

As Labour rises in UK polls, Blairite breakaway party plans gather pace

By Robert Stevens
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Ahead of the June 8 snap general election, former Labour Party leader Tony Blair and his supporters are brazenly advancing plans to establish a new right-wing political formation.

The Blairites have openly outlined their agenda through a series of deliberate leaks to the *Telegraph*, *Times* and *Daily Mail*—longstanding Conservative-supporting newspapers. Corbyn’s office dismissed the plans as “silly” stories from “Tory papers,” but this week the Blairites continued airing their intentions via the pages of the *Observer*, the Sunday edition of the anti-Corbyn and staunchly Blairite *Guardian*.

Amid poll results showing Labour under Jeremy Corbyn cutting the Conservative (Tory) lead to just 5 percent, from a high of 20, the *Observer* ran comments from Jonathan Powell, described as Blair’s “most trusted adviser.” The Blairites are committed to opposing the Tories’ plans for a hard Brexit that would result in the British bourgeoisie losing access to the European Union’s Single Market. The *Observer* reported that Powell “said that there was no pro-European party capable of commanding significant support and that ‘a different party’ could fill the vacuum if Labour opted not to do so.”

Powell declared, “We will wait to see what happens in the election, but... there is a yawning chasm in the middle of politics at the moment that is not represented and the [Liberal Democrats] are incapable of filling that space. At some stage, someone is going to fill it. Whether it is the Labour party after the election or a different party, who knows?”

Just hours after Corbyn launched Labour’s manifesto, veteran Blairite MP Frank Field became the first to call openly for a split. Speaking to the Conservative-supporting *Sun*, owned by Rupert

Murdoch, Field said if Corbyn refused to go in the aftermath of a Tory win, the right wing had to break away and form a caucus in parliament, possibly as “People’s Labour.”

Such a plan could only be enacted “if we get a majority of like-minded Labour MPs back in parliament.” It would require access to taxpayer funded “Short money,” which opposition parties require to function in parliament. To receive the money, a party must have at least two MPs or one MP and more than 150,000 votes. Labour, with 232 elected at the 2015 general election, receives at least £6.2 million a year through 2020.

Nothing is being ruled out by the Blairites, including taking Corbyn to court to seize control of millions of pounds in assets and being declared the official opposition. They calculate such moves could be supported by up to 172 MPs—if they retain their seats—who opposed Corbyn in a vote of no confidence after last year’s Brexit referendum.

This plan had already been formulated by the Blairites in the *Telegraph*, with a report that 100 prospective Labour MPs were considering resigning the Labour whip and become independents after the general election.

Commenting in the May 21 *Sunday Telegraph* in a piece headlined “After defeat, Labour must split or die,” Simon Heffer wrote, “The uprising may not happen the weekend after the election, but... the breakaway will come, and it will be far more seismic than the formation of the [right-wing] SDP [Social Democratic Party] in 1981.”

Blair, the architect of Britain’s illegal invasion of Iraq, is widely hated and forced to plot behind the scenes. The Blairites have concluded that he and his immediate circle are too toxic to openly front a new

formation, with Heffer stating that, “Many names are [instead being] floated—Yvette Cooper, Chuka Umunna, Clive Lewis, Dan Jarvis or even Sir Keir Starmer.”

In their efforts to ensure the Labour Party remains pro-war and pro-austerity, the *Telegraph* et al. are resorting to naked propaganda. Last week the *Telegraph* published a survey claiming that a quarter of Labour voters supported a split from Labour if it did not win the election. However, faced with the loaded question of whether “Labour should formally split and a group should breakaway and form a new party if it does not win power at this election,” three quarters of voters were still opposed.

To facilitate their plans, a merger with the pro-EU Liberal Democrats—who are committed to a second referendum but who have just nine MPs in parliament—is being mooted. Earlier this month, the *Times* cited a “Blairite” who revealed, “One of [former Liberal Democrats leader Nick] Clegg’s mates said: ‘You moderates in the Labour Party, if you wanted to just take us over you could just join, it would be yours.’” Clegg is known to be meeting regularly with Blair.

The *Sunday Times*, earlier this month, reported, “Allies of [current Liberal Democrat leader] Tim Farron have indicated that he might be persuaded to rename the party.” It revealed that some Labour MPs and Tory pro-Europeans met last year, “in which a party called the Democrats was discussed, a title that has previously been advanced by Lord Ashdown, the former Lib Dem leader.”

The Blairites, with the war criminal himself estimated to be worth £80 to £100 million, have lined up a number of multi-millionaire backers.

Details of the fundraising have been revealed in the *Times* and *Daily Mail*. Yesterday’s *Mail on Sunday* reported that Blair and Lord Levy—Labour’s main fundraiser in Blair’s period in office—are working closely together. Between 1994, when Blair became Labour leader and 2007, when he stepped down as Prime Minister, Levy raised more than £100 million for Labour.

Dr. Assem Allam, a British-based Egyptian businessman worth £250 million, previously donated £720,000 to Labour. The *Mail* reported that he met Blair and Levy on April 23 and “offered to fund

moderate Labour MPs who want to leave Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour and set up a new ‘centrist’ party.” According to the newspaper, Allam pledged to give Blair several million pounds at the meeting. However, with initial election polls showing a large Tory lead, he reportedly changed his mind.

The *Times* said property developer Sir David Garrard, who has given Labour £1.6 million, would “willingly support” a new party “if a majority of centrist Labour MPs broke away to join it.”

Another multi-millionaire ready to move is Peter Coates—the owner of Premier League football team Stoke City FC. Coates has donated £200,000 to Labour, with the *Times* stating “he was ‘interested’ in the idea of a new party.”

The Blairites’ plans were summed up by a “source who used to work for Blair,” who told the *Sunday Times* two weeks ago that the result of the election would be central to the plotters next move. The source said, “[S]ome people have already come to the conclusion that it [the Corbyn wing’s control over the party] can’t [be reversed] and therefore something else will have to be born.”

The open plotting of the Blairites is a devastating rebuttal of Corbyn’s central claim that Labour can be refashioned as a vehicle through which to end austerity and curb the danger of war. The very forces which he has refused to move against, in the name of maintaining party unity, are intent on preventing him from ever forming a government—and are still pursuing this goal without a finger being raised against them.

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