Twitter Thread by Christabel Cooper

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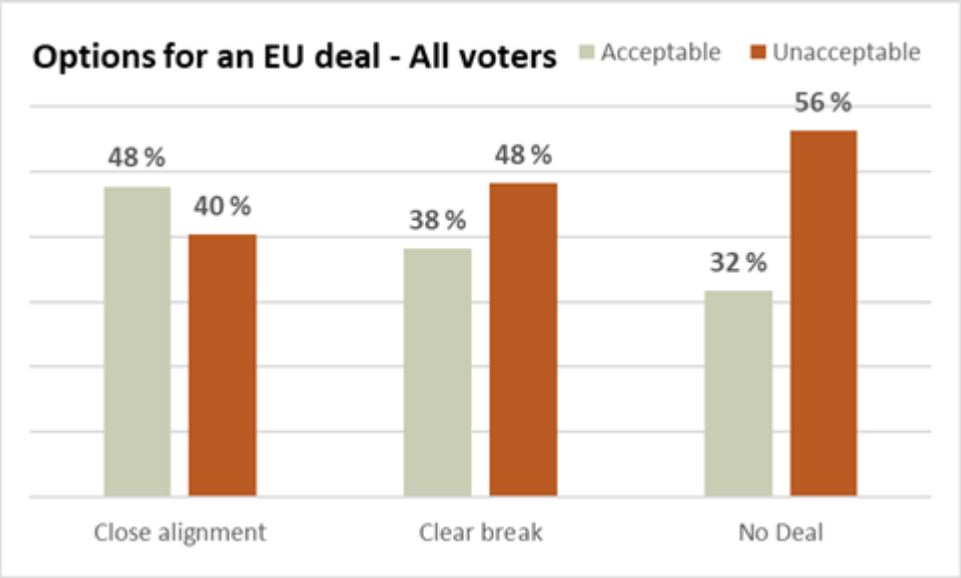
It's true that Labour cannot form the next government without winning back most of the "Red Wall" seats it lost.

But the leadership has come to some odd decisions over its Brexit strategy as a result.

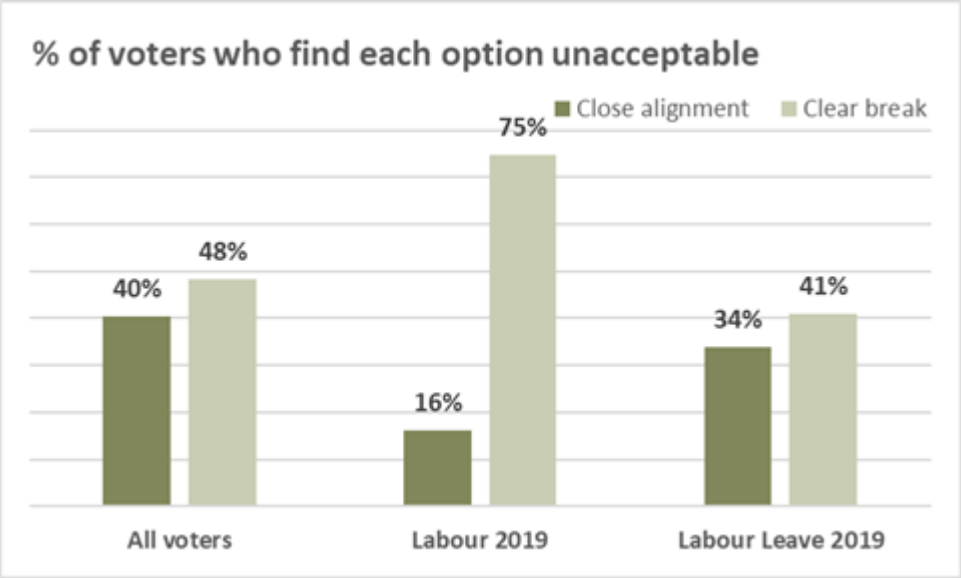
Let's look at the polling. From @OpiniumResearch last week, we can see that of 3 options:

a trade deal with close alignment to the EU
a trade deal with a clear break from the EU
No Deal

Only the close alignment option is acceptable to more people than unacceptable. 2/12



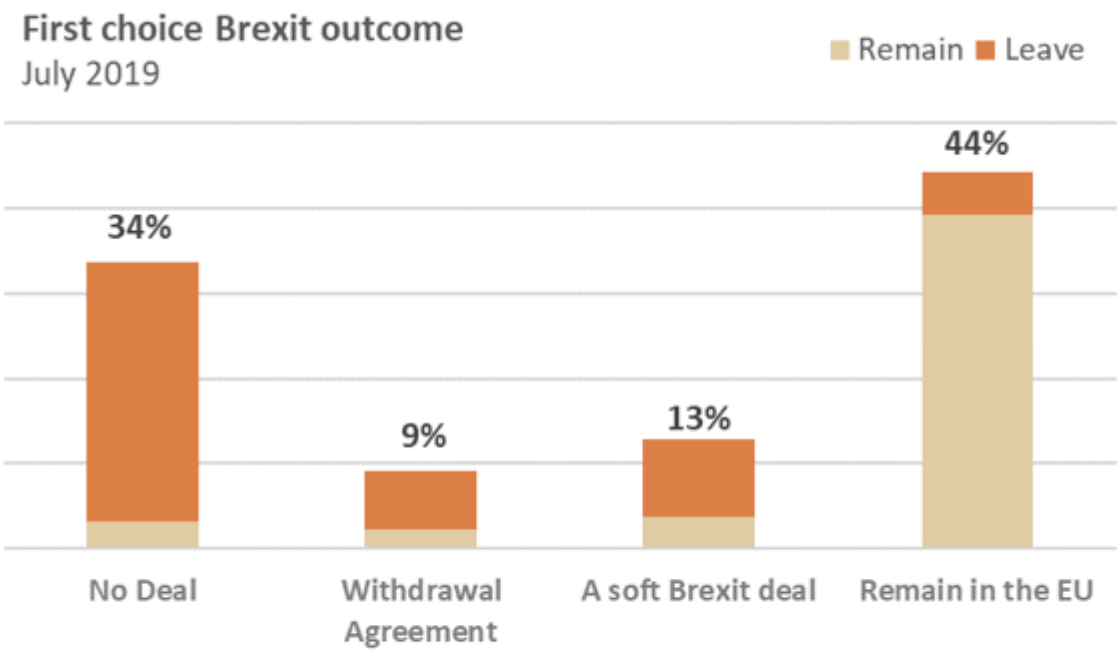
If we just look at the people who find each option unacceptable, out of All Voters, Labour voters *and* 2019 Labour Leave voters, all groups find a deal with a clear break more unacceptable than a deal with close alignment. 3/12



So it hardly feels like electoral suicide for Labour to explicitly argue for a deal with close alignment. This is particularly true since Labour's current poll lead with @YouGov comes mainly from the one third of 2019 Lib Dem voters who now say they would back Labour. 4/12

75% of 2019 Lib Dem Remainers think a "clear break" deal is unacceptable, so there is considerable risk in alienating these voters by Labour backing a Tory deal with the EU which will inevitably mean a very hard Brexit. 5/12
https://t.co/q6ma2zZWyF

At the height of the Brexit crisis, the debate had become highly polarised, and a soft Brexit option was unpopular with both Remainers and Leavers (who mostly wanted No Deal). Labour was right to back a second ref, not soft Brexit, under these circumstances. 6/12



(From YouGov polling July 2019)

But back in September 2017 a citizens assembly of 50 randomly selected members of the public heard presentations from experts and politicians on both sides and came to the conclusion that a soft Brexit would be the best option. 7/12 https://t.co/st3BEd2rG4

At the heart of Brexit there is a trade off - greater sovereignty inevitably means taking a hit to the economy and jobs. In a less polarised atmosphere with a genuine discussion around this trade off, the citizens assembly provides evidence that people prioritise the economy.8/12

Now that much of the sound and fury around Brexit has dissipated, there *is* an opportunity to have a serious debate, and an opportunity for Labour to be leading that debate by arguing against the government's hard Brexit. 9/12

As @anandmenon1 points out in this excellent article, criticising a government deal which will do more medium-term damage to the economy than Covid, falls neatly into Starmer's narrative around government incompetence. 10/12 https://t.co/bKgJ5jhIth

Voting for the deal makes future attacks on it more difficult, and also picks a weirdly unnecessary fight with the pro-EU Labour membership at a time when there is already a necessary (IMO) fight going on around Corbyn and anti-Semitism. 11/12

Abstaining on a government deal would be a good start, but more importantly Labour needs to be arguing for an alternative deal with closer alignment to the EU. With polls already suggesting this is the most popular Brexit outcome, this shouldn't need too much courage. 12/12