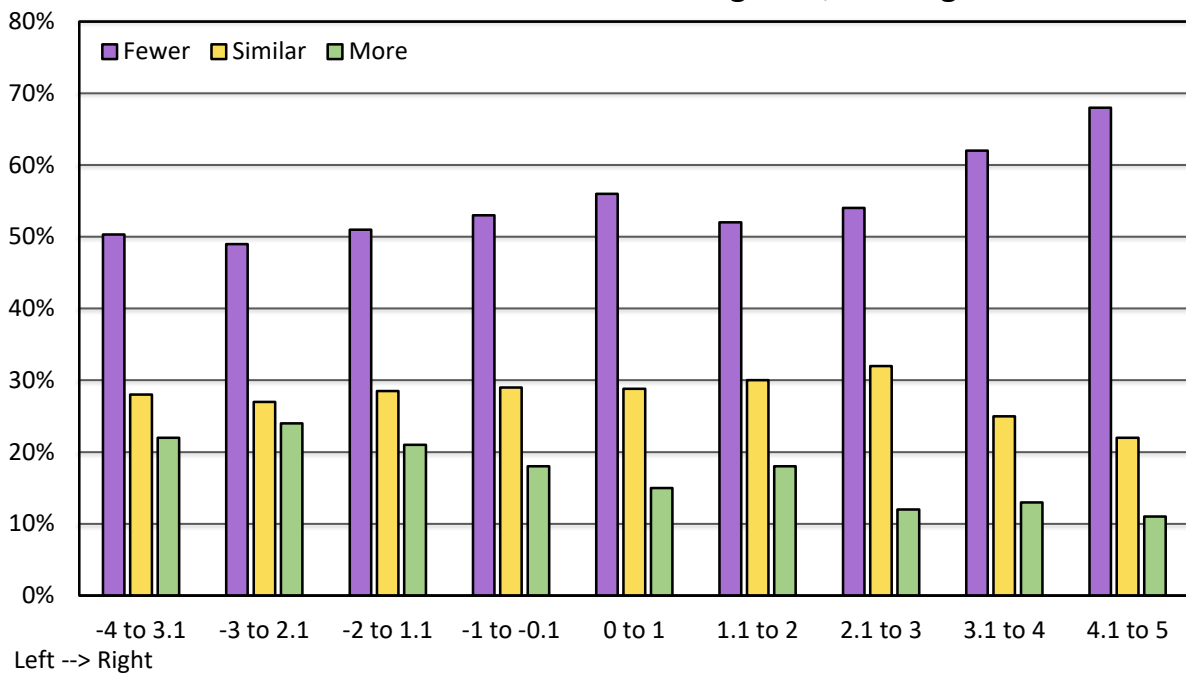
However, figure 3.14 shows the Liberal-authoritarian divide, the variable that is being used to represent the new cultural dimension discussed earlier, displays a clear divide. There is a bimodal distribution here, indicating that a divide exists which can separate the electorate into two new distinct political groupings.

BES 2017: Allow more or fewer immigrants, Lib-Aut scale
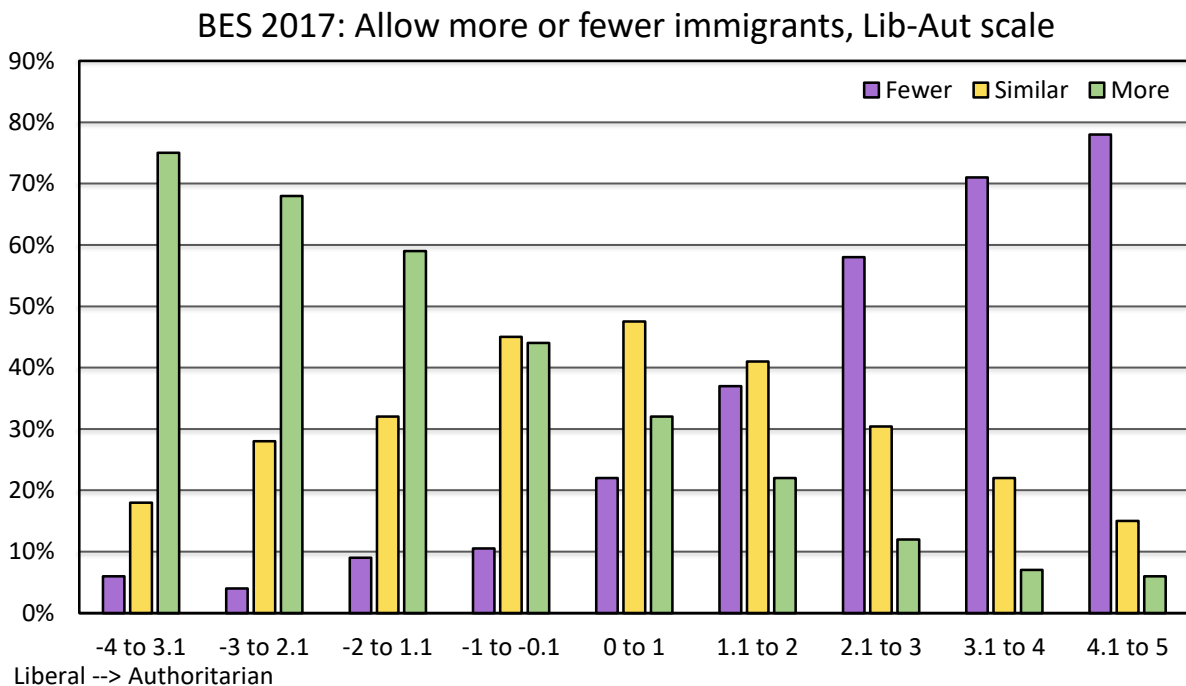
Figure 3.14: A voter's position on migrant numbers by the Liberal-authoritarian scale.

This new political divide follows into other questions concerning immigration. Previously this book found there was a divide concerning the cultural impact of immigration, and this social divide had grown over time. This new divide does translate across the Liberal-authoritarian spectrum and does so in a strong way. Figure 3.15's bimodal trend does again indicate the possible emergence of a new political divide, of which could be summarised as a culturally liberal/authoritarian division. Moreover, this divide appears to intersect the old left/right divide as this question again found that the left/right divide did not create a clear division in response to this question. This again crucially highlights how the electorate were redistributed differently on these new critical issues, therefore making new voting bases possible.

Figure 3.15: Responses to the question that asked the extent immigration enriched or undermined UK culture, BES data – 2017.

Fig 3.16: Immigration a priority? by Lib --> Aut scale, 2019 BES
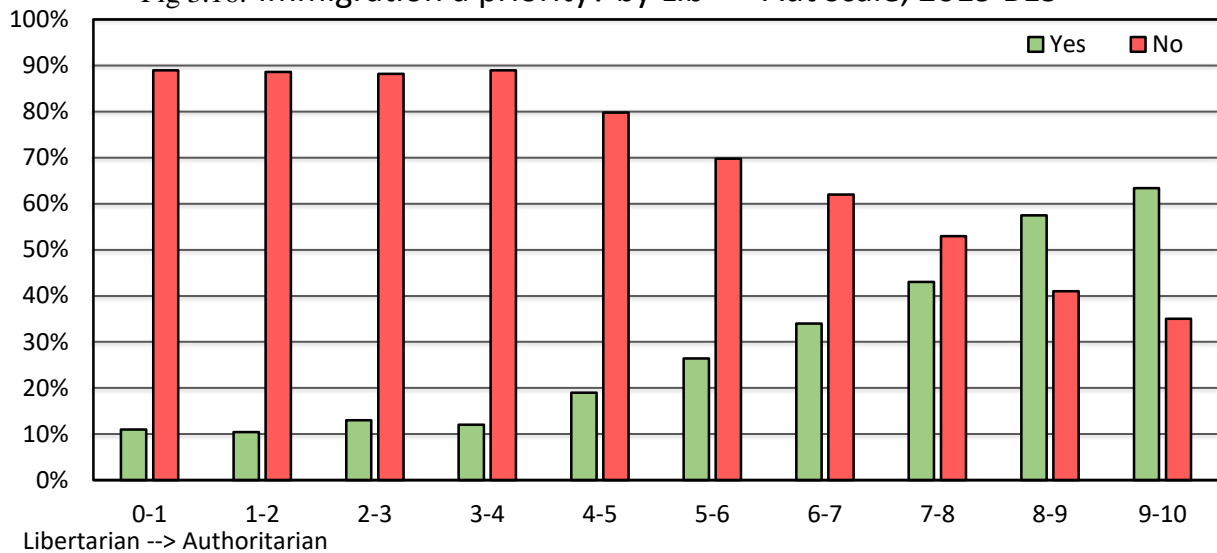
Earlier this book found evidence that indicated a divide of priorities, where some groups were much more likely to be concerned with immigration over any economic problems. On analysing the libertarian and authori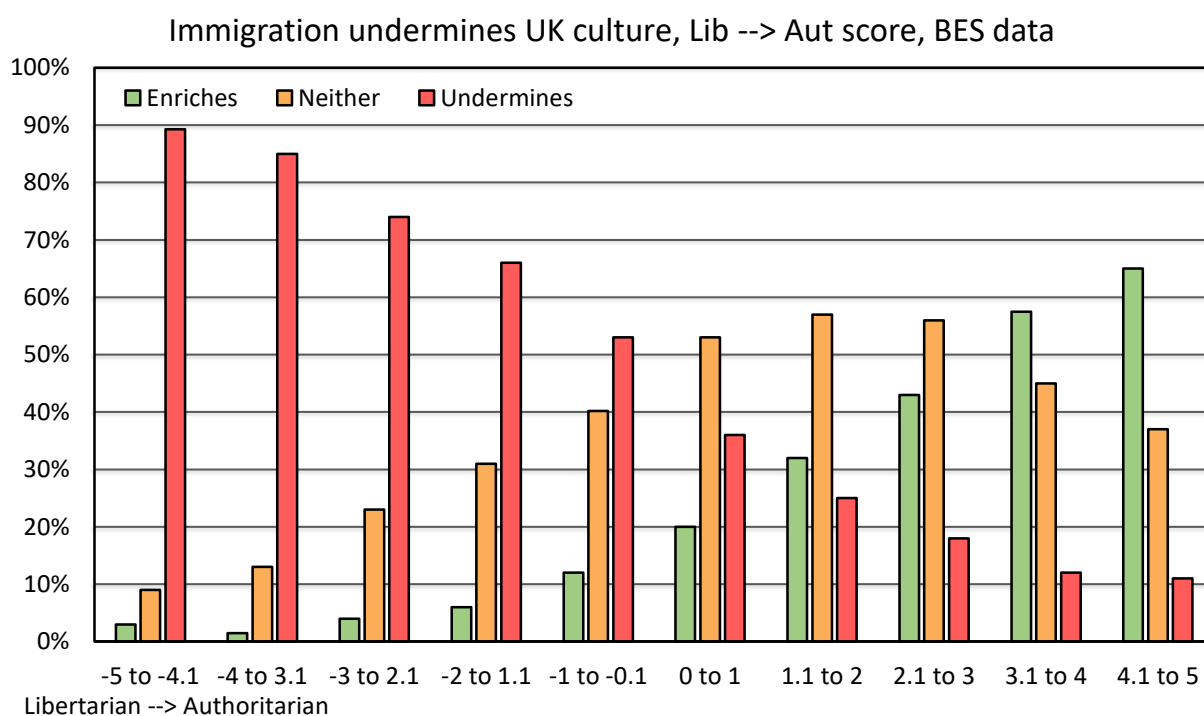tarian trends, those on the liberal side of the spectrum were substantially more likely to not think about prioritising migration, whilst those on the other end of the spectrum expressed the exact opposite view and highly prioritised the migration issue. Alternatively, there was not this divide on the left/right spectrum, thus indicating the electorate were not as aligned around traditional divides in terms of views on new issues and how much such issues should be prioritised. Therefore, it can be stated that a realignment was possible leading into critical political moments throughout the 2010s.

Breaking the old divide: The EU issue.

Crucially, questions surrounding views on the EU also appear to cut across the left/right divide. In terms of views on EU membership there again was a stark divide amongst liberals and authoritarians, but not such much with the left/right divide. Liberals became increasingly more likely to back remain, whilst Authoritarians became much more inclined to back the Leave side. Moreover, the BSAS reinforces these findings over a longer period. Again, liberals drift away from authoritarians and this divide has become more pronounced than the left/right

divide. The growing divide between these groups indicates the emergence of a new political divide, which when the EU rose up the agenda divided old loyalties.
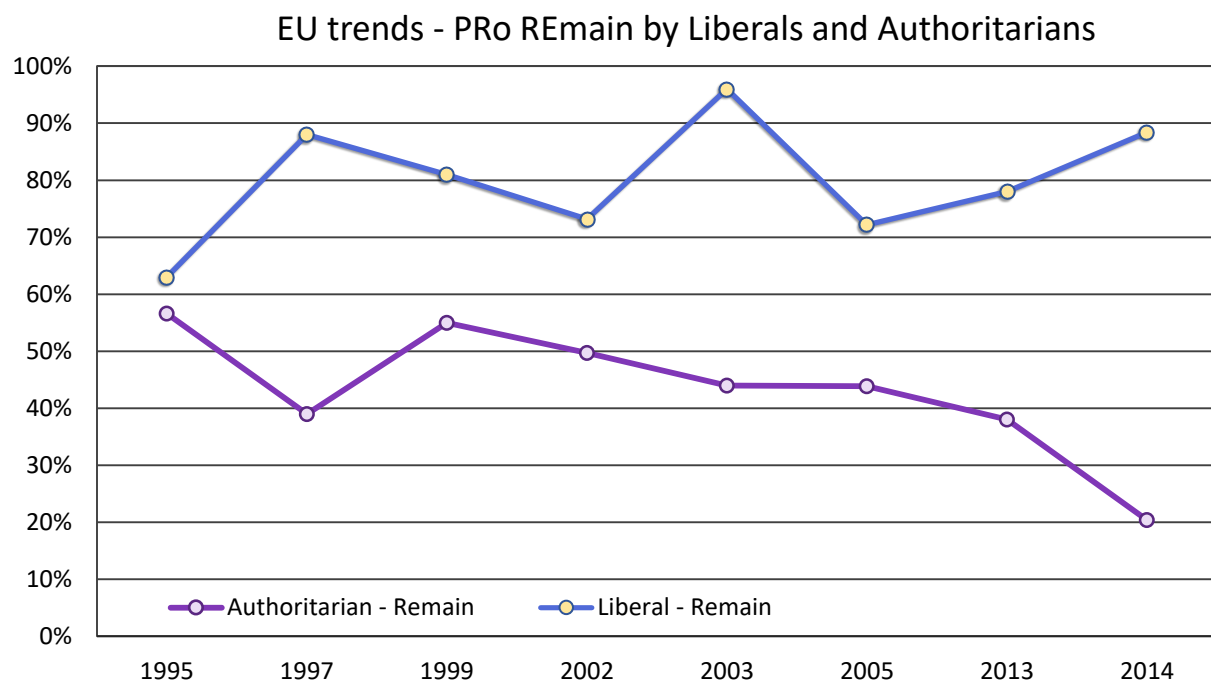
Figure 3.17: Individuals who responded as wanting to remain in the EU, by the liberal and authoritarian divide. Source; BSAS 1995 – 2014.

Brexit:

The divide mentioned above does translate into a broader set of feelings and attitudes towards the EU. For example, there is a stark divide in this political dimension surrounding thoughts on what policies the government should prioritise in the Brexit negotiations. Liberals overwhelmingly prioritise retaining market access to Europe, whilst authoritarians clearly favour securing migration controls, see figure 3.18. However, when focusing on the left/right dimension there is no clear divide. Instead, there appears to be voters who want to prioritise migration controls on both the left and the right. Voters were also divided around the question of sovereignty. It would appear that different sides of the spectrum have a very different idea of how to enhance UK political power. Authoritarians seem to view sovereignty as something

which can be enhanced if kept inside UK borders. Conversely, liberals perceived the concept of sovereignty quite differently, where sovereignty is enhanced through working together with international institutions.

As a result, these two different groups of voters appear to instinctively give different responses to the question of whether UK sovereignty would be enhanced post-Brexit. However, again the left/right divide does not reveal such a split on the EU question.
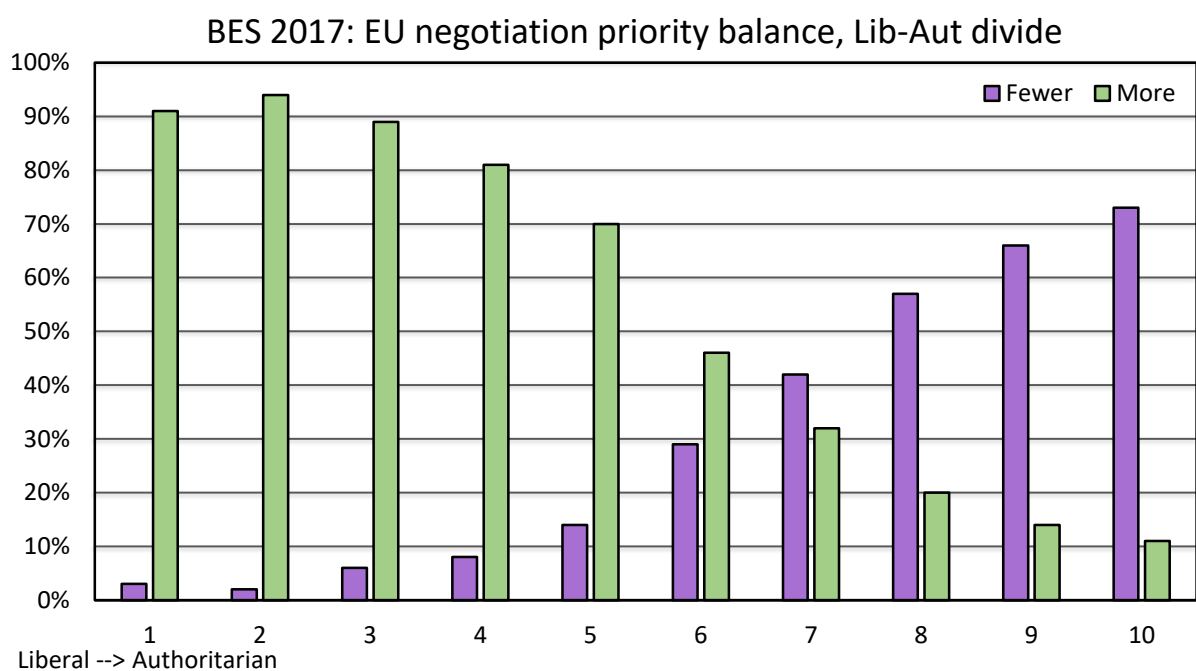
Table 3.1: A voter's stated preference in the Brexit negotiations by the liberal and authoritarian divide. It demonstrates how the liberal/authoritarian divide was replicated across a wide range of questions that in some way involved the EU. Moreover, they all seem to cut across the left/right divide, all be it to varying degrees. Furthermore, figure 3.19 shows that this new divide translated into what people wanted out of Brexit, and therefore what voters wanted the future direction of the country to be. This all indicates the presence of a new political cleavage that could rearrange voters into new political camps where the parties could secure new bases, thus changing the structure of competition within British politics. Therefore, this new divide may have been strong enough to reshape electoral outcomes, thus making it possible that this new political divide partly caused Brexit and subsequent election results.

Table 3.11: EU Benefits – BSAS data	1995	2014
AVG - EU economically Benefits UK	34.30%	36.77%
Liberal - EU economically Benefits UK	66.49%	76.79%
Authoritarian - EU economically Benefits UK	47.01%	22.77%
AVG - EU weakens UK economy	22.58%	18.12%
Liberal - EU weakens UK economy	11.27%	7.81%
Authoritarian - EU weakens UK economy	28.09%	51.27%
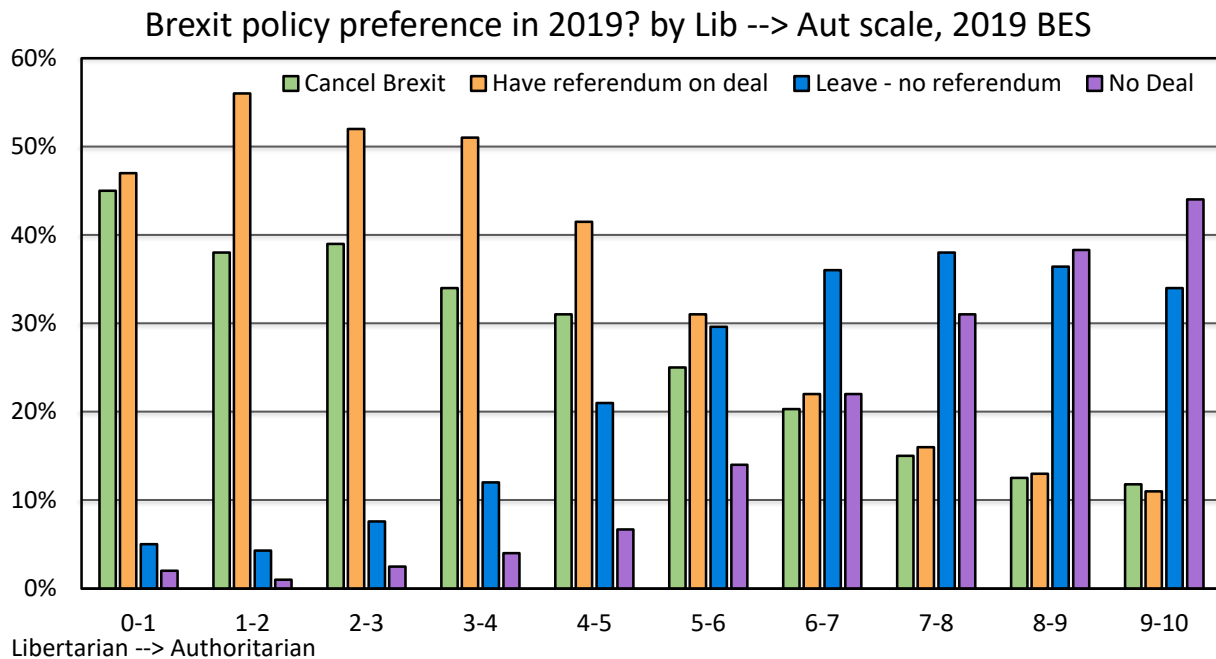
Figure 3.19: A voter's preferred Brexit outcome by their position on the liberal – authoritarian divide. It shows that liberals preferred securing an option that guaranteed the option to remain, whilst authoritarians chose options that guaranteed an option to leave.

Overall:

This chapter concludes through stating that it can accept (H1). This section has found clear evidence that non-economic issues have risen in importance, whilst economic issues have decreased in voters' priorities. Moreover, these concerns were more focused on cultural and value-based questions, again making them quite distinct from historical voter priorities within British politics. This was demonstrated across several datasets, giving this study increased confidence in accepting the first hypothesis. Moreover, this study can also go on to accept (H2).

This is because there are clear sociological group divides on these issues, giving the potential for new political divides to emerge from this. Significantly, as projected, these divides appear to represent growing cultural divisions, of which can be described as a cultural liberalism vs cultural conservatism divide. Again, as these divides were replicated across multiple datasets this study can have high confidence in accepting the second hypothesis. Furthermore, this book can go on to accept this hypothesis more confidently as these issues also appear to form cleavages that cut across the traditional left/right divide. Crucially, this means that voters could reposition themselves and vote according to a different dimension. This allowed parties to successfully target voters they likely would not have won over before this cross-cutting divide emerged, thus allowing for a remoulding of British politics. As the electorate began to place more emphasis on this new cleavage they might have started to change their voting intention towards a new party that was changing their appeal. Therefore, post-2016, the findings in this chapter only makes voters changing their allegiances because of this new divide more likely.

In order to establish the magnitude of voters changing allegiances throughout the last decade, the next chapter examines the extent to which voters felt detached from historic party allegiances. It does this by tracking the propensity they reported switching from their previous general election vote, also known as voter volatility. It will also identify if the new political divide created from Brexit was powerful enough to break old allegiances. If there have been historically high levels of dealignment and voter switching then this will indicate that these new issues may have caused enough of a shift in party and voter allegiances to remould how British politics operates.

Chapter 4: Wavering loyalties.

If a realignment in British politics has occurred then a period of destabilisation should have occurred. This increased instability of past loyalties especially should have occurred approaching critical political moments, such as Brexit and the 2019 election. If the new divides outlined in the last chapter are to have changed voting patterns then they must have at some point weakened past loyalties. This chapter tracks the level of partisan dealignment and voter volatility in order to examine if voters were breaking from past party loyalties at the same time these new divides emerged in British politics. If found, this would signal that these new political divisions could have weakened old allegiances, and therefore made it possible for new ones to be created.

Dealignment:

Partisan allegiances weakening:

Realignments can emerge from unstable political times. A key sign of old loyalties increasingly having the potential to be broken is a decline in emotional attachments to a party. Historically the BES has tested if such an attachment exists through the question of party identification. This question asks if a voter feels a particular loyalty to any of the political parties in the UK. Analysing historical trends to this question shows that fewer people have an attachment to the main three political parties. Moreover, the decline in attachment to the main parties has not been replaced by greater attachments to smaller parties. Instead, figure 4.1 shows there is a clear trend showing more people increasingly feel no attachment to any political party. This response has doubled in frequency since the late 1980s and now reflects how a fifth of the electorate feels. Further to this, in 1964 45% of voters had a strong identification, whilst in 2015 only 15% had (Sanders 2017). Therefore, the bases of support the parties had historically

been able to rely upon may have increasingly not been prepared to repeat past voting behaviour, possibly making party support less stable. This increasing instability in the parties' voting bases may signal that the parties' bases were changing and keeping historic bases of support had simply become harder for the two main parties. Therefore, this would have incentivised the parties to attract new voters, further making old patterns of support less relevant.

This all indicates that the UK might have recently gone through a period of voters having an increasing willingness to switch between parties. Crucially, this occurred at the same time as new political divides emerged, giving the possibility that a new political landscape was breaking down historic loyalties, thus making a fundamental change within British politics increasingly likely when approaching key political moments, such as that of Brexit and the 2019 election.

UK Party Identification Trends 1987 - 2017, According to the BES
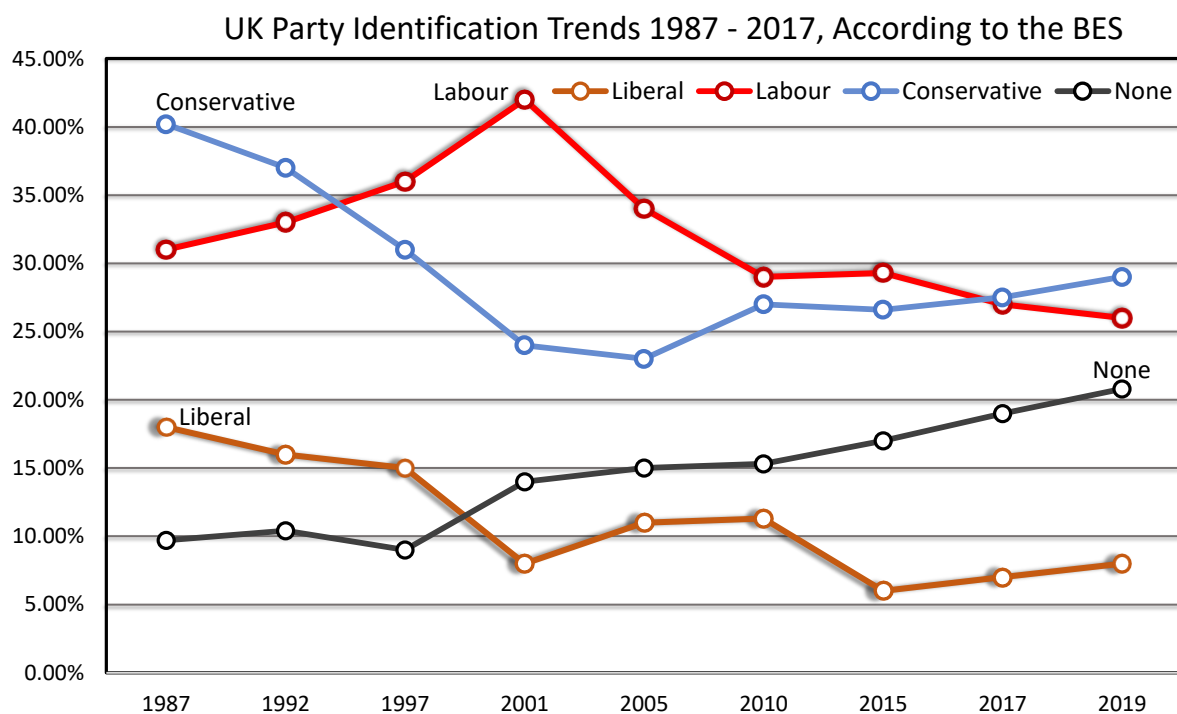
Figure 4.1 - trends in party identification from 1987 – 2017, source: BES datasets. It shows that since the late 1980s party identification has steadily been declining in British Politics. In contrast, those who stated they felt no attachment to any of the political parties doubled in this time period. This is an indication that the emergence of new political divides may have weakened old longstanding political loyalties.

<u>The weakening of social allegiances:</u>

Crucially, these trends are not limited to any one specific demographic. Age group trends particularly show that this is not just a pattern of younger voters being politically disengaged. Breaking down these trends into different cohorts, the book discovers a generational pattern. Figure 4.2 shows that political dealignment is increasing fastest amongst younger voters, suggesting a continued rise of political dealignment is possible in future elections. Interestingly, it also shows increased dealignment amongst older voters.

Further, this trend also appears to be consistent amongst groups with different levels of education. Therefore, this indicates that decreased political attachment may have arisen not just due to the widening of higher education, but also because of wider factors affecting all social groupings. A possible cause behind widening political dissatisfaction amongst the main parties could have instead been the parties' inability to respond to voters' concerns regarding new issues that they felt were not being addressed. Immigration, especially for Labour supporters, might have helped destabilise old loyalties to make political change possible. Alongside this, an inability for parties to be seen to competently deal with Brexit could have furthered this process of dealignment. As parties produced deadlock on the Brexit issue those who expected their party to deal with Brexit quickly and competently may have begun to doubt their party, and consequently looked for a new party to deal with this critical concern many voters had.

No Party ID, BES 1992 - 2019: By Age Groups
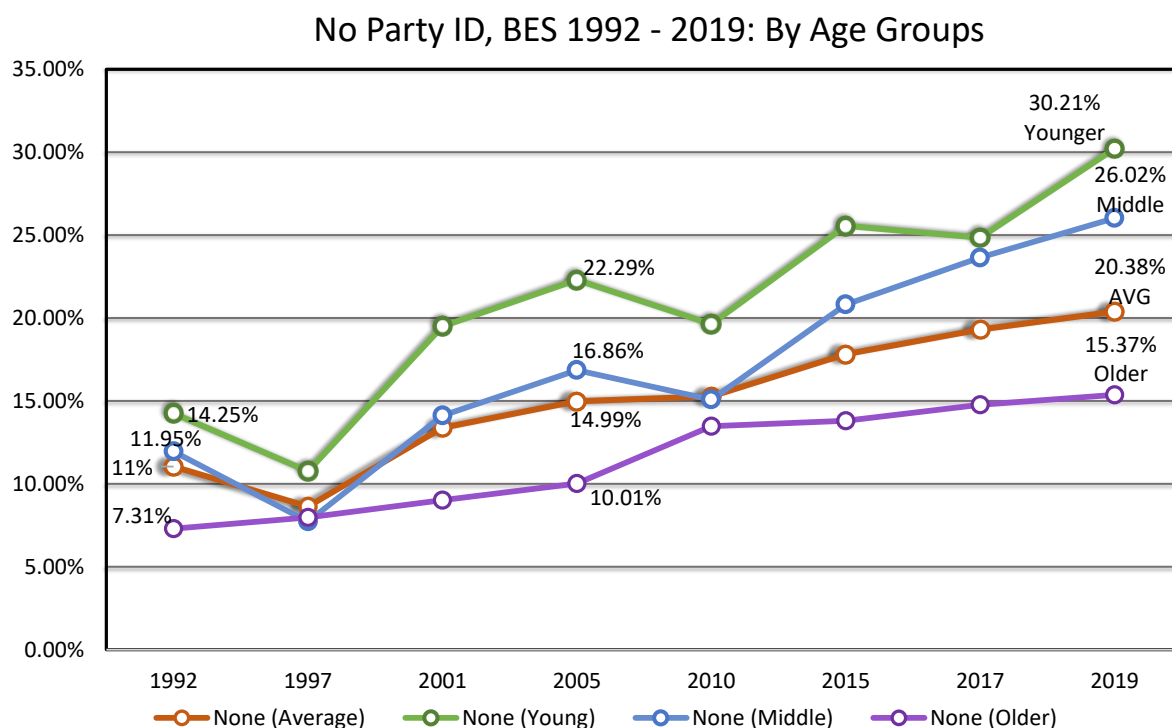
Figure 4.2: Trends in the proportion of voters who stated that they had no party identification.

Source: BES 1992 – 2019.

Class Dealignment:

Table 4.1: Alford Index 1945-2019:

1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964	1966	1970	1974	1979	1983
44.00	40.00	42.50	41.50	39.50	40.50	42.50	33.50	30.50	23.00	20.00

1987	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019
22.50	25.00	20.50	18.00	14.00	7.50	9.00	5.50	-1.03

The traditional measure of class-based voting is the Alford index, where a score is given for the estimated amount of traditional class-based voting. Traditional class-based voting should see large numbers of the middle-class voting Conservative, with the working class voting Labour. The lower the score the weaker class based voting has become. Norris' research has published trends of the Alford index up to 1997 (Norris 1990). Using the BES it is possible to update findings on the amount of class-based voting since 1997 and dealignment in all classes has accelerated. Table 4.1 demonstrates that class dealignment has continued to the extent that

in the 2019 general election the Conservatives now represent more working-class voters than Labour. Labour on the other hand has clearly become more reliant on middle-class votes with successive elections since 1997. With both the main parties experiencing such trends class dealignment has become so common that the old class-based divides appear to be no longer relevant to British political outcomes.

Alongside this, in terms of party identification, there has been a sustained dealignment of traditional class trends with both Labour and the Conservatives. Fewer middle-class voters identify as having an allegiance with the Conservative Party, with more associating themselves with the Labour Party over time. Moreover, working-class voters associate less with Labour and more often with the Conservatives than they did two decades ago. As these trends have been developing across the last couple of decades there appears to be little chance of a sudden reversal of these trends. Consequently, the dealignment in class-based voting is likely now the norm in British elections. As class-based trends have declined this has given rise to the possibility for new dividing lines to emerge. Therefore, this particular type of weakening of partisan ties has created the very environment needed for old allegiances to be broken.

Overall, the amount of detachment from any political party appears to have increased with each new generation entering the electorate. The trend mirrors post-materialist trends where each generation remains increasingly unattached to old political allegiances their parents, and grandparents, likely experienced. Post-materialist trends tend to be long-term, if not permanent changes, indicating that increased willingness to change party allegiance is now part of British politics, and with this higher levels of voter-switching has the capacity to exist. The increased potential for voter volatility signals the possibility for rapid political change, resulting in the potential for the UK political system to have been remoulded in recent times.

Greater Volatility:

Net volatility:

Net Volatility: Butler Swing 1945-2019.

1945 -50	1950 - 51	1951 - 55	1955 - 59	1959 - 64	1964 - 66	1966 - 70	1970 -74	1974	1974 -79	1979 -83	1983 -87
2.9	1.1	1.8	1.2	3.1	2.8	4.9	0.8	2.2	5.3	4.1	2.7
1987 -92	1992 -97	1997 - 01	2001 - 05	2005 -10	2010 -15	2015 -17	2017- 19				
2.1	10.2	1.8	3.2	5.1	0.7	2.05	4.55				

Table 4.2, Butler Swing 1945 – 2019.

When using the oldest net volatility measure, the Butler swing, it can be said that over the last decade elections have been increasingly volatile. Moreover, table 4.2 shows under this measure of net volatility the 2019 election was the fourth most volatile election in UK post-war history. The level of volatility is also similar to that of the period where the last realignment occurred, during the 1974-79 parliament, indicating that similar conditions during the last realignment may have been present within the last decade of UK politics.

Net Volatility: Pedersen Index

Critics of the Butler measurement stress that this measure of net volatility does not include third and other minor parties. This means that when volatility creates gains for smaller parties, or the emergence of new parties, under the Butler measure this is not deemed to count. The Pedersen Index takes into account gains and losses that occur under smaller parties. When using this method to calculate voter volatility between each electoral cycle in post-war UK history it can be said the past decade has been very volatile. Figure 4.3 shows the electoral cycles between 2010-15 and 2015-17 were historically the most volatile elections in post-war times. This importantly captures the increased levels of voter switching created by the rise of smaller parties, such as UKIP. This trend diminished at the last election, but this is not

surprising considering that most voters had already switched in the 2017 election. In terms of a decade average, the last decade can be confidently said to be the most unstable time in UK post-war history. This crucially indicates that as new divides emerged voters began to leave past loyalties and consider changing parties, and do so at quite a rapid rate.

Pedersen Index of General Election Volatility UK - 1945 - 2019
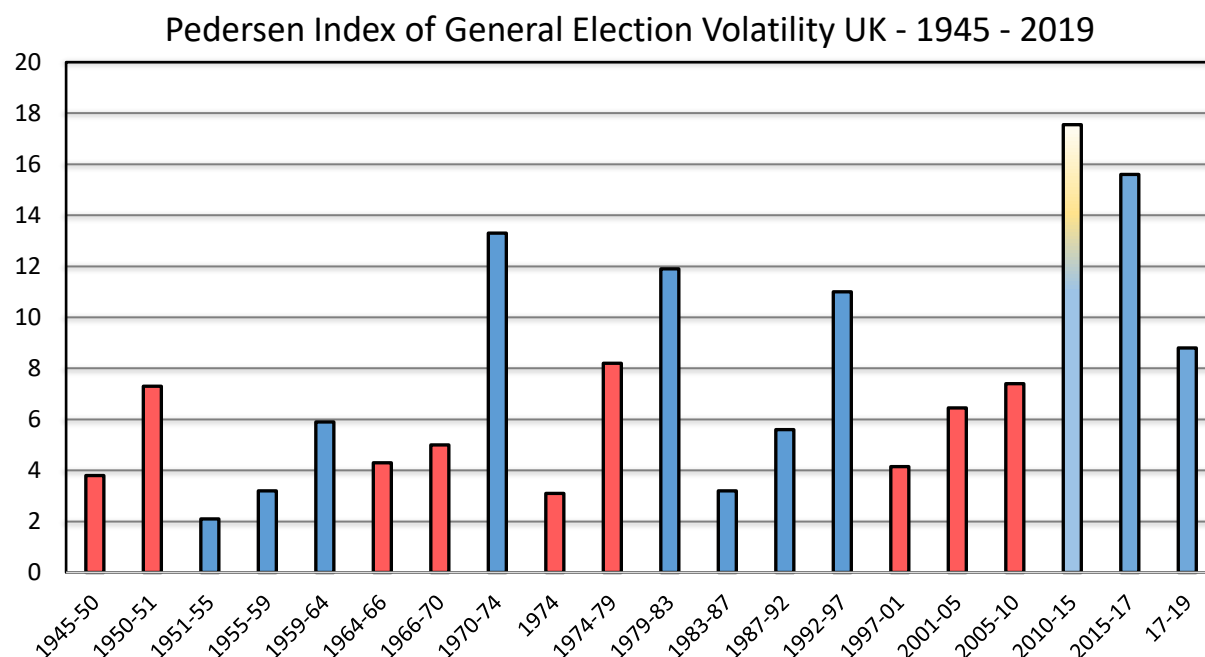
Figure 4.3 Displays the Pedersen Index for each election since 1945. This takes into account the changes in the main parties' vote share between general elections, whilst also taking into account changes in the third party vote share.

Gross volatility:

Gross volatility refers to the extent individual voters switch parties between general elections rather than focusing on changes in the share of the vote the parties receive.

Using BES panel data to track how stable the parties' vote share was from the previous election, at an individual voter level the last decade of British politics can be said to be a highly volatile period in British political history. Comparing stable votes, ballots where the same voter supported the same party two elections in a row, it can be said the parties' voting base was at its most unstable level since the 1970s. Table 4.3 provides evidence that the last decade was

the first decade where vote retention was below 60% in all elections. Moreover, vote retention for the two main parties was at its lowest level since the latter half of the 1970s, the last time a realignment occurred.

Stable	1970	1974	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019 GE
Main-Main	47	43	42	52	54	52	49.5	53.1	49.2	38.2	43.0	42.4
Lib-Lib	3	4	7	7	10	6	5.9	9.1	9.1	4.9	3.3	6.3
Other-Other							2.8	0.5	1.0	6	5.7	5.5
Non Voter-Non voter	16	11	13	5	5	4	4.9	1.6	0.8	2.9	5.4	4.6
Unstable	66	58	62	64	69	62	63	64.2	60.0	51.9	57.4	58.9
Con-Lab Switch	5	5	4	4	3	3	6.1	4.2	6.4	6.7	8.7	7.9
Main & Lib	4	8	9	14	13	15	12.1	13.6	14.9	17.6	5.6	9.2
Main Other							3.1	3.2	4.3	11.2	18.2	12.9
Non-vote Switch	25	29	25	18	15	20	15.7	14.9	14.3	12.6	10.0	11.2
Switchers	34	42	38	36	31	38	37	35.8	39.9	48.1	42.6	41.1

Table 4.3: Voter stability per election cycle 1970-2019: Norris 1970-'92 & BES 1997 – 2019 data.

Furthermore, voters switching between the two main parties has been consistently at its highest level since BES records began. This indicates great potential for the two main parties' voter bases to have changed. With four elections within the last decade, and each one producing large levels of voter switching between the main parties, there is a possibility that higher levels of net volatility has led to a gradual shift in voting bases. This again indicates that increased willingness to change parties coincided with the new divides that were outlined in the last chapter. The largest changes in voting bases may have occurred in the 2017 and 2019 general elections, which may have been a change accelerated by the events of Brexit, raising the possibility that these elections were realigning ones. This, therefore, raises the possibility for a gradual remoulding of politics to have occurred as political events developed throughout the decade. Further, this is a similar development as the one that occurred in the 1970s. In the '70s,

political developments resulted in a realigning election at the end of the decade with Thatcher being elected, ushering in her neoliberal economic revolution. This time the realigning election could have occurred with political developments in the 2010s, culminating in Johnson's victory in 2019 and the implementation of Brexit.

Volatility between elections: By-Elections:

Parliamentary cycle	Avg of Con Vote	Avg of Lab Vote	Avg of LD Vote	Avg 4th Vote
1945-50	43.29	50.53	4.37	1.80
1950-51	45.34	50.15	19.20	1.82
1951-55	49.70	47.13	11.99	6.50
1955–59	45.29	45.60	23.31	5.29
1959–64	36.53	42.07	22.95	7.83
1964-66	44.20	39.42	15.27	1.23
1966–70	45.70	34.57	11.30	10.90
1970-74	32.40	44.51	14.69	11.09
1974-79	42.77	37.13	12.02	9.35
1979-83	27.88	38.81	32.16	6.82
1983-87	28.99	30.43	37.99	2.89
1987-92	22.25	43.35	18.84	15.56
1992-97	21.43	48.52	19.67	12.45
1997-01	23.84	36.32	20.09	19.04
2001-05	20.17	34.33	32.26	12.50
2005-10	23.86	33.33	16.95	24.60
2010-15	19.29	42.47	11.12	24.74
2015-17	31.28	36.43	13.86	18.43
2017-19	26.51	31.43	21.12	20.95
Average	37.00	42.25	17.21	10.53

Table 4.4: Average party volatility in by-elections per parliamentary cycle:

By-election results can be one indication of how volatile voters are feeling during the points between both local and national elections. Previous studies on volatility revealed that third and smaller parties performing well in by-elections can indicate a desire for political change (Norris 1997). This is because parties that lose control of seats in by-elections, especially those thought to be previously safe seats, can indicate a change occurring within British politics before a general election occurs.

By taking an average of by-election vote shares of the main parties across one given parliament table 4.4 shows a clear trend of smaller parties improving on their vote share with successive parliamentary cycles. This indicates that the increased detachment from the main parties has created an increase in vote switching during by-elections. Therefore, it can be said that governments, and in some cases the opposition party as well, have become more vulnerable to by-election losses as the public appear more accepting towards outsider parties and the political change they offer. On top of this, there have been more instances of major parties losing by-elections than in previous decades. One such notable case was the by-election of Copeland where Labour, a party nationally seen as the main opposition party, lost the by-election. Moreover, in by-elections within similar parts of the north of the country UKIP performed quite well, securing many second places. This was an early indication that voters in such constituencies were ready for political change, and were prepared to accept more culturally conservative alternatives. Interestingly, the movement towards the Conservatives occurred with the collapse of UKIP and the rise of the Conservatives after prime minister May agreed to implement Brexit. Moreover, this development has coincided with the emergence of new political divides, as outlined in chapter 3. This raises the possibility the volatility these by-elections highlighted showed the movement from Labour towards the Conservatives, and the remoulding of British politics, sometime before the 2017 and 2019 elections.

Defending in by-elections:

Another way to measure by-election volatility is by focusing on changes in the share of the vote for the party defending that seat. Therefore, this method controls for parties who defend more seats in by-elections during periods the party is more successful. The results from this method, table 4.5, shows that since 2005 by-elections have become increasingly difficult for the two main parties, regardless who is in government. Historically, patterns have shown that

the main opposition party has overall been the beneficiary of by-elections. However, since the parliamentary cycle of 2005-10, both parties have been losing their share of the vote in by-elections where they are defending. This means that volatility has increased in a way that appears to have caused increased instability for both the main parties, regardless of who is in power. This increased level of volatility therefore appears to benefit smaller parties, especially those offering political change, rather than parties seen to be the establishment parties of Westminster. This again indicates that there is enthusiasm for some form of political change and by-elections have been used by the British public to voice their dissatisfaction with the two-party system. Such dissatisfaction crucially occurred at the same time the new divides emerged, indicating that mainstream parties being perceived not to have dealt with these new critical issues well may have caused voters to turn to smaller parties, thus increasing the willingness for voters to abandon old party loyalties.

Parliament	Con Defences	Lab Defences
1945-50	12.90	-2.92
1950-51	22.50	-1.00
1951-55	5.90	-1.57
1955–59	1.80	0.72
1959–64	0.00	-2.67
1964-66	13.80	-2.64
1966–70	17.00	-14.09
1970-74	3.30	-4.32
1974-79	17.00	-7.05
1979-83	0.10	-7.32
1983-87	-8.49	1.52
1987-92	-2.60	3.74
1992-97	7.60	6.99
1997-01	28.50	-12.58
2005-10	11.00	1.33
2010-15	-8.90	-5.10
2015-17	-2.70	-5.87
2017-19	-9.60	-12.70
Average	28.5	-2.42

Table 4.5: Average change in by-elections per parliamentary cycle.

Comparing by election performances to general election results:

Another measure that can be used is tracking the difference in the percentage of the vote for each party in the by-election compared to the share of the vote they received at the previous election. This, therefore, takes into account the change in performance for all parties regardless of which party wins or loses the seat. Using this method figure 4.4 demonstrates that by-elections have been increasingly difficult for the two main parties for a couple of decades. Both the main parties have consistently lost support in by-elections with their share of the vote on average decreasing, or flat-lining, in parliamentary cycles since 1997. This continued loss of support from general election into by-elections again highlights the greater demand for different representation and frustration over a lack of credible action on new issues the electorate highly valued, such as Europe and immigration. Overall, regardless of how the book has measured by-election volatility the evidence appears to show increased volatility in recent times, with this increase being at historically very high, and at times unprecedented, levels.
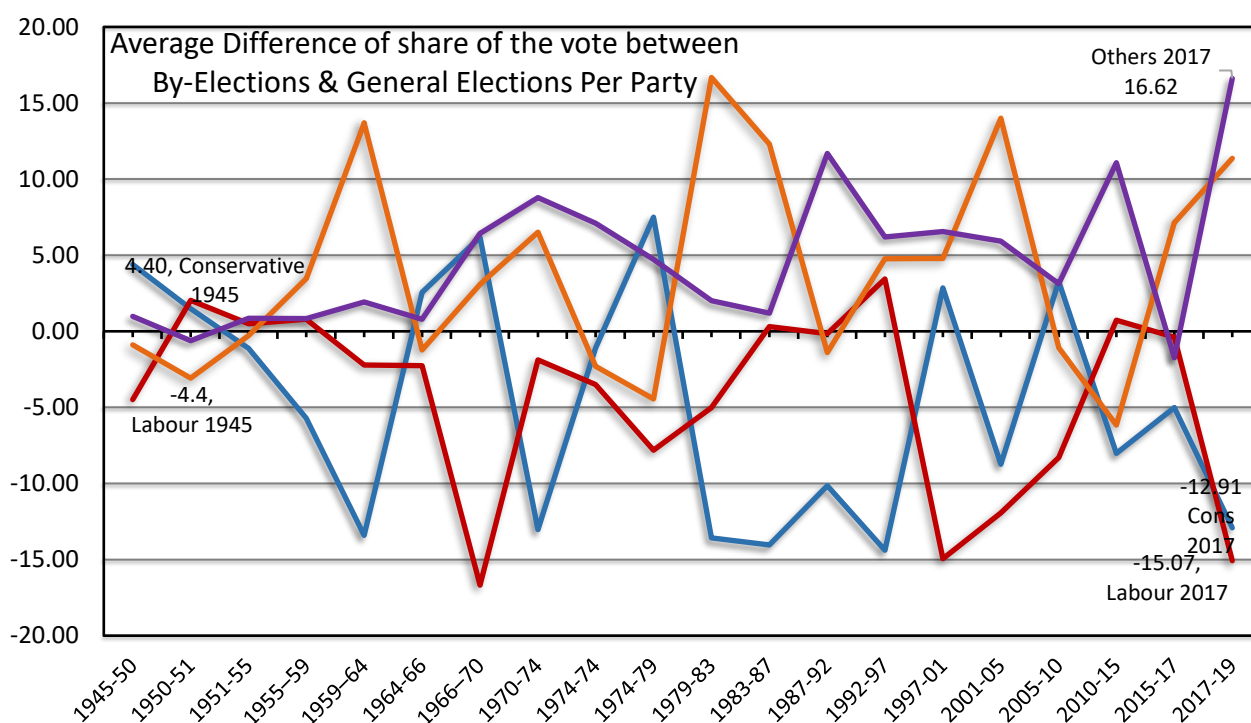

Figure 4.4 displays the changes in party votes shares between a by-election and the previous general election result for the respective seat. It highlights how the two main parties have

increasingly struggled to match their general election performance in by-elections, signalling a weakening of both their bases.

Opinion Poll volatility:

Poll fluctuations between elections:

Figure 4.5 displays the change in average ratings for all parties in the opinion polls from 1945 to just before the election in 2019. It compares the average difference in support a party registered in one given quarter to the previous one. The average change is the mean of all the parties' change in support, consequently meaning that this graph takes into account the rise of new parties. The closer the figure is to zero the less volatility has occurred from one quarter to the next, with higher numbers representing greater volatility. The graph shows that the decade experienced quite significant volatility, more so than most periods British politics has produced. Moreover, there are more opinion poll organisations conducting regular polls than in the past, resulting in greater confidence that this volatility is not due to sampling errors. On average, parties changed up to four percentage points in very short timespans towards the end of the last decade, resulting in leads being created, or cut, in shorter periods than British politics has historically allowed. Moreover, as the UK approached the 2019 election the variation in monthly and quarterly opinions polls increased to historic levels. The last period opinion polls fluctuated higher than 2019 was the years that led into the realigning election of 1979, indicating that enough volatility was present to create a possibility the 2019 election was another realignment. Moreover, there are large fluctuations in volatility approaching, and during, general elections, which had not occurred at such high levels since the late 1970s. This again indicates that volatility was not just at a historic high, but also was occurring during critical points in UK political history. This means that volatility in recent times has had the

potential to shape political outcomes and create unpredictable elections that may have altered the base of party competition.

Labour & Conservative volatility:

Interestingly, when focusing on the two main parties' shares of the opinion polls, this study found that there have also been many sharp increases and decreases of the two main parties' shares of the vote, indicating a destabilisation of both parties' support bases. Crucially, towards the end of the last decade, both the Labour and the Conservative levels of support appear to decline together at the same rate. Historically in British politics, the patterns of their share of the vote have been mirror images; as one increases, the other decreases at roughly the same rate. This is because these parties have typically fought over a small number of voters in the centre-ground and an exchange of these voters would result in a direct transfer of votes, with one party gaining and the other losing out. However, this pattern stopped as the realigning election approached, indicating that these parties were now losing votes to smaller parties and were taking from each other's traditionally solid support bases. Interestingly, the last time this trend occurred was around the last realignment in British politics, 1979 - 1983.

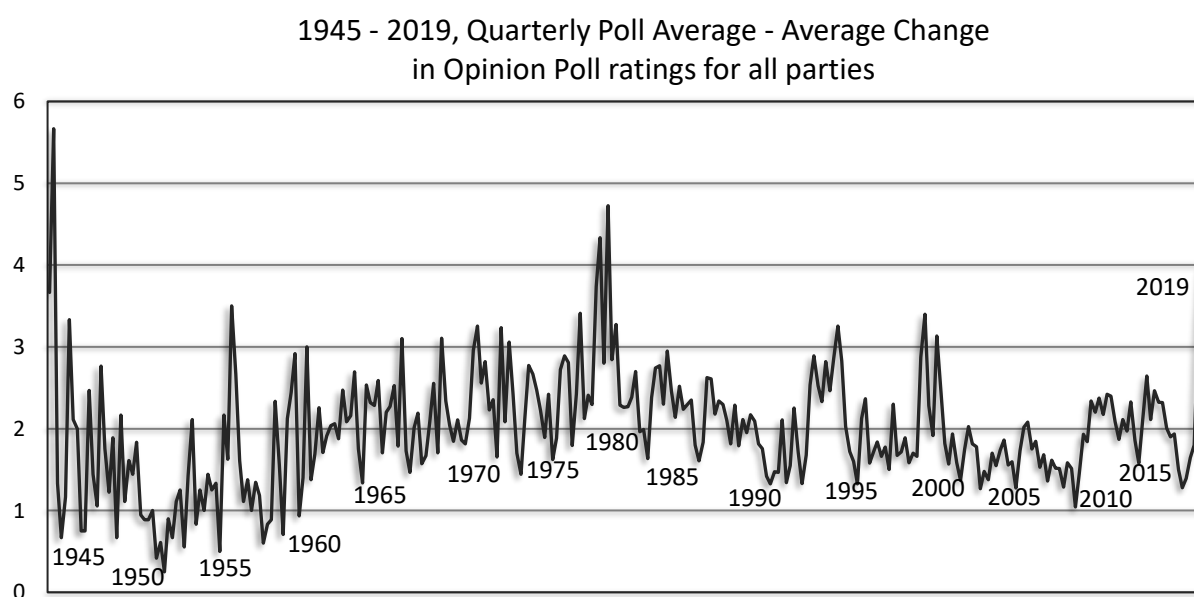1945 - 2019, Quarterly Poll Average - Average Change in Opinion Poll ratings for all parties

Figure 4.5 outlines the changes in the average quarterly polling rating for the main parties in British politics. It shows how from 2016 to 2019 there was at times historically very high levels

of voter-switching between parties. Therefore, the new divides that emerged at the time of Brexit may have remoulded the parties' bases of support.

<u>Fourth Party volatility and increased voter switching:</u>

Figure 4.6 shows that changes in smaller party fortunes has been quite high during the last decade of British politics. It has seen the rise of the SNP in Scotland, and also the rise and fall of UKIP in England and Wales. Alongside this, the 2019 EU election witnessed the emergence of a new party, the Brexit Party, increasing volatility from smaller parties to its highest level in UK polling history. This level of volatility is quite extreme, with rapid gains and losses for these parties. This could indicate that these parties are being used as vehicles of protest with an aim to force the main parties to adopt certain positions. It could also indicate that these parties might have been used as a mechanism for voters to switch between the two main parties gradually, as occurred with the Liberal Party in the 1970s. Therefore, quick changes in fortunes for these smaller parties could indicate that rapid voter changing has been part of a process where voters realign their allegiances. For example, the dramatic fall in the share of the vote the Liberal Democrats once commanded during the first year of the coalition may have resulted in a transfer of votes of former Conservative voters to Labour. Meanwhile, the rise of UKIP and the Brexit Party may have resulted in the gradual transfer of former Labour votes towards the Conservative Party. Significantly, the finding outlined in figure 4.6 highlights how the destabilisation of the parties' bases may have brought new patterns of support, thus remoulding the nature of British politics. It also crucially highlights how this occurred at a time when new divisions had formed over non-economic matters.

Finally, according to this book's theory, increased instability into the political system should emerge from a sustained period of the main political parties converging in the centre-ground, where they ignore concerns around new issues. Using MARPOR, or CMP data, it is clear that there has been a clear centre-ground convergence from the mid-1990s until the 2010 election.

This covers several parliamentary cycles and has occurred at the same time as dealignment, indicating a possible link between these parties reflecting similar positions on new important issues, such as immigration. This correlation could mean that a lack of action on these new issues could have caused some voters to look elsewhere for answers. Therefore, this book's findings indicate that increased voter-switching may have originated due to lengthy dissatisfaction towards the party positions generated by the two-party system. This dissatisfaction may have started a process that made a changing of allegiances possible as it increased the possibility these parties' traditional voter bases might have started voting for smaller parties. From this, as these parties faded away these voters may have then started to consider the main party they historically were opposed to as they were now closer to their concerns than their historic party was.

Figure 4.6: 1987 – 2019 opinion poll support for challenger parties (those outside the two main parties). It displays how changes in smaller party vote shares increased rapidly post-2016. Therefore, as smaller parties faded away after Brexit this may have redirected traditional support towards new patterns of support. Therefore, this graph raises the strong potential that patterns of support may have been reshaped alongside new divisions post-Brexit.

Polls fluctuating in UK elections:

Figure 4.7 displays how polls have also started to fluctuate to a much greater extent during election campaigns. Going into more detail of polling fluctuations during election campaigns, it can be said the polls show the UK to be at its most volatile level in electoral post-war history. Taking the average of the polls for the Labour, Conservative, Liberal and pro-Brexit parties at the start of a campaign, and then comparing this to the average poll during the last week of the campaign, the data shows more voters switching during an election. Historically election campaigns have done little to change the poll ratings of the parties, indicating that election campaigns might not have changed party fortunes in UK post-war history.

However, since 2010 every election has seen higher levels of volatility during an election than existed pre-2010. The 2010, 2017 and 2019 elections showed the parties on average moving four points away from their starting position. Moreover, both in the 2015 and 2017 elections gains were underestimated, meaning the true amount of volatility was probably even higher than the graph suggests. This all indicates that voters now are more likely to consider changing their vote during an election campaign. Therefore, this chapter's findings overall supports hypothesis three, which stated increased voter de-alignment will have caused levels of volatility to have increased to historically large levels. Crucially, this historically high level of party switching during elections in the last decade has created the potential for elections that can alter the parties' bases of support, indicating the 2017 and 2019 general elections could be ones that remoulded the structure of British politics.
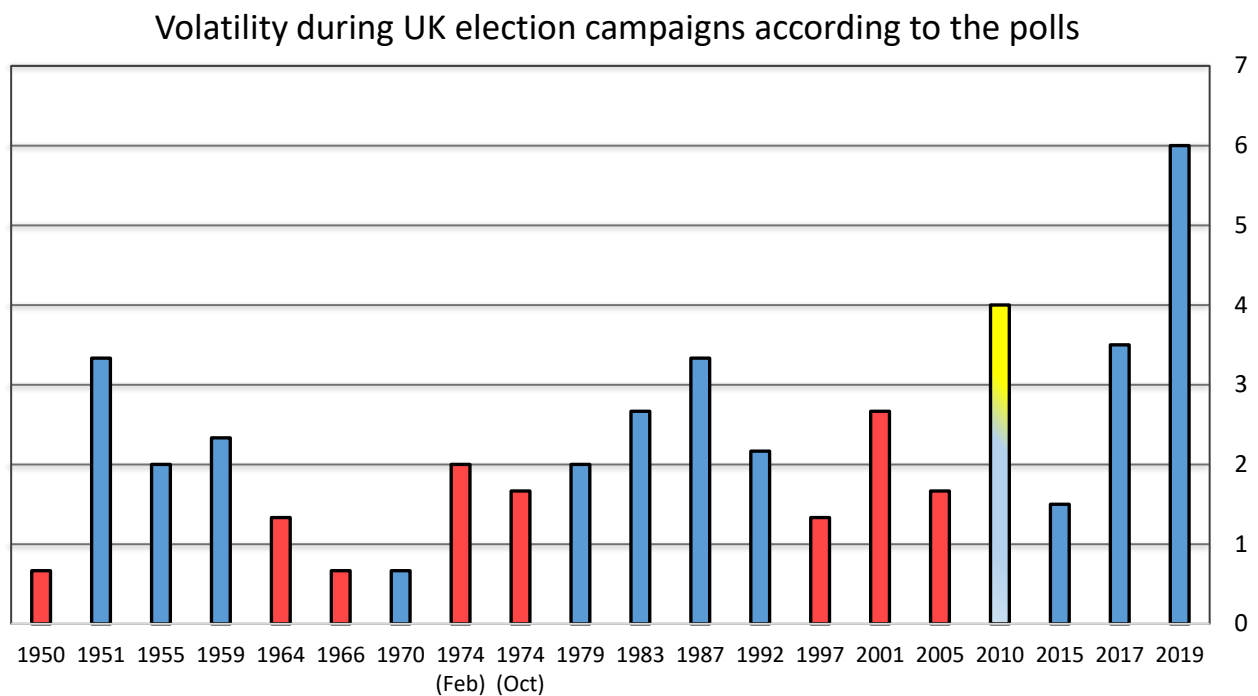
Figure 4.7: Volatility during general elections, according to opinion polls taken during election campaigns. Source: polls from 1950 – 2019.

Overall, this section of the book has found that the conditions needed to exist for a realignment to likely take place in British politics post-2016 indeed existed. There has been a fairly long period of dealignment where old party loyalties have steadily weakened with each parliamentary cycle. Moreover, the strength of party identification appears to have also weakened, making the remaining identification less meaningful. On top of this, there has been increased voter switching, further indicating that old allegiances have weakened, if not been eroded. This volatility has transferred into recent election campaigns, thus making it more likely that parties' bases of support have been changing. Further, this has coincided with a period where new divisions had been created, giving the possibility a new divide has altered political allegiances. Therefore, all of these combining factors has created fertile ground for British politics to have been remoulded into a new system.

Section 3: Brexit, The new divide emerges.

Chapter 5: Brexit, new voting divides are created.

In the last section of this book, it was outlined how new divides were created and how such cleavages brought the potential for new political groups to emerge that could break old political loyalties. This chapter focuses on how these political groupings were fully formed during the Brexit campaign. It will do this by focusing on how individuals who voted for Remain had a consistent set of opinions, of which can be broadly described as an ideology. In contrast, the chapter will compare these opinions to that of Leave voters and outline how these attitudes sat in direct opposition to the ones Remain voters displayed. These two different sets of opinions can therefore be described as a new ideological divide that can be broadly be described as a culturally liberal vs conservative value divide.

Remain voters displayed instinctive reactions towards immigration, the EU and the perceived effects from both of these factors very differently to Leave voters.

Leave voters appear naturally sceptical towards how the status quo affected their lives. They tended to give responses that showed immigration, the overall structure of the economy and the political system did not favour them and their communities. Therefore, Leave voters displayed a consistent set of grievances against the social, cultural, economic and political system they found themselves in. Alternatively, Remain voters were much more likely to respond positively towards the current state of immigration and were less likely to feel they did not benefit from the current economic system. They also instinctively appear to respond

positively towards the quality of EU democracy and feel it functioned enough to work for them and their communities.

Crucially, these divides indicate that groups of voters have been placed into a new two-tribe divide partly based upon how they had been affected by modern, local and global socio-economic trends. Those who had benefited, and lived in communities that had profited, from modern developments in global economics appeared to see protecting Britain's place in Europe to be in their self-interest. Conversely, those who felt they had lost out from such developments instinctively reacted against Europe, potentially partly blaming such institutions for their, and their communities', perceived decline. Therefore, these feelings grouped Remain and Leave voters into opposing political tribes on issues that now were at the very top of the voters' agenda. From this, voters began to re-think their political allegiances as parties failed to deliver on their new concerns.

Therefore, this means that the political tribes created in this referendum became very important to how political competition changed later on in the decade. As this chapter will show, the referendum created a group that became unified through opposing immigration, modern economic developments and the role the EU had played in this. This group can be broadly described as the culturally conservative group, of which would go on to increasingly back the Conservative Party. After the shock of the leave result, the remain group (who were unified around support for migration tolerance, modernisation of the economy and support for international institutions) would growingly back liberal-left-leaning parties, mostly Labour. This chapter now goes on to outline how these two groups very much backed different campaigns during the Brexit referendum.

Social divides on new issues translate into voting patterns:

Age:

Age Group	Average Response
18-25	3.77%
26-35	9.38%
36-45	12.50%
46-55	18.60%
56-65	30.72%
66+	25.02%

Age Group	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
18-25	74.95%	25.05%
26-35	67.90%	32.10%
36-45	61.50%	38.50%
46-55	48.85%	51.15%
56-65	46.73%	53.27%
66+	42.38%	57.62%

Table 5.1: Remain vs leave voters by age groups, BES, 2016 EU wave.

Interestingly, the same social divides that separated the voters in chapter three appear to heavily reflect differences in remain and leave support levels. Younger groupings were seen to have more supportive attitudes towards Europe and the gap between this cohort and older people grew over time, especially in the years approaching the EU referendum. Table 5.1 shows the 2016 referendum cemented this divide as younger groupings clearly voted to remain much more than any other cohort, and much more so than older generations. In contrast, older groups, who gradually had become much more likely to disapprove of the EU, clearly made Brexit possible as they chose to heavily vote in favour of leaving the EU. Therefore, the social divides found in chapter three now can be said to have translated into a political divide, and done so at a critical moment in British politics.

Qualifications:

Education	Average Response
No qualifications	7.67%
Below GCSE	4.52%
GCSE	21.70%
A-level	21.31%
Undergraduate	33.77%
Postgrad	11.04%

Education	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
No	26.84%	73.16%
Below GCSE	32.28%	67.72%
GCSE	33.47%	66.53%
A-level	49.94%	50.06%
Undergraduate	64.49%	35.51%
Postgrad	76.78%	23.22%

Table 5.2: Remain vs leave voters by highest qualification, Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Another social divide that was found to have grown over time on cultural issues was the qualification gap. Approaching the 2016 election, voters who had obtained higher-level qualifications, degree and above, were much more supportive of the EU and less hostile towards the immigration it had brought to the UK. Alternatively, lower qualification groups, those who had obtained level-two and below qualifications only, were much less likely to respond positively towards the migration and European issues that had risen in prominence. Significantly, table 5.2 shows that this divergence may well have translated into a new political divide as these groups clearly backed different sides in the EU referendum. Those with fewer qualifications were overwhelmingly more likely to have backed Leave, whilst those who had obtained a university-level education mostly backed Remain.

Ideology:

Table 5.3: left/right divide compared to the liberal/authoritarian divide by remain and leave groups, Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Left/Right	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
0-2 Very Left	29.26%	52.80%	47.20%
2-4 Left	40.43%	50.23%	49.77%
4-6 Middle	20.83%	46.43%	53.57%
6-8 Right	7.95%	47.90%	52.10%
8-10 Very Right	1.53%	44.42%	55.58%

Liberal / Authoritarian	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
0-2	3.22%	93.76%	6.24%
2-4	11.03%	89.66%	10.34%
4-6	21.98%	68.39%	31.61%
6-8	36.09%	41.41%	58.59%
8-10	27.68%	23.56%	76.44%

The liberal and authoritarian divide growing overtime was another new political cleavage found in chapter three. By the time of the 2016 referendum this cleavage was found to be

stronger than the left/right divide on key issues as well. Interestingly, the 2016 EU referendum appears to have been shaped by the cultural divide much more than the left/right cleavage. Table 5.3 highlights how there was little variation in EU referendum voting patterns along the left/right spectrum, but there was a much larger variation in where people could be placed on the liberal-authoritarian spectrum, which significantly represents the new cultural divide.

Class:

Occupational class	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Higher professional occupations	61.43%	38.57%
Lower professional and managerial and higher supervisory	53.16%	46.84%
Intermediate occupations	48.04%	51.96%
Employers in small organisations and own account workers	43.78%	56.22%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	37.69%	62.31%
Semi-routine occupations	40.49%	59.51%
Routine occupations	36.33%	63.67%

Table 5.4: Occupational class by remain and leave voters, BES 2016.

Interestingly, the new ideological divide appears to have weakened the class divide, probably as the left/right cleavage weakened as new cultural issues started to divide the voters into new political tribes. Working-class groups, those in lower-supervisory and routine occupations, quite clearly voted to Leave the EU in large numbers. However, those in higher occupational classes, more professional and higher managerial jobs, displayed a majority for Remain. These occupational classes therefore may have been at odds with the leadership of the party they have historically supported, and this especially will have been the case when approaching the 2019 election. Therefore, it can again be stated that the divergence over new important cultural issues, such as immigration and the EU, may have formed new political groupings which did not adhere to traditional divides. Importantly, this indicates political support may have been remoulded during the Brexit referendum.
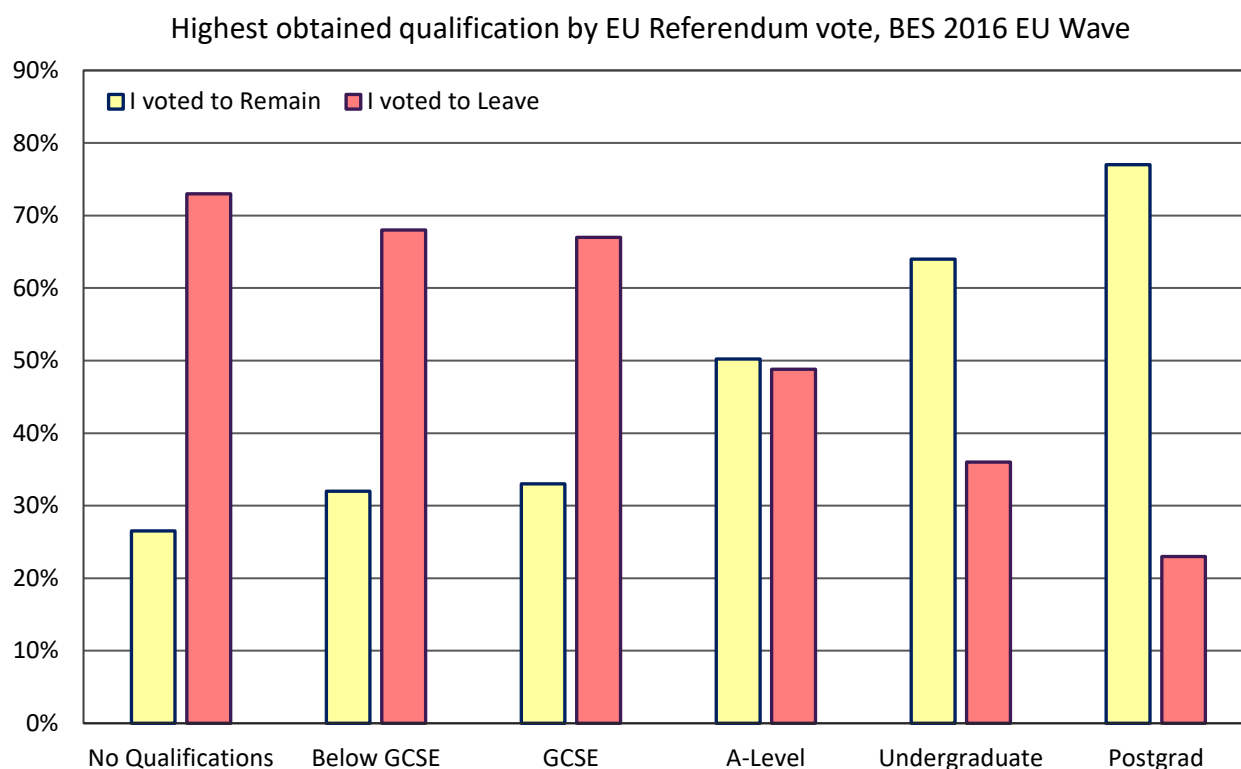
Figure 5.1: Voters EU referendum vote by qualification groups. It shows the social divergence displayed around opinions on Brexit and immigration in the years leading up to the 2016 referendum translated into a political divide during the EU referendum. Therefore, the public was very socially divided post-2016 and appear to be divided differently from how the left/right cleavage distributed voters.

Different Priorities:

Response	Average Response	Response	I voted to remain	I voted to leave
1. Europe	36.64%	1. Immigration	9.49%	**47.07%**
2. Immigration	28.32%	2. Europe	40.39%	33.86%
3. Economy	10.33%	3. Economy	15.19%	5.39%
4. Inequality	5.92%	4. Health	7.27%	3.22%
5. Health	5.19%	5. Terrorism	3.29%	2.77%
		Note: Inequality (6th)	9.21%	2.42%

Table 5.5: Most important issue for voters by 2016 EU referendum vote:

Chapter three also found that different sections of the electorate prioritised different issues approaching the 2015 general election and the 2016 EU referendum. Younger more qualified groups tended to prioritise the economy and older cohorts with fewer qualifications tended to prioritise immigration. Table 5.5 shows how these priorities appear to have impacted voting outcomes in the 2016 referendum, where those more concerned about immigration voted to Leave, whilst economic concerns encouraged people to vote Remain. Interestingly, these mirror the voting patterns of the social divides discussed earlier.

Further, those whose concerns could be described as more of a cultural than an economic one also voted to Leave to EU in large numbers, see table 5.6. Therefore, those concentrating most on the new political divide may have been encouraged to vote Leave in higher numbers because these issues tapped into concerns of change that the Remain campaign, and culturally liberal political leaders, had embraced. As the Leave campaign focused on rejecting culturally liberally trends, such as that of EU integration, freedom of movement and increased migration flows, this campaign's message may have resonated with these voters more than the Remain campaign's focus on the economy did. As Leave voters cared more about immigration, and as we shall later see wanted to reduce numbers, they may have been more receptive to the Leave campaign's anti-freedom of movement message as it reflected their policy ambitions. The Remain campaign focusing on the economy tapped into traditional left/right policy concerns that many voters were not thinking about. Therefore, such voters may have not greeted their campaign's message with as much enthusiasm, possibly making them less likely to back Remain. Crucially, this indicates that value and policy priority divides found in chapter three may have shaped the EU referendum result. This, on top of social divides affecting voting patterns, possibly shows that long-term divides may have shaped the EU referendum result, thus contributing to the reshaping of British politics.

Response	Average Response	I voted to remain	I voted to leave
Left-right	23.95%	35.33%	12.07%
Lib-authoritarian	69.44%	56.60%	82.76%
General-negativity	2.64%	3.56%	1.58%

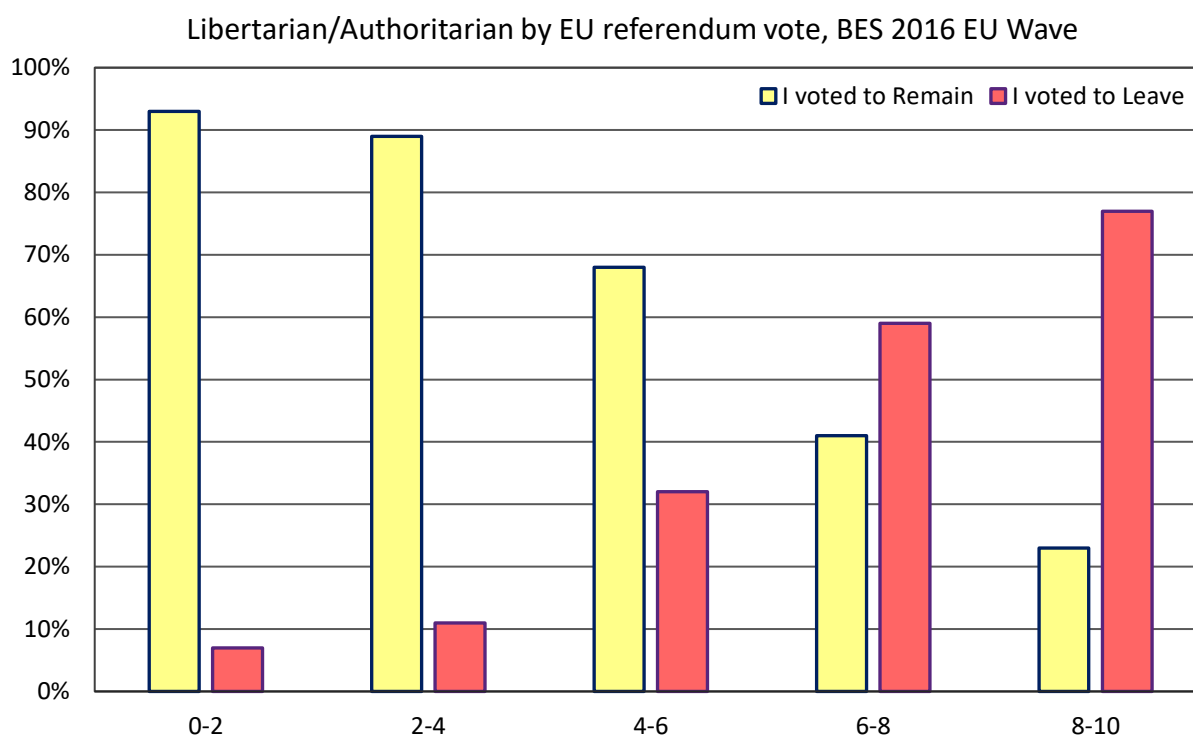Table 5.6: Dimension of most important issue: BES 2016.

Figure 5.2 shows how the libertarian/authoritarian spectrum very much divided the voters into two new political tribes, the remain/leave divide. This again highlights how those who focused more on this divide and could be described as having mainly authoritarian culturally conservative views, were more likely to have voted to Leave the EU.

Immigration:

The importance of numbers:

One issue that was found to have particularly divided the electorate in the period leading up to the EU referendum was that of immigration. Vitally, according to BES data, it would appear that this divergence fed into the strong Remain-Leave divide witnessed on June the 23rd of

2016. This was very much exemplified when focusing on how much voters wanted net-migration numbers to decrease. In the lead up to the 2016 EU referendum migration numbers increased considerably and, as shown in chapter three, this caused some groups within society to react strongly against the changes in migration flows.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Allow many fewer	51.21%	24.90%	79.92%
Don't know	9.71%	41.70%	11.75%
Allow many more	12.64%	23.15%	2.13%
Middle	26.43%	10.26%	6.20%

Table 5.7: Allow more or fewer migrants? BES 2016.

Table 5.7 demonstrates that those who voted to Leave the EU were very strong in their desire to see migration numbers lowered, whilst Remain voters were more content with maintaining the system where it was. Therefore, it is not surprising that the social groups who voted to leave the EU more heavily than others expressed these views as they had already been doing so for some time leading up to the 2016 EU referendum. Significantly, it could be argued that the 2016 referendum mobilised these political concerns in a strong enough way to produce a new political grouping. In contrast, Remain voters, who instead were more relaxed about the migration changes and prioritised the economy, may have naturally fitted into an opposing camp during this referendum as they felt the strong lower migration message from the Brexit campaign did not resonate with them. Post-Brexit, this group felt that their priorities were not being listened to and that their view of what Britain should be in a modern world was being challenged. As a result, the result of the EU referendum caused an opposition political bloc to form against the concept of Brexit, and it was from this two new political tribes with very distinct views emerged.

Migration numbers in the year leading to Brexit:

Perceived change in migration level	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Getting a lot lower	0.84%	0.48%	1.10%
Getting a little lower	1.54%	2.21%	0.73%
Staying about the same	21.69%	38.38%	5.27%
Getting a little higher	25.86%	34.02%	17.24%
Getting a lot higher	46.13%	20.19%	74.11%
Don't know	3.94%	1.55%	4.72%

Table 5.8 View of change in migration from 2015-2016.
Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Table 5.8 highlights how the perceptions of migration flows were different between groups who had voted differently in the EU referendum. The leave side clearly thought that migration was getting a lot higher in the years leading up to the EU referendum, where Remain voters felt there had been little change or only a slight increase. Therefore, these voters again can be thought to have seen this issue differently, and, as a result, had different views on how important the issue was in the campaign. The leave side clearly perceived the issue to be much larger than the Remain side and thought numbers were getting out of control. This could be one reason why the slogan of "take back control" resonated more with Leave voters than it did Remain voters. On the other hand, Remain voters felt that the migration levels the UK had experienced, although high, was manageable and may only need reducing slightly.

As a result, this perception divide on migration trends may have caused different groups within the electorate to back different sides in the referendum as some perceived it to be a big problem, whilst others did not. Therefore, it can be again stated that the divergence witnessed on the immigration issue could have played a role in shaping thoughts during the referendum campaign, and from this shaped the likelihood of an individual voting for either Leave or Remain.

The EU, its new countries and freedom of movement:

In terms of numbers, it can lastly be stated that those who voted to Leave more often blamed the EU for this increase in net migration. This can particularly be found in the question which asked BES respondents if they felt too many countries had joined the EU, the extent this was a problem and who was to blame for this development. Figure 5.3 shows that those who voted to leave the EU clearly thought that too many countries had been allowed to join the institution and that this was a problem, most likely because of the increase in migration due to more states gaining freedom of movement rights. Moreover, these voters clearly partly blamed the EU for this development and likely thought that leaving the EU was a good idea as it would prevent further countries from joining, such as Turkey, which was a large discussion point for the Leave campaign. Alternatively, Remain voters were more likely to disagree with the statement of there being too many states in the EU. Therefore, they were also less likely to see EU expansion, and the EU in general, as a problem. Therefore, those more concerned with globalisation and its expansion expressed sceptical views towards EU expansion and voted Leave, whilst the contrasting group who accepted expansion tended to back Remain. Therefore, it can again be said a clear political divide may have helped shape the EU referendum result.
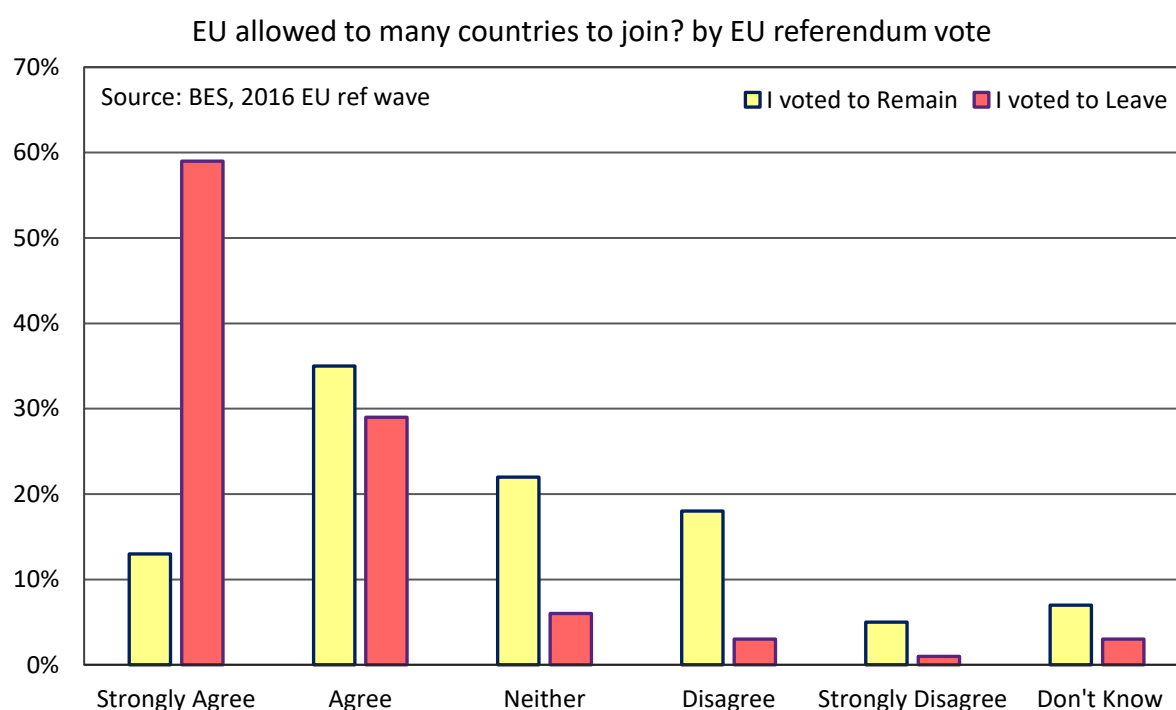

Figure 5.3: Responses to the question of EU expansion, by EU ref vote. Source: BES 2016.

Figure 5.3 shows how Leave voters appear to instinctively react against modern developments from globalised economics, in this case, further integration and expansion of the EU. The Remain side appears to be much more likely to accept such changes. Therefore, there appears to be a natural ideological divide between these two voting options, potentially signalling the emergence of a new political and ideological divide. This divide, as stated earlier, is known as the culturally liberal and conservative cleavage.

Immigration and its perceived cultural impact:

This book's theory states that the increased immigration the EU has brought to the UK, particularly after the eastern EU states join in 2004, should have created a culture shock to groups that can be described as culturally conservative. In regards to the EU referendum, this study would expect to find that groups who had greater cultural concerns towards recent migration flows will have been more likely to reject the institution perceived to cause such flows, in this case, the EU. Figure 5.4 and table 5.9 supports this theory as it shows when migration was thought to bring cultural change, and do so in a negative way, such individuals tended to come down on the Leave side much more than the Remain side. Conversely, those who did not experience negative emotions when asked such questions tended to be more likely to back Remain.

Figure 5.4 highlights how those who felt recent migration flows harmed the UK and its cultural way of life were much more likely to have backed Leave. In contrast, individuals who felt the latest wave of migration had added to the UK's culture, and this diversity had been a good thing, were more likely to reside in the Remain camp. As seen in chapter three, the question of the cultural impact of immigration on the UK has become controversial, with social groups diverging over time. Crucially, this indicates that long-term divides on these new important cultural issues may have merged into new political divides, and done so in a way that might

have shaped a key political moment, Brexit. Therefore, such divides might represent a new cleavage divide that could be tapped into by the parties when trying to gain political support, therefore potentially remoulding political competition.

This possibility can further be seen in table 5.9, where those the most anxious about a new foreign country, with a distinctly different culture, joining the EU at a later date was much more likely to have voted to Leave the EU. Consequently, as the EU campaign focused upon the theory that Turkey could join the EU, and therefore further increase migration flows, this may have spooked culturally conservative voters into being more likely to back the Leave side of the debate. Again, this would indicate that the trend of certain groups feeling that migration was culturally changing the UK in a negative way potentially shaped the key political moment of Brexit.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Much worse	37.55%	18.59%	59.46%
Worse	31.62%	38.18%	25.96%
About the same	13.78%	20.86%	6.19%
Better	2.23%	3.88%	0.51%
Much better	0.33%	0.46%	0.15%
Don't know	14.50%	18.04%	7.73%

Table 5.9: EU better or worse if Turkey joins? Source BES, 2016 EU wave.

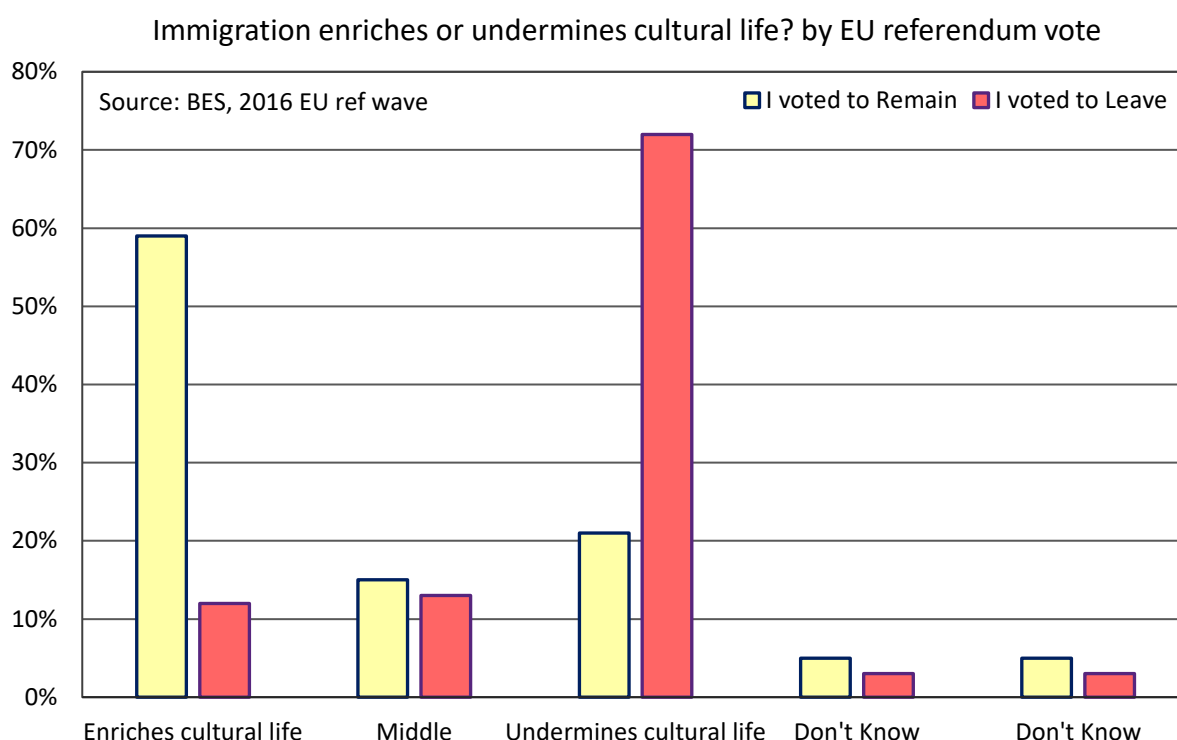**Immigration enriches or undermines cultural life? by EU referendum vote**

Figure 5.4 Individual responses to the question that asked their thoughts on how recent migration waves had affected UK cultural life. Source: BES 2016. It highlights how the new cultural divide separated the electorate in the 2016 EU referendum. Those who felt that modern economic and political integration was impacting the UK negatively backed leaving the EU in large numbers, whilst those less concerned with such cultural impacts chose to support Remain.

Immigration and its perceived economic impact:

Interestingly, the migration divide appears to extend past just numbers and the perceived cultural impact of increasing flows. The sensed economic impact from the increased migrant numbers also correlated with EU voting patterns. Figure 5.5 shows the long-term divergence over opinions on migration again can be stated to have separated voters into opposing political camps. Individuals who had grown concerned with the economic impact of immigration mostly voted to leave the EU, whilst those who felt that such trends had improved the UK economy backed the Remain side of the campaign. This cleavage was almost as pronounced as views

concerning the cultural impact of migration. Crucially, this again suggests that there is a clear and consistent political divide that separated the voters into two political tribes in the EU referendum. Those who were more pessimistic about the changes modern economic trends had brought, in this case, increased migration flows, felt there was a need to reject the EU. In contrast, individuals who felt that they, and their local community, had benefitted from such phenomena wanted to keep the status quo and Remain in the EU. Therefore, these instinctive reactions both for and against globalisation, and its perceived effects, might be a logical explanatory factor in understanding the Remain/ Leave divide.

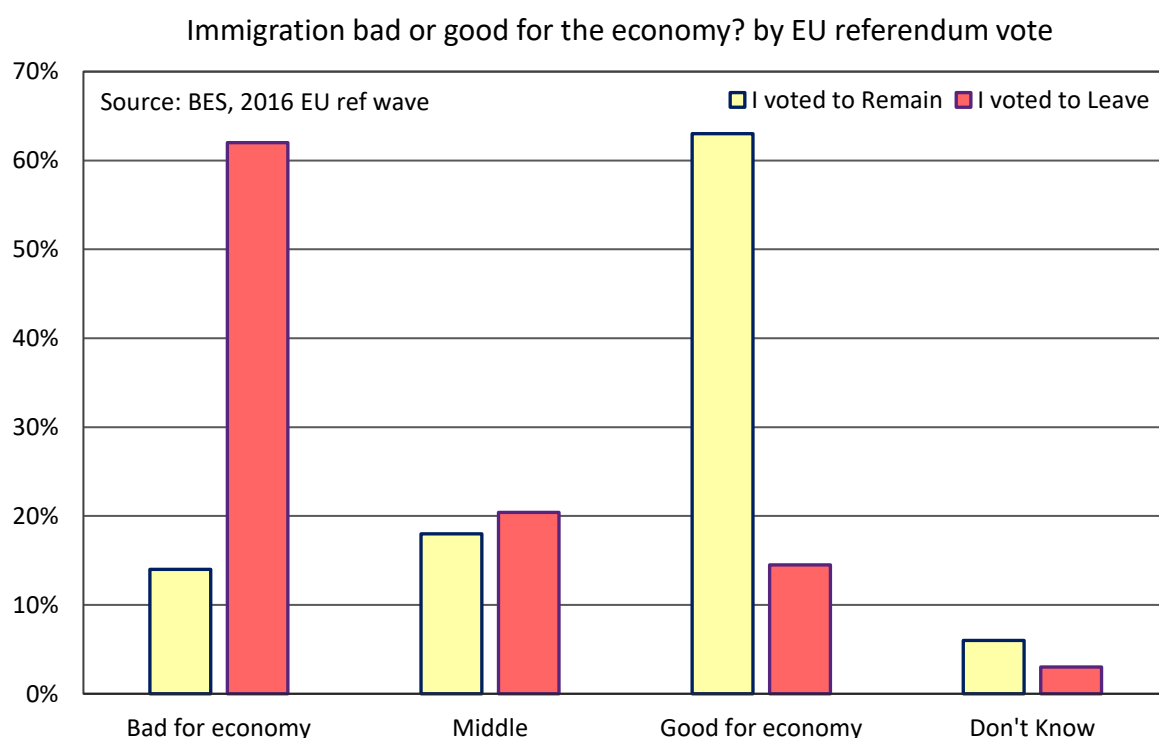**Immigration bad or good for the economy? by EU referendum vote**

Figure 5.5: Voters' responses to the question of whether immigration is good or bad for the economy. Source: BES 2016. Figure 5.5 shows how there was a distinct divide across a range of questions relating to migration. Not only did the culturally conservative-liberal divide impact trends between voting behaviour and migration numbers, but it also impacted trends between voting patterns and views on the effects of immigration, in this case, its perceived economic effect.

Economic migration and Brexit:

From EU	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Many fewer	42.08%	27.76%	72.66%
Middle	37.37%	35.21%	18.47%
Many more	13.80%	28.86%	5.06%
Don't know	6.75%	8.17%	3.81%
From outside EU	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Many fewer	47.11%	31.90%	64.10%
Middle	34.29%	44.23%	25.41%
Many more	11.38%	15.63%	6.71%
Don't know	7.22%	8.25%	3.78%

Table 5.10: Immigration types: Allow fewer/more workers by EU vote.

Table 5.10 shows that regardless of where workers were migrating from the groups of people who had voted Leave overwhelmingly wanted numbers to be lowered. Economic migration from the EU appears to be the most contentious form of economic migration, yet economic migration from outside the EU also was mostly rejected by this group as well. This again would indicate that the voters who were most likely to react against global economic developments, of which had brought higher migration flows, were more likely to have voted to Leave the EU. Therefore, it would appear that the EU, as a supranational and global institution, was being blamed for negative developments many felt they could not control. As a result, these groups were more likely to vote Leave in order to show a visible sign that they were rejecting such institutions. In contrast, those less concerned saw no need for change and opted for Remain.

Migration and its effect on the welfare state:

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
A burden	29.21%	8.56%	50.58%
A slight burden	26.84%	21.96%	32.41%
Middle	25.34%	40.00%	11.14%
Slightly beneficial	11.66%	21.88%	1.67%
An asset	2.30%	2.63%	2.00%

Table 5.11: Immigrants are a burden on the welfare state by referendum vote. Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Further to this, Leave voters were more likely to feel that migrants were an economic burden, particularly to the welfare state. Alternatively, Remain voters were much less likely to feel this way and tended to be either indifferent or feel that migrants overall slightly improved the welfare state. This might have been because Leave voters were more likely to feel that migrants did not benefit the economy, didn't improve public services and generally felt that incomers gained whilst the UK lost. Figure 5.6 supports this theory as it shows that Leave voters felt that immigrants took more from the welfare state than they paid in, despite immigration partly filling skill gaps. Conversely, Remain voters were much less likely to feel this way. Therefore, it can again be stated that those who naturally felt that migration changes had been bad for the UK voted Leave and those who thought it most had been beneficial backed Remain, again showing a new political divide emerged in 2016.

EU immigrants get more in benefits & services than they pay in taxes? by EU referendum vote
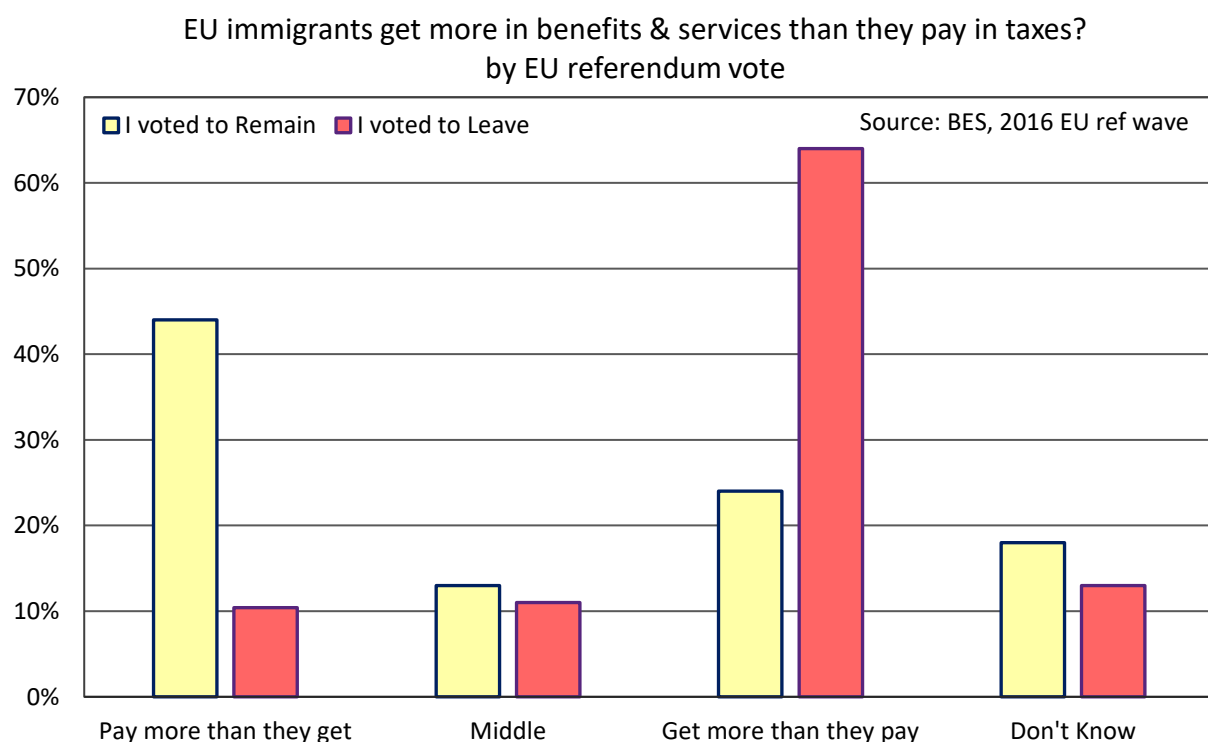
Figure 5.6 View on EU migrant benefits by referendum vote. It demonstrates how the leave camp instinctively reacted to the perceived economic impact of immigration in a negative way, whereas remainers mostly felt much more positively towards this. In this example, leavers felt

that migrants get more benefits than they pay into the system, whilst remainers sensed the system gained from immigrants' contribution.

Attitudes towards Europe:

This new culturally liberal/conservative political divide extended beyond concerns around the issue of immigration. Further to this, as shown in chapter three there had been a divergence on views towards the European Union by these groups, and this also may have gone on to affect voting outcomes in the EU referendum.

European Integration and its perceived effects?

View on EU integration	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Unite fully with the European Union	17.08%	32.95%	1.13%
Middle	22.66%	39.26%	5.75%
Protect our independence	53.79%	21.86%	89.39%
Don't know	6.47%	5.94%	3.74%

Table 5.12: View on EU integration by 2016 EU referendum vote. Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

From chapter three it can be stated that there was a clear divergence over Remain and Leave views, of which fully materialised in the EU referendum. This book's theory stated that this divergence will have partly occurred due to the EU's increased integration and the migration flows that came from this. Interestingly, table 5.12 shows those who rejected the EU were clearly of the opinion EU integration had gone too far and that the UK needed to protect its independence. Those less concerned about EU expansion supported the maintenance of current UK-EU integration or felt that it could even be allowed to go further. Moreover, figure 5.7 shows the perceived effects from EU integration also may have helped determine voting patterns. This figure particularly shows how the freedom of movement that came from increased EU integration was very much thought to be a bad thing for the UK by leave voters,

much more so than Remainers. Further to this, table 5.13 highlights how the free trade that came from this integration also divided these new political groupings. Leavers were less likely to respond that the free trade gained from integration had been good for the UK, with a fair few of these voters feeling it made no difference to their lives. This indicates such groups felt they were being harmed by freedom of movement, yet gained no financial compensation for this. Oppositely, Remainers felt free movement was worth the cost. Therefore, those who voted Leave may have been rejecting the consequences of globalisation as they felt it was bad for their lives, local community and country. Remainers instead appear to embrace such changes, again showing how these groups were forming contrasting political views.

View on EU free trade and its effect on the UK.	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Good for Britain	66.16%	86.33%	47.81%
Neither good nor bad for Britain	21.32%	6.92%	36.78%
Bad for Britain	5.16%	1.70%	8.44%
Don't know	7.36%	5.04%	6.96%

Table 5.13: View on EU free trade by EU referendum vote, Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Good or bad for Britain: The free movement of workers within Europe? by EU referendum vote
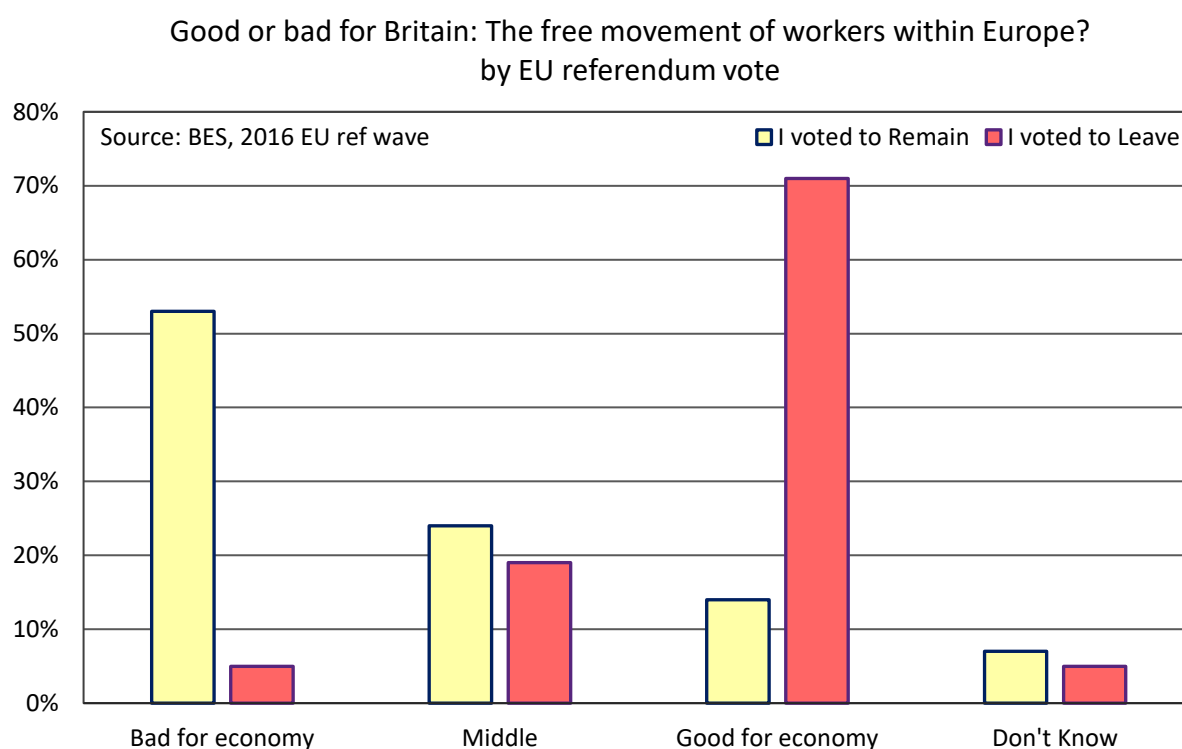
Figure 5.7: demonstrates how the new cleavage divide became quite deep and covered a range of questions that related to immigration and the EU. Those who disproved of the EU, and the migration that came from it, tended to perceive the effects of the EU to be quite bad for Britain. Alternatively, those who approved of the EU and felt its effects were manageable, or even desirable, for the UK mostly backed Remain.

Common agricultural policy:

This acceptance or rejection of the EU due to this new political divide occurred across a wide range of policy areas the EU could be thought of as responsible for. With regards to the effects of the common agricultural policy, it would appear that the Leave side of the debate again instinctively rejects the EU, see table 5.14 for more detail. On the other hand, individuals who had backed Remain were significantly more likely to state that the way the EU handled agriculture was in the UK's interests. It is not unfair to assume the level of detail acquired by the electorate on this matter would be fairly low, yet clear opinions emerged, with very few voters stating they did not know how to feel about this policy issue. This would again indicate that by 2016 there was a natural ideological divide that had the capacity to separate voters, and do so instinctively. If a question was asked on how the EU handled a specified policy area, leavers would respond negatively and Remainers positively.

View on common Agricultural policy Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Good for Britain	24.95%	43.25%	7.18%
Neither good nor bad for Britain	24.24%	24.42%	24.67%
Bad for Britain	32.79%	14.05%	53.71%
Don't know	18.02%	18.28%	14.44%

Table 5.14: View on common agricultural policy by EU referendum vote: Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Parliamentary sovereignty:

Table 5.15 shows that these instinctive reactions towards the European Union also translated into how voters thought the EU impacted upon British sovereignty. Leave voters again reacted more negatively and felt that the EU was undermining the UK, this time through weakening the UK's parliament, thus limiting the ability for UK elected representatives to make decisions. Remainers were less likely to respond this way and more often stated that they disagreed with this statement, or felt the EU had no real impact upon the UK parliament. Again, the level of detail the voters will have acquired of how the EU parliament may affect the UK parliament's ability to make decisions will be limited. Despite this, a clear divide emerged between these two new political groups, again highlighting how the new cleavage divide may have been impacting voters' views on key issues, and from this, shaping the likelihood of a voter backing either Remain or Leave.

EU undermined UK parliament? Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Strongly agree	32.90%	6.88%	62.17%
Agree	27.70%	27.70%	27.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	14.32%	23.97%	4.02%
Disagree	14.49%	28.29%	1.27%
Strongly disagree	3.58%	6.09%	1.26%
Don't know	7.01%	7.07%	3.69%

Table 5.15: EU undermined powers of UK parliament, by EU referendum, Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

The EU's perceived effect on UK finances:

Figure 5.8 demonstrates how there was a clear divide between Remainers and Leavers regarding the extent to which the UK being a member of the EU had increased the UK's prosperity. People who had backed Remain felt that the EU had increased the UK's prosperity. Alternatively, voters who had supported Leave felt the UK's prosperity was limited by being in the EU. Therefore, it can be stated that individuals who had voted Remain valued the free trade the UK had with the EU, thought that membership helped increase UK trade and believed

that EU membership likely attracted financial flows towards the UK. In contrast, individuals who had backed Leave rejected the idea that connections to the EU increased UK trade and prosperity. Further, table 5.16 shows how these voters also felt the UK did not get a fair share from EU finances, whilst they also felt other countries gained more than their fair share. This again shows a clear political divide existed in attitudes towards Europe, and this in part may have shaped voting patterns.

Table 5.16: The UK gets fair share of EU spending? BES, 2016.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Much less than its fair share	0.66%	0.55%	0.64%
A little less than its fair share	2.90%	4.37%	1.31%
More or less its fair share	26.90%	43.86%	11.07%
A little more than its fair share	27.80%	20.05%	37.28%
Much more than its fair share	17.63%	4.12%	32.40%
Don't know	24.09%	27.05%	17.29%

Table 5.16: The UK gets fair share of EU spending? BES, 2016.

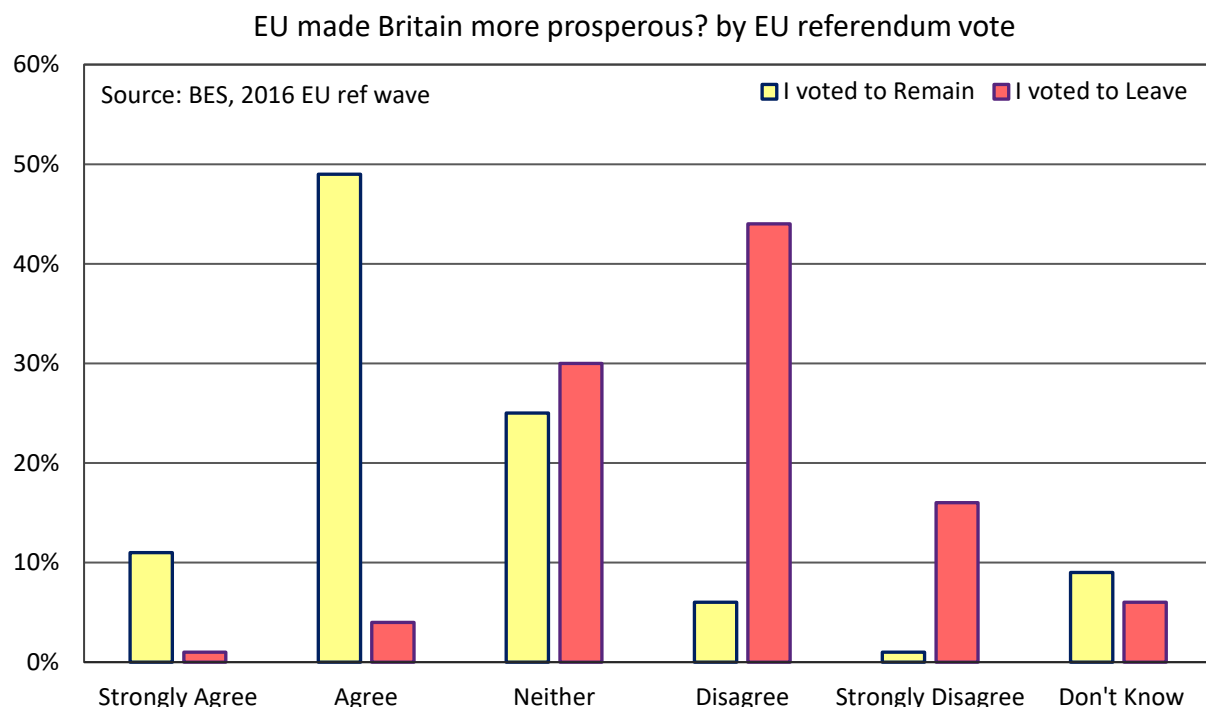EU made Britain more prosperous? by EU referendum vote

Figure 5.8: highlights how there was a clear political divide in how voters perceived the EU to affect the UK's economic growth. Crucially, this divide followed the new theorised cleavage.

The culturally conservative leave side rejected the idea that the EU made the UK more prosperous, whilst the culturally more liberal remain faction embraced the EU as they felt it supported the UK economy.

Feelings of what would happen post-Brexit:

Perceived impact on the country and personal life:

Table 5.17: How much impact would leaving the EU have on you? BES 2016.

Response	% Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
No impact at all	10.29%	3.87%	16.97%
A small impact	20.88%	15.16%	27.73%
A moderate impact	31.95%	33.67%	30.85%
A large impact	18.44%	26.22%	11.09%
A very large impact	7.99%	11.48%	4.49%
Don't know	10.46%	9.60%	8.87%

This new cleavage divide also extends to perceptions of what would happen if Brexit were to occur. Those on the culturally conservative leave side of the spectrum were optimistic about the effects of leaving the supranational institution, whilst Remainers were very worried about the effects from pulling out of such a globalised institution. Table 5.17 shows Leave voters tended to be more likely to think Brexit would not adversely affect their lives. Meanwhile, Remain voters were more likely to feel Brexit would have a large negative impact on their life. Furthermore, these views extended to how individuals felt Brexit would impact the nation. Leave voters felt it would not greatly affect the UK and any potential impact would likely be temporary, whilst Remainers felt it would have substantial long-term implications for the UK.

Therefore, the new political divide created in the years approaching Brexit may have caused different groups of voters to look upon the potential consequences of Brexit very differently.

This may have caused leavers to reject the Remain campaign's message of Brexit being very disruptive as they simply felt that the upsides would negate any transitional problems.

The UK Economy Post-Brexit:

One reason those who voted to Leave may have not feared the consequences of Brexit might have been because they felt there would be little, if no, negative economic consequences if Brexit was implemented. Oppositely, Remain voters were under the impression that if Brexit was to occur the UK would be left economically worse off, see table 5.18. Further to this, this pattern was replicated regarding how individuals felt Brexit would impact their finances. Leavers thought Brexit could improve their finances, whereas remain voters felt that withdrawal from the supranational institution would likely lower their household income. This again displays how differing attitudes towards globalised institutions may have created a new political divide. Those who recognised such institutions had benefitted their country, communities and personal lives appear to be more likely to cast a vote that would keep the UK integrated within such institutions. Alternatively, those who felt they had lost backed institutional separation from the EU.

Table 5.18: Effects of Brexit on the UK's economic situation, by referendum vote, Source: BES, 2016.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Much worse	8.30%	16.61%	0.49%
Worse	28.13%	53.00%	4.13%
About the same	30.92%	17.81%	44.38%
Better	19.39%	3.16%	36.84%
Much better	3.88%	0.40%	7.49%
Don't know	9.38%	9.02%	6.67%

Brexit, A trade-off between the economy and migration?

The Remain campaign placed emphasis on the fact those concerned with rising migration numbers would have to decide between free trade with Europe and their desire to see migration

numbers decrease. However, this narrative may have not worked with Leave voters as they did not see this trade-off as they only perceived upsides in leaving the EU. Table 5.19 and figure 5.9 demonstrates that voters who backed leaving the EU thought that migration could be much lower post-Brexit, but international trade could in fact be increased, meaning that they perceived no policy trade-off between trade and controlling migration. Therefore, Brexit was a policy that was seen to only deliver benefits and Leave voters saw few downsides to leaving this globalised institution. It can again be stated that Leave voters appear to have a natural disdain for such institutions and felt that such bodies were the cause of problems surrounding issues they felt to be very important, such as immigration. Therefore, the groups most likely to feel they had lost out from EU integration and globalisation developments also tended to vote Leave in higher numbers than compared to groups who most likely gained from supranational institutional benefits.

Table 5.19: Effects of Brexit on immigration into the UK by referendum vote, Source: BES, 2016 – EU wave.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Much lower	15.32%	4.27%	27.10%
Lower	39.85%	27.66%	53.61%
About the same	30.08%	50.75%	9.98%
Higher	4.61%	6.57%	2.31%
Much higher	2.58%	2.27%	2.62%
Don't know	7.55%	8.48%	4.39%

Remainers on the other hand did not see a positive effect from Brexit. Again, there was a sense that Brexit was not a trade-off between securing migration controls vs free trade. Groups who backed Remain often thought that Brexit would not significantly help lower migration and probably would make no difference to flows, but it would however reduce international trade flows to the UK. Significantly, this again indicates that perceptions of the effects from the EU and Brexit were very different amongst these new political divides. This indicates that the long-

term divisions explored in chapter three were now separating voters into distinct political camps. These two political tribes now perceived the biggest issues in British politics very differently, and this may have been why this new cleavage divide went on to shape voting outcomes in the critical political moment of Brexit.
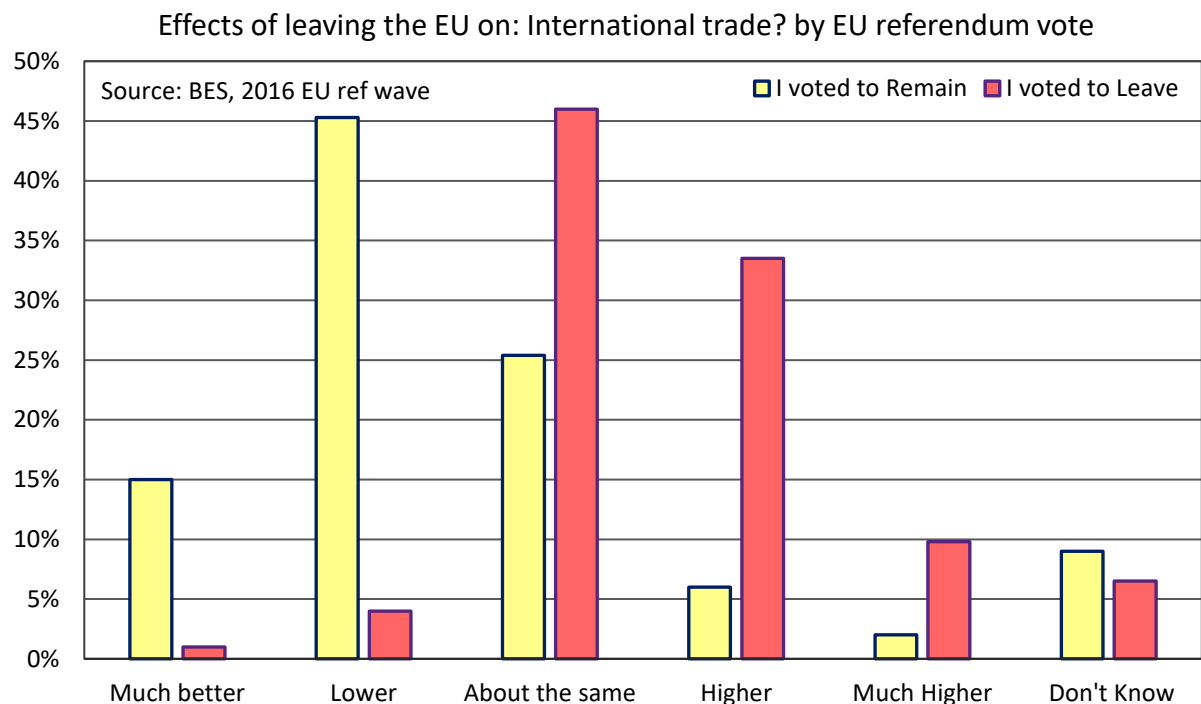

Figure 5.9: Effects of leaving the EU on international trade. Source: BES 2016. It displays how there was a clear cleavage divide in terms of what voters thought the effects of Brexit would be. Leave groups felt that the EU was limiting international trade and separating from the supranational institution would only benefit trade. Remain voters on the other hand thought being connected to such institutions increased trade flows to the UK and that Brexit would mostly harm these trade flows.

Feelings of what would happen if the UK remained:

These perception divides were not just limited to Brexit. It also impacted how different groups of voters sensed what a Remain outcome would have brought the UK. Table 5.20 shows that Leave voters feared remaining in the EU would bring future problems for the UK in terms of

how much influence the EU would have over the UK parliament. Leave voters felt that Brexit would increase UK sovereignty, whilst a majority of these voters also thought that Remaining would continue a trend of the UK parliament being undermined by the EU. Alternatively, Remainers were more likely to feel that the UK was not being undermined by the EU and continued membership would bring no change to UK-EU integration strength, and consequently how much the EU could decide policy outcomes in the UK. Critically, it can again be stated that these two new political groupings had very different perceptions and disagreed about what leaving and remaining would mean for the UK, again indicating the new cleavage divide may have heavily impacted the 2016 EU referendum.

Table 5.20: If remain: The EU will have more powers over UK? BES, 2016.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Many fewer powers	3.95%	0.60%	7.38%
Fewer powers	8.42%	8.20%	8.81%
About the same power as now	41.95%	71.06%	14.03%
More powers	21.12%	10.43%	32.10%
Many more powers	16.86%	1.90%	33.11%
Don't know	7.70%	7.81%	4.58%

EU laws and British identity?

Leave voters also felt that if the UK was to remain in the EU the European Court of Human rights would continue to have too much influence over the UK. Further, this would be a bad thing as the laws this organisation presided over were deemed to be made poorly. These individuals also were more likely to state that they felt such institutions undermined British identity. Remainers on the other hand felt that these laws did not undermine the UK's sovereignty and that often these laws were better made at the EU level as they dealt with issues that spanned across borders. Further, they also were much less likely to feel such institutions did not damage British identity. Crucially, it can therefore again be stated that these groups clearly had different perceptions of how this supranational institution would continue to affect their lives, identity and democracy if the UK was to Remain.

Response	Average Response	I voted to Remain	I voted to Leave
Strongly agree	7.39%	13.60%	1.50%
Agree	30.28%	52.53%	8.27%
Neither agree nor disagree	16.75%	15.74%	17.26%
Disagree	22.02%	9.85%	35.09%
Strongly disagree	16.79%	2.38%	33.11%
Don't know	6.77%	5.90%	4.76%

Table 5.21: Some laws are better made at the European level? Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

The future EU-UK deal if the UK remained.

Overall, attitudes towards Europe, if the UK had remained, can be summarised as Leave voters consistently feeling the UK would find themselves in a worse situation, whilst Remainers thought things would either stay the same or slightly improve. Figure 5.10 shows that individuals who voted to leave the EU feared the future continuation of EU-UK integration. Leave voters appear to instinctively worry about the impact the EU was having upon their lives and may have been willing to reject the EU in order to eliminate perceived future problems the institution would bring. Alternatively, Remain voters felt the institution would likely continue to benefit them, and this may have been why they felt maintaining membership was necessary.
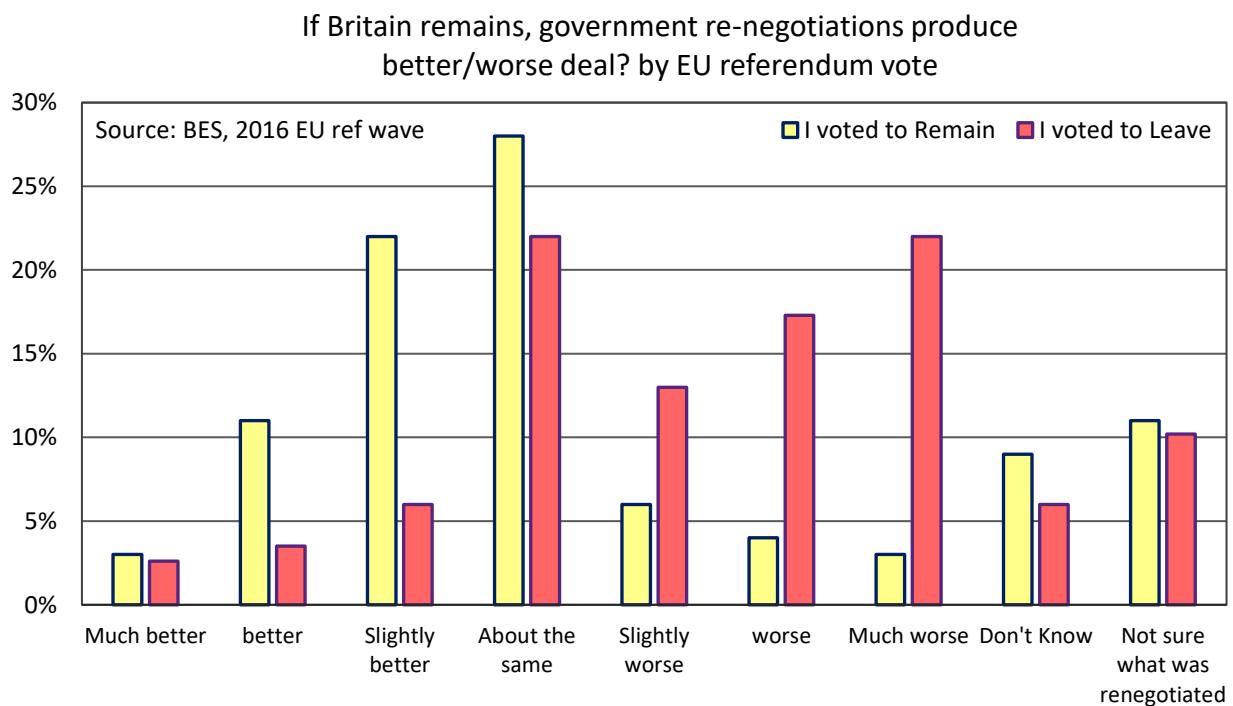

Figure 5.10: Responses to the question that asked if the UK remained in the EU would

Britain get a better or worse deal from the EU, by the EU referendums voting divide. Source: BES 2016.

<u>Assessments of the economy:</u>

Historically, assessments of the economy have impacted heavily upon how voters have cast their ballots. However, as stated earlier in this study, the left/right economic divide may have not been as pronounced during the referendum as it had been in previous general elections. As a result, how voters assessed the economy to have changed since the 2015 and 2010 general elections may have not been as important, meaning other divides might have been more influential in shaping this political outcome. Figure 5.11 confirms this theory because how voters assessed the economy appears to have had little impact in dividing Remain and Leave voters. The spread of opinions is fairly even for each possible assessment of the change in the state of the British economy. Therefore, it is unlikely that such assessments caused the Remain-Leave divide, especially when other questions produced a much starker divide.

Importantly, these patterns would indicate that the perceived effect from the EU was more important than logical assessments made by the voters. For example, this chapter has shown that those who felt they had lost out from globalisation tended to blame the EU for this, and consequently, they had a poorer view of the EU, a more positive view of Brexit and were more likely to back Leave. Those who felt they had gained tended to have a better view of the EU, a worse view of Brexit and, as a result, were more likely to back Remain. Crucially, this means that this new political divide may have been more influential in causing Brexit than economic trends were.

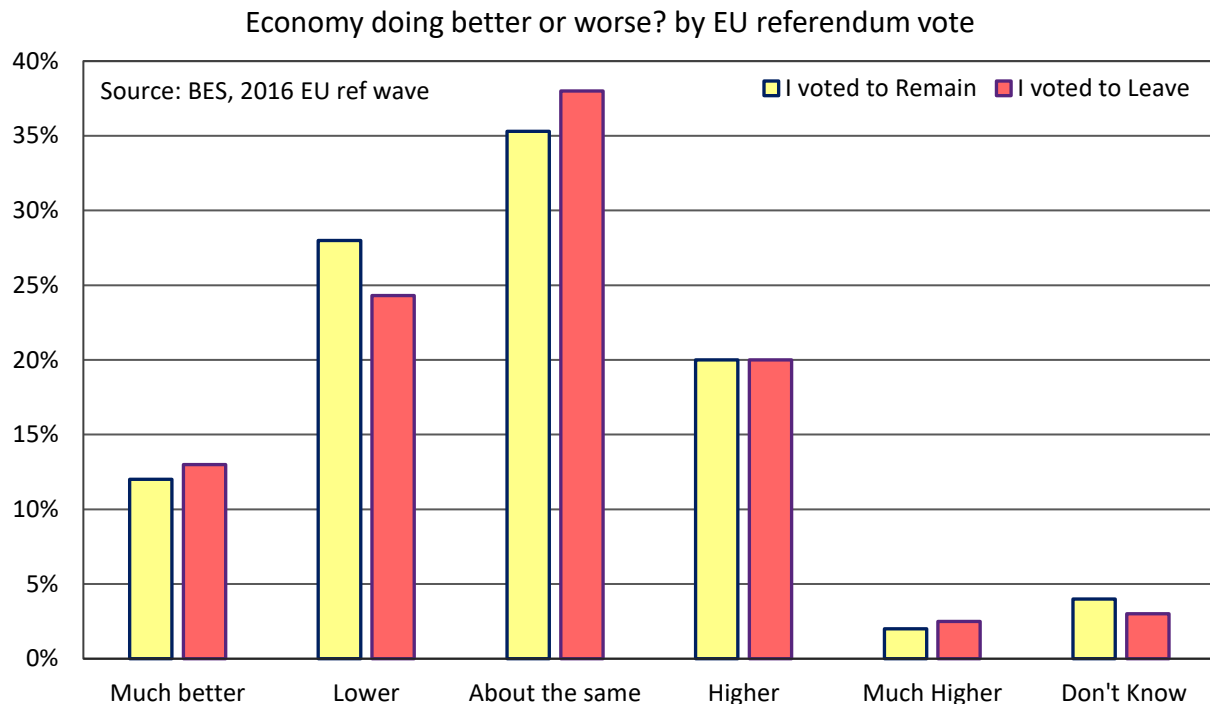**Economy doing better or worse? by EU referendum vote**

Figure 5.11 Responses to the question of if the economy was doing better or worse. Source: BES 2016. It demonstrates that economic assessments likely made little impact in causing the remain/leave divide, indicating that the new political divide, of which highlighted starker differences, likely shaped Brexit more than the traditional left/right cleavage.

Perception divides:

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to note that this new political divide may have been more important than just causing Brexit. It may have gone onto alter judgements around politicians and the parties they represent. This is crucial as this has the capacity to break down old voting divides and incentivise voters to consider new political choices, which is vital in any political realignment. Table 5.22 demonstrates that there was a strong pattern between a party leader's rating and how an individual voted in the EU referendum. This example uses Boris Johnson's ratings and shows how those who highly rated Johnson during the campaign were most likely Leave supporters, the choice he advocated as a leader of the Leave campaign. Individuals who disliked Johnson during the campaign were more likely to have backed

Remain. Individuals who liked Cameron tended to back Remain, whilst those who disliked his performance voted Leave. Therefore, this crucially shows that the new political divide may have been altering the voters' perceptions, regardless of which party an individual supported.

Like Boris Johnson Scale	Average Response	I voted to remain	I voted to leave
7 -10, Like Johnson	32.73%	11.92%	55.40%
4 – 6, Middle Johnson	23.86%	22.29%	25.27%
0 – 3, Dislike Johnson	38.38%	62.34%	15.60%
Don't know	5.03%	3.44%	3.73%

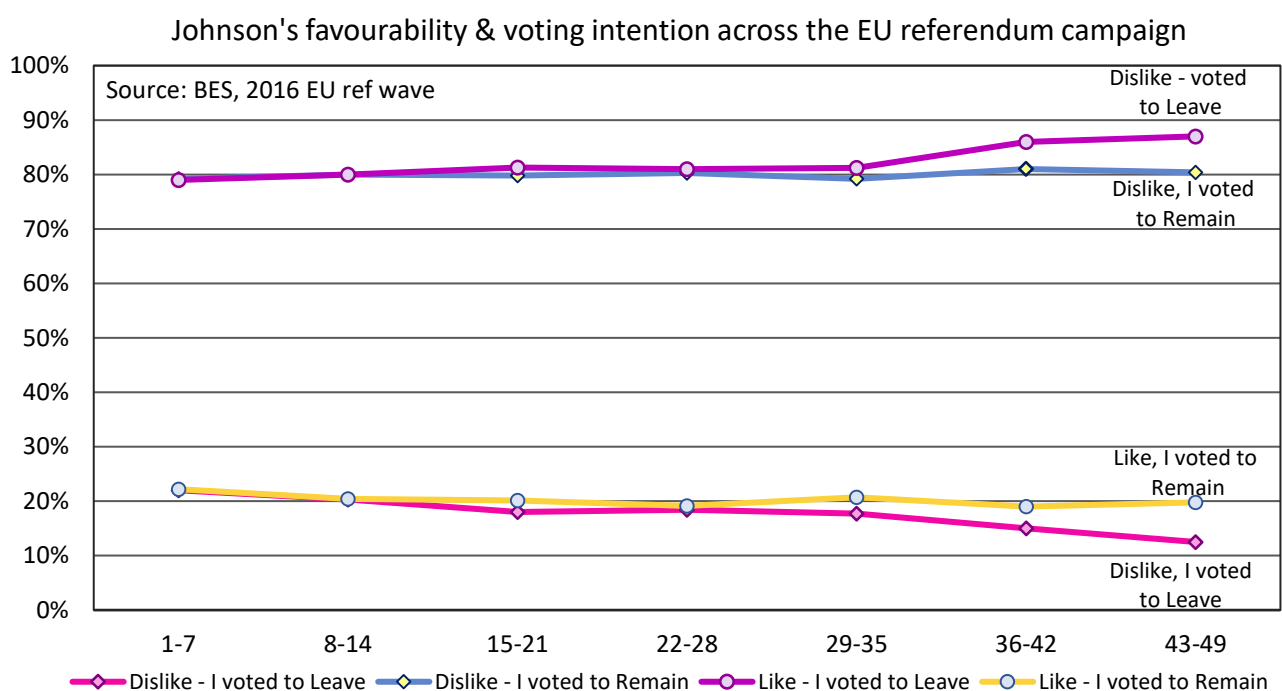Table 5.22: Rating of Johnson (10 scale) by EU referendum vote, Source: BES, 2016 EU wave.

Figure 5.12: highlights how the political perception divide around leaders, regardless of party support, correlated heavily with the new Leave/Remain divide. Vitally, this indicates that this new culturally-based political divide had the capacity to alter how voters perceived the parties, and their respective leaders, and from this realign voting patterns.

<u>Overall:</u>

This chapter has shown that the long-term divisions on cultural issues, like the EU and immigration, merged into a new political divide during the 2016 EU referendum. Younger

cohorts with more qualifications tended to vote for Remain, meanwhile, older generations with fewer qualifications clearly voted to Leave the EU. Further, those who could be described as more authoritarian tended to back Leave, with liberals supporting Remain. This indicates that groups who had become more concerned around the effects of immigration and the EU voted to Leave, whilst those who had become more relaxed with immigration and the EU's influence voted Remain. Therefore, the divergence experienced in society leading up to the EU referendum on important issues appears to have formed new political groupings, of which formed into the Remain/Leave divide in 2016.

These new political groups had different priorities, where Leavers valued immigration, whilst Remainers valued the economy, a trend that emerged in the years approaching the referendum between contrasting social groupings. Significantly, Brexiteer's views differed from Remainer's opinions on their highest priority, immigration. They felt that numbers were now too high, there was a lack of control over the migration issue and that migrant flows were harming the UK economically and culturally. Remainers disagreed, they were more relaxed with numbers staying the same, perceived migration to culturally and economically benefit the UK and felt migrants contributed more than they took from the welfare system. Therefore, there was a clear cleavage divide on the highly salient migration issue, of which can be described as culturally conservative (Leave) vs culturally liberal (Remain). This new cleavage divide extended into the EU issue. Leave voters felt that the EU had made Britain less prosperous than it could otherwise be, eroded parliamentary sovereignty and generally had negatively impacted their life. Remainers on the other hand again disagreed and felt the EU increased trade, improved the economy and intruded little into UK sovereignty. Leavers felt Brexit was a chance to increase trade and lower migration, whilst Remainers felt migration would not change and trade would decrease.

These consistent opposing views importantly represent a new ideological divide within the British electorate. Vitally, this phenomenon had only been able to fully emerge through new voting patterns due to the EU referendum, highlighting the importance of this event in remoulding the UK's political system. These two groups, with a consistent set of opposing views, can be described as a new ideological divide that reflects culturally liberal vs conservative values. Further, these view-points appear to divide voters according to social groups who feel like either the winners (Remainers) or the losers (Brexiteers) of modern global economic developments. Crucially, this means that this chapter's evidence has partly supported hypothesis four, of which stated divisions over new issues will have correlated with divides in voting during the EU referendum. To fully test hypothesis four the book will need to examine the extent these correlations are related, in other words establish the extent to which divides on new issues actually determined the EU referendum result.

Now that these vital trends have been identified, the next chapter explores the extent to which this new ideological divide caused the Brexit outcome, and therefore will identify if this new divide had the potential to remould the electorate and map of British politics.

Conclusion

Summary of evidence in how this book's theory explains British politics from 2010-2020.

This book has argued that its core theory can help to explain the development of British politics over the last decade; including the breaking of old allegiances, the rise of UKIP, the vote to leave the EU, the split of the remain/leave camps in the 2017 election, the growing divide of such groups in the 2019 election and finally the squeeze of the Labour vote in 2019 that led to the Tories' large majority. This study now summarises the evidence it has found that supports this narrative.

A new socio-political divide (a realignment) has emerged from a divergence across new non-economic issues (H1 & H2):

This book has outlined clear evidence of a divergence occurring within questions that tapped into the new political divide of cultural liberalism vs conservativism. For instance, with the Common Market and the European Union there once was mostly agreement that entering the common market had been a positive move for the UK. However, in the early 1990s with the controversy over the Maastricht treaty, alongside growing domestic government instability because of the EU question, the public became less content with EU membership. With the EU's creation, and its growing size bringing more waves of migration, this division increased. This divide was not spread evenly over society, where a growing age and qualification divide emerged, which particularly accelerated after successive waves of immigration. Younger people with higher levels of qualifications became much more likely to be pro-European, whilst older generations with fewer university-level qualifications became much more Eurosceptic. Alongside this, growing disagreement surrounding views on the effects of migration also developed. Younger and more qualified groups generally remained optimistic about the effects

of EU migration, whilst older and less qualified cohorts became much more concerned about the effects growing numbers were having on the UK. This can be said to reflect the emergence of a new political divide of cultural liberalism/conservativism post-2004 when the EU expanded. This book also uncovered evidence that demonstrated issues that shaped this new divergence became more prominent in voters' immediate thoughts. The book showed that since 2004, outside times of deep economic crises, immigration and the EU have consistently been at the top of the voters' agenda. This was identified in multiple datasets, thus giving greater confidence in these findings. This means that thoughts on these issues will have coincided with critical moments within British politics in the last decade. Consequently, it is likely that the divergence that existed in these views were present when important voting decisions were made. Therefore, events like Brexit might have partly been caused by diverging views on these issues. Consequently, such developments may have gone onto alter voting patterns, possibly explaining the puzzling election outcome of 2017.

A lack of focus on this new political divide created high levels of dealignment where elements of the two main parties' traditional bases sought alternative representation, thus creating potential for huge shifts of electoral support (H3):

This book has demonstrated this process firstly when it uncovered findings from the BES that the amount of voters who identified as supporting one particular party decreased quite significantly overtime. Moreover, the proportion of voters outlining they had continued strong levels of support for one given party had also declined. Secondly, the amount of volatility, an indication of how many voters are willing to change their vote, grew across the decade. This study found that regardless of the method used to measure volatility the amount of voters willing to change their vote has continued to increase. In particular, polling showed large swings compared to historical levels in British politics. This growing dealignment was felt to be due to a long-term lack of representation on the culturally conservative side of the new

political divide from the main parties. The book supported this theory when it found that the two main parties were very much based in the centre-ground liberal camp during the New Labour era. The theory that this alienated parts of the traditional bases of both the main parties was found to have some weight to it as volatility coincided with average positions parties took. It particularly showed that the rise of UKIP coincided with long periods of the main parties being culturally liberal. This decreased loyalty towards the two main parties and made it possible for the rise of UKIP and new voting patterns to emerge.

Divisions over new issues shaped the EU referendum result, and from this created a new political divide that went onto shape future election results (H4 & H5):

This book showed that this new political divide first emerged in the 2016 EU referendum, where voting choices were heavily shaped by divisions around newly important non-economic issues. As previously stated, society had diverged over the issue of immigration and chapter five showed that individuals who had grown anxious about increasing migration levels were significantly more likely to have voted for Brexit. Moreover, such individuals perceived Brexit to be much more positive than contrasting social groups, where they felt it would increase trade, secure the reduction in immigration they demanded and would increase sovereignty. These perceptions also made this group more likely to back Brexit. In contrast, voters in the opposite camp, those less concerned about increasing migration, were more likely to vote Remain. Such individuals also believed the EU to have a more positive effect on the UK and felt Brexit would be damaging. They felt that EU membership increased trade and Brexit would damage it. They also believed that Brexit would not effectively manage migration and the goal of managing migration was not worth the economic costs of leaving the EU. Such views led them to be more likely to back Remain. Therefore, the EU referendum exposed the new political divide of older, less educated voters voting along more culturally conservative lines and younger more highly educated voters voting along more culturally liberal lines.

These new voting patterns subsequently emerged post-Brexit through this new socio-political divide in the realigning elections of 2017 and 2019 and redistributed votes between Labour and Conservative, thus creating a new cleavage divide. This book showed this by both the 2017 and 2019 elections being explained by diverging patterns on key issues that represent the new cultural cleavage divide. The study demonstrated this by presenting evidence that there has been an increasing relationship between an individual's position on the culturally liberal/conservative divide and the party an individual votes for.

Individuals taking pro-EU positions have moved towards liberal left-wing parties, whilst those wanting to leave generally have flowed the Conservatives' way. There was also a similar movement regarding views on immigration where those more concerned with its effects have increasingly voted Conservative, with those less negative about immigration opting for left-liberal parties. Further to these findings, the study found that demographic divides on these issues have also translated into voting patterns across constituencies. Constituencies that are more populated with older voters who have gained fewer qualifications became more likely to return a Conservative MP over the decade, whilst the opposite demographics have become more supportive of Labour. Finally, opinions on these issues have become more statistically significant over the last decade in determining voting patterns, and therefore the new political divide on these issues has become more impactful in driving voting patterns. Therefore, the theory that cultural issues have caused electoral change significantly enough to force an electoral realignment was very much supported by this book's findings. Crucially, the ability to explain such shifts, therefore, shows this study can help explain the 2017 and 2019 election results. Importantly, such change was shown to be durable by highlighting how the realignment has altered voters' perceptions of the parties and by demonstrating that the 2021 local elections continued to show realignment patterns, both at the aggregate and individual levels.

Changes in voting patterns have resulted in an alteration in the structure of British politics that has changed how the parties compete for voters and which voters they compete for, thus creating changes in party competition (H6):

This book outlined this by showing that there has been a consistent flow of the vote that has altered which electoral groups the English parties can most likely receive votes from. The study also outlined how the parties' positions have polarised, again supporting the theory that the political structure has changed to a centrifugal model. Alongside this, the two main parties' membership base has polarised, thus cementing structural change.

Vitally, this study showed that the parties were forced to adapt to what they see as a new political model, and as a result, this acceptance of change has brought wider party system change. This adaptation explains how the Conservatives were able to carve out a new political base, because they were the party that developed the clearest electoral strategy that tapped into a distinct side of the new cleavage divide, the culturally Conservative side that wanted Brexit implemented. Moreover, the book demonstrated how the theory's assertion that the Labour vote would be squeezed on both sides of the political debate was accurate. Labour was shown to lose votes to both the Lib-Dems and the Tories, with clear trends that voters on both sides of the cleavage fled their party. Consequently, the middle ground approach no longer being the sole electoral winning strategy again shows how the structure of UK politics changed to a centrifugal one, whilst it also does help explain how the Conservatives won. Vitally, this confirms hypothesis six that stated party competition will have changed and again demonstrates how the study can accurately explain key developments within British politics.

Overall, the above shows how this book has provided evidence for how the UK has experienced a divergence over new non-economic issues that has resulted in electoral and party competition change, thus producing a full realignment that has remoulded British politics.

Concluding argument:

This book has explored the extent to which the UK has gone through a realignment during the last decade and concludes that the UK has gone through a full realignment which has been gradual and has picked up pace with successive elections across the last decade. Furthermore, it has rapidly developed post-Brexit and has increasingly shaped political outcomes since 2016. The study argues that a realignment fully emerged in 2019 through a realigning election where part of Labour's traditional base defected to the Conservatives. As a result, this gradual political change has resulted in an altered base for the Conservative Party who will now have to adapt to representing a range of seats they have historically not controlled, whilst Labour will be seeking to win these seats back. Consequently, the next few years of Westminster politics will most likely be framed around the concerns, attitudes and problems these constituencies face.

This book argues that this realignment has emerged through the development of a new cleavage divide that has reshaped electoral voting patterns. This emerging cleavage divide has arisen through long-term changes of public opinion on a range of issues across distinct socio-political groupings. In particular, long-term trends on views regarding immigration and Europe have emerged, with previous agreement gradually vanishing as a divergence occurred. This divergence has resulted in the emergence of the culturally liberal/ conservative divide, which has altered the basis of party competition. Growing divisions on these questions coincided with these issues rising up the voters' agenda. With the main parties initially not focusing on these new issues, growing disillusionment occurred, bringing wide-scale dealignment to the British political system. Sustained limited focus on these new issues caused shifts in party support, generating very high levels of volatility as voters looked for new options. Successive local and national elections gave opportunities for disillusioned voters to protest against their traditional party and this led to a gradual shift of voting patterns. Post-Brexit the proportion of disillusioned voters willing to jump to a new party rapidly grew and this resulted in

unprecedented levels of volatility. With politicians seemingly unable to deliver on these new important issues, protests started to translate into more fixed patterns of new support, often leading to scenarios where voters were aligned with the party they historically voted against. With the Brexit process becoming a stalemate and a source of increasing frustration another wave of disillusioned voters considered shifting their support. All this meant that by 2020 enough voters had altered their support for a full realignment to occur.

Importantly, these shifts have the potential to be long-term as they have altered individuals' perceptions of political parties. Significantly, this means that how parties now compete for voters has been drastically reshaped. Vitally, this means that electoral and party system change has occurred simultaneously, indicating that a full realignment occurred during the last decade of British politics.

This process has been an extended and gradual change brought through long-term global developments that have fuelled disillusionment, such as globalisation, economic displacement and recession. Furthermore, successive waves of migration and problems of leaving the EU post-referendum have pushed these disillusioned voters over to new parties, which led to successive waves of partial realignment. Moreover, after two years of political stalemate on an issue many voters felt had already been settled, more voters changed their allegiances, which culminated with a realigning election in 2019 that favoured the Brexit side of the debate. As a result, the culturally conservative losers of globalisation and the culturally liberal winners of modernisation now reside within different political camps that vote for opposing parties, thus creating a new political landscape.

Finally, this new political landscape has great potential to shape political events of the 2020s. Firstly, there is evidence that it has altered perceptions of the two main parties and their respective leaders. Moreover, the cultural divisions the realignment brought has partly shifted

the main political parties ideologically, which both means the realignment very likely will continue to affect short-term voter assessments that partly determine voting behaviour.

Secondly, if the realignment was purely about Brexit then the realignment would have ended in 2020 with the emergence of the pandemic and the decreased saliency of cultural factors that made way for traditional economic concerns. Yet, as this book demonstrated, the 2021 local elections, both at the aggregate and individual level, showed that 2019 realignment patterns continued to heavily shape British political outcomes.

Thirdly, the realignment can be durable as it is about wider factors than just divisions that exist around cultural questions and Brexit. The realignment is not only about discontent around cultural change but is also partly about discontent around economic change. This discontent is focused within communities that have a sense of loss arising from growing economic inequality that has been partly driven by globalisation. Whilst some areas of the country have benefited from global economic developments many areas in the UK have not shared in this newfound economic prosperity. This has led to some areas losing their younger populations to growing city-centric economic hubs that have benefitted from global economics, further creating additional long-term economic difficulties for the so-called "left behind" areas. Therefore, whilst Brexit was clearly part of a cultural divide, for some communities it was also about a demand for a different economic settlement and the EU referendum provided a useful way to express frustration and voice this grievance. Indeed, research into why individuals decided to leave the EU showed that people who believed the economy had not improved for them was a contributing factor behind the leave vote, especially when they lived in areas that had not gained economically since the recession (Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley 2017).

Vitally, this makes the realignment durable as the Conservative Party has recognised this and have developed a wider message of "levelling up". Such a narrative can address feelings associated with this economic discontent as it will promise to use flagship investment policies

to show a Conservative government can bring the investment their new electoral base desires. Indeed, academics have already published papers that have shown how the government's policy platform is creating such a political agenda (Jennings 2021). Therefore, whilst Labour's former base abandoned them in favour of the Tories partly around Brexit and the immigration concerns, they may have also left Labour in 2019 because they felt the Tories were better placed to address their economic grievances than Labour was. For instance, this study has shown that in 2019 90% of the voters who left Labour did not think the party would improve their economic circumstances, with 70% stating a Labour government would actively make it worse. However, these voters did trust the Conservative Party to manage the economy far more than Labour. Therefore, even if the pandemic does cause voters to think more about the economy, there is no evidence this will help Labour and unravel the realignment as the government's "levelling-up" agenda may resonate with key Red Wall voters as such voters may believe the Tories can better address their economic dissatisfaction, of which was first voiced in the Brexit referendum.

As a result, the realignment can endure because it reflects a wide new ideological divide that the Conservatives have recognised through their one-nation approach of trying to bridge the inequality divide that clearly exists within their new voting base, which has been labelled the "levelling up" agenda. Consequently, if the government successfully addresses such economic dissatisfaction through this agenda then it is entirely possible they can keep these voters and ensure the realignment continues to favour them and presents further problems for Labour. However, if the government continues to be undermined by scandals, sleaze, and perceived incompetence they will be deemed to have failed to deliver the new economic settlement their Red Wall voters demanded, and their new base will weaken. Right now, these key voters are watching the government, waiting for Prime Minister Johnson's fate post "party-gate" and the government's response to problems post-pandemic times are bringing, such as inflation.

In terms of research on ongoing developments, such work could focus on assessing the extent to which the realignment can continue to shape UK political outcomes post-Covid19. Such work could examine the extent to which the realignment holds during an economic recovery that will need to be created post-lockdown, which could be done by analysing the next general election result. The next election is likely to be in 2023 or 2024, and in the meantime, research could analyse the extent to which party strategies continue to change in a way that this book would project. If both the main parties' electoral strategies continue to address this new voter divide, for example with the Conservatives continuing to target poorer, economically deprived northern areas, then future research could confirm the realignment to be a durable one. After such evaluations have been carried out, such research could confirm the accuracy of the study's core argument, namely that a new political era has emerged through a realignment where political competition in Britain has been remoulded.

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Appendix:

As this book was constructed from a PhD thesis, there is a methodology chapter that can be accessed. If interested in this book's methodology, it can be requested by contacting the author or the University of Sussex Library, of which an electronic copy of the thesis is stored.