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## UK politics

### Jeremy Corbyn's first 100 days

*Andrew Stone*

**The leader of the opposition has been in power for 100 days. How successful has he been so far?**

Few party leaders have faced such sharp scrutiny as Jeremy Corbyn ([www.tinyurl.com/h6slyoc](http://www.tinyurl.com/h6slyoc)). Within his own party he inspires fervent hopes in the 'Corbynistas' of the left, while provoking antipathy and derision among the party's right (or 'moderates', as they prefer to be known). The civil war within Labour was far from over by Christmas, but what did that initial period suggest about who was likely to win it, and with what effects for Labour's electoral chances?

The following table highlights some of the key decisions and controversies of Corbyn's first 100 days as party leader. The views of 'supporters' and 'critics' are generalisations — neither are homogenous blocs. While the former currently make up a majority within the wider party membership, the latter have the support or sympathy of a majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP).

Day	Date	Event	Critics' view	Supporters' view
1	12 Sep	<p>Corbyn wins Labour leadership election with 59.5% of first preferences. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/ocfon69">www.tinyurl.com/ocfon69</a></p> <p>After brief celebrations of his victory he speaks at a mass rally in solidarity with refugees. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/q4z7q3t">www.tinyurl.com/q4z7q3t</a></p>	<p>Corbyn may have won over the party membership but national elections require winning over the centre ground. Tony Blair was able to do this and thus won three consecutive elections.</p> <p>UKIP's populist anti-immigration message hurt Labour at the last two elections. If they are to convince some of those 3.8 million UKIP voters they need to listen to their concerns about immigration.</p>	<p>251,417 votes is a massive mandate — around 100,000 more than the entire Conservative Party membership. His share of the vote in a four-way contest was greater than Blair's — 57%, in a three-way vote in 1994. During the campaign he spoke to 99 rallies attracting around 50,000 people. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pljfmfsf">www.tinyurl.com/pljfmfsf</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/nbe9lq9">www.tinyurl.com/nbe9lq9</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hrh22zq">www.tinyurl.com/hrh22zq</a></p> <p>Pandering to bigotry will just make it respectable. Labour needs to show its principles — this is one of Corbyn's prime appeals.</p>

2	13 Sep	<p>Corbyn begins formulating his first shadow cabinet. His left-wing ally John McDonnell is made shadow chancellor.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/qebr93n">www.tinyurl.com/qebr93n</a></p>	<p>This shadow cabinet is missing many talented names — Chuka Umanna, Tristram Hunt, Liz Kendall and Yvette Cooper all stood down.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hsuld9n">www.tinyurl.com/hsuld9n</a></p> <p>Appointing McDonnell is a divisive move — he was too left-wing even for Ken Livingstone on the old Greater London Council.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/haprgxe">www.tinyurl.com/haprgxe</a></p> <p>Giving all the leading roles (chancellor, home secretary, foreign secretary) to men undermines the fight for women's equality.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/p4dv7bm">www.tinyurl.com/p4dv7bm</a></p>	<p>Corbyn is prepared to work with all wings of the party — e.g. the appointment of leadership rival Andy Burnham. He can't be blamed if some refuse to reciprocate.</p> <p>Opposition to austerity was a clear plank of Corbyn's mandate. He needs someone he can trust to deliver it.</p> <p>Corbyn's is the first majority female shadow cabinet in history. The assumed hierarchy of posts is perverse, given the importance the public place on health, business and education (all briefs given to women).</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/grbnkcw">www.tinyurl.com/grbnkcw</a></p>
4	15 Sep	<p>Corbyn is criticised for not singing the national anthem during a Battle of Britain memorial service.</p>	<p>Whatever his personal views, Corbyn was elected leader of Her Majesty's Opposition. It was disloyal to the country and disrespectful to the fallen not to join in. Labour will lose votes if it is seen to be unpatriotic.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/nf3n7oz">www.tinyurl.com/nf3n7oz</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/j5tavhu">www.tinyurl.com/j5tavhu</a></p>	<p>How does an atheist republican singing 'God Save the Queen' honour the nation's soldiers? Some supporters believe that he was right to stick to his principles, though the official line is that he was moved by the service and will sing the anthem in future.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pljzkjf">www.tinyurl.com/pljzkjf</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pqnk289">www.tinyurl.com/pqnk289</a></p>
5	16 Sep	<p>Corbyn attends his first Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) as party leader, and reads out emails from the public.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/oty4yac">www.tinyurl.com/oty4yac</a></p>	<p>Well-intentioned as his approach may be, it provides David Cameron with 'soft balls' that are easier to deal with. It limits the opportunity for follow-up questions that pin down the PM.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/jylg839">www.tinyurl.com/jylg839</a></p>	<p>Cameron denounced 'Punch and Judy politics' when he was first elected leader — but Corbyn is following through. Making PMQs a 'people's question time' increases political participation and the reputation of parliament.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/htawqp2">www.tinyurl.com/htawqp2</a></p>
6	17 Sep	<p>Corbyn confirms that Labour will campaign for a Yes vote in the EU referendum.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pqhvf5z">www.tinyurl.com/pqhvf5z</a></p>	<p>The only reasonable course to take. Corbyn has thankfully dropped his left Euroscepticism. A victory for common sense.</p>	<p>Corbyn retains criticisms of the free-market bias of the EU, but will stay inside to fight for his vision of a social Europe that boosts workers' rights.</p>

18	29 Sep	<p>Corbyn gives his first speech as leader to a Labour Party conference. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/zs7d4at">www.tinyurl.com/zs7d4at</a></p>	<p>Corbyn plagiarised parts of his speech from a former political adviser, Richard Heller. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/htgml9r">www.tinyurl.com/htgml9r</a></p> <p>Corbyn's emphasis on his own socialism will not appeal to the wider electorate.</p>	<p>Heller was happy for Corbyn to use his words — and Heller's background attacking the hard left shows that Corbyn is open-minded. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pzrshca">www.tinyurl.com/pzrshca</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/zh2vpks">www.tinyurl.com/zh2vpks</a></p> <p>If Bernie Sanders can compete so well for the presidential nomination in the USA, then why the taboo about socialism? <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/h37jhmw">www.tinyurl.com/h37jhmw</a></p>
19	30 Sep	<p>Corbyn announces that he would not permit the use of nuclear weapons as prime minister. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pl3v3h5">www.tinyurl.com/pl3v3h5</a></p>	<p>This undermines the UK's nuclear deterrent and bolsters Cameron's message that Corbyn is 'a threat to national security'. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/nkmfjqk">www.tinyurl.com/nkmfjqk</a></p> <p>Much of the shadow cabinet and PLP cannot get behind a unilateralist policy that proved so disastrous in the 1980s. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/zn3zuyg">www.tinyurl.com/zn3zuyg</a></p>	<p>The cost of renewing the Trident nuclear submarine fleet could be £167 billion, yet many military leaders question its usefulness. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/no7f5jc">www.tinyurl.com/no7f5jc</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hgovsyo">www.tinyurl.com/hgovsyo</a></p> <p>The SNP won 56 out of 59 Scottish seats with an anti-Trident policy.</p>
27	8 Oct	<p>Labour now has 370,658 members — the highest figure since 1997.</p> <p>Corbyn supporters set up a campaign group called Momentum. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/jmfg7jb">www.tinyurl.com/jmfg7jb</a></p>	<p>This is encouraging, but it does include some high-profile attempts at 'entryism' by far left groups. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pdm6jee">www.tinyurl.com/pdm6jee</a></p> <p>Momentum is designed to be a party within a party aimed at harassing and deselecting moderate MPs. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/nkfzqr8">www.tinyurl.com/nkfzqr8</a></p>	<p>Party membership has doubled since the 2015 election. They have been inspired to do so by Corbyn. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/olaccece">www.tinyurl.com/olaccece</a></p> <p>Momentum aims to harness the enthusiasm of Corbyn's leadership election. It will not focus on deselecting MPs but issues like voter registration. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/gn2sklv">www.tinyurl.com/gn2sklv</a></p>
32	13 Oct	<p>Justice Minister Michael Gove cancels a £5.9m contract to help run prisons in Saudi Arabia, a deal criticised in Corbyn's conference speech.</p>	<p>This is a welcome change, but pressure on issues such as this need to be balanced against the UK's international alliances (Saudi is an important oil-producing regional power) and potential impacts on UK jobs.</p>	<p>The UK cannot claim to have an ethical foreign policy while supporting governments who abuse human rights.</p>
47	28 Oct	<p>A YouGov poll shows a 20% negative rating for Corbyn.</p>	<p>Corbyn is the first opposition leader in history (going back 6 decades) to begin with negative</p>	<p>Corbyn has faced disproportionately negative media coverage — it will take time to</p>

		<a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/goemjkg">www.tinyurl.com/goemjkg</a>	poll ratings. For these to have slumped further risks making him a liability.	counter that. The public can be won around by 2020. And polls are unreliable — an Ipsos Mori poll gives Corbyn a better approval rating than Cameron. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/nmdp59o">www.tinyurl.com/nmdp59o</a>
56	6 Nov	Corbyn's advisor, Andrew Fisher, is suspended from the party for supporting a Class War candidate in tweets prior to the election.	Fisher is part of a far-left faction promoted under Corbyn that risks bringing the party into disrepute. There was sufficient evidence for him to be expelled, but pressure was apparently brought to bear on the investigation. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/gnxykgy">www.tinyurl.com/gnxykgy</a>	The Labour right wing is hardly above factions, as groups such as Progress and others show. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hpl7t73">www.tinyurl.com/hpl7t73</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/z5omolr">www.tinyurl.com/z5omolr</a>
63	13 Nov	Corbyn is criticised for saying that 'it would have been better' if ISIS terrorist Mohamed Emwazi ('Jihadi John') had been put on trial rather than killed in an air strike.	This shows Corbyn to be naïve on the practicalities of foreign affairs. Without ground troops in Syria (which he opposes) arrest was not a realistic prospect. His pacifism has again exposed the party to ridicule. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/j42okfp">www.tinyurl.com/j42okfp</a>	Targeted killings are of questionable legality under international law. They risk exacerbating the causes of terrorism. Some of Emwazi's victims' families spoke out against what they saw as a revenge killing. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/jzau3p4">www.tinyurl.com/jzau3p4</a>
66	16 Nov	Corbyn criticises the policy of 'shoot to kill'.	This was very insensitive so soon after the Paris terrorist attacks. He failed to relate to popular revulsion at the atrocities. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/oghsboy">www.tinyurl.com/oghsboy</a>	Policy should not be driven by raw emotion. The fatal shooting of Jean Paul de Menezes so soon after 7/7 should serve as a warning. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/z2onkac">www.tinyurl.com/z2onkac</a>
75	25 Nov	Chancellor George Osborne retreats from planned tax credits cuts in his Autumn statement.	This is a welcome victory that involved a co-ordinated effort across the party in both Houses. It shows the benefit of party unity. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/nvr2n2t">www.tinyurl.com/nvr2n2t</a>	This shows the benefits of opposing cuts, rather than abstaining, as Labour MPs were told to in July over the welfare bill. Corbyn defied the whip then. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pvenwu6">www.tinyurl.com/pvenwu6</a>
77	27 Nov	Two senior Labour MPs call for Corbyn's resignation.  The firefighters' union FBU reaffiliates to the Labour Party.	His weak leadership is becoming unsustainable.  The FBU is welcome but Labour needs to retain a credible distance from the unions.	The re-energisation of Labour's activist base, alongside the revival of support from the trade unions, show that it is beginning to represent working-class people again. That is more important than the gripes of a couple of ex-ministers. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/z5p2gud">www.tinyurl.com/z5p2gud</a>

82	2 Dec	Corbyn opposes government plans to launch air strikes on Syria but allows a free vote among his party. 66 Labour MPs vote in favour. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/p4yaqle">www.tinyurl.com/p4yaqle</a>	In the run-up to the vote Corbyn encouraged the intimidation of Labour MPs considering voting for air strikes. He was only forced to accept a free vote due to the strength of PLP feeling. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hj9o8ck">www.tinyurl.com/hj9o8ck</a>	Corbyn condemns any bullying, but encouraging constituents to lobby their MPs is part of the democratic process. It is almost unheard of to have a free vote on a matter of war and peace. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/zt7l93m">www.tinyurl.com/zt7l93m</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hzryb8r">www.tinyurl.com/hzryb8r</a>
83	3 Dec	Labour wins a convincing victory in the Oldham West by-election, increasing its share of the vote.	Corbyn only visited the constituency once during the campaign due to his preoccupation with Syria. This was a local vote for a local candidate. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/pgul3dp">www.tinyurl.com/pgul3dp</a>	There were dire predictions ahead of the election, and critics were lining up to blame Corbyn if Labour did badly. For the sake of consistency, they should recognise his role in the success. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/j45y2ex">www.tinyurl.com/j45y2ex</a> <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/jtj458p">www.tinyurl.com/jtj458p</a>
91	11 Dec	Corbyn attends a fundraising dinner for the Stop the War Coalition.	Since the Iraq War the Stop the War Coalition has been hijacked by the far left. Corbyn's continued association with it undermines the need to speak to Middle England. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/mk3n4nb">www.tinyurl.com/mk3n4nb</a>	Corbyn says that 'People in the country that oppose wars and want to see a peaceful future shouldn't be condemned or denigrated.' It will always be possible to cherry-pick quotes from broad organisations — it does not delegitimise the entire organisation. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/q3wn8oh">www.tinyurl.com/q3wn8oh</a>
100	20 Dec	First Secretary Angela Eagle is asked if Corbyn will still be leader in 2020. 'We have our leader' is her response.	This underwhelming endorsement represents the concerns of the wider membership. An opinion poll published shows that 57% of likely voters, including 30% of Labour supporters, did not expect Corbyn to be leader in 2020. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/hw8oyqp">www.tinyurl.com/hw8oyqp</a>	This uncertainty is largely generated by disloyal MPs who won't recognise Corbyn's overwhelming mandate from the membership. If Corbyn doesn't succeed they will be to blame. <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/jnl3w8r">www.tinyurl.com/jnl3w8r</a>

## Task

What do you think his first 100 days suggest about Corbyn's potential for victory in 2020? As well as the events discussed above, consider the possible impacts of upcoming events such as the May local and devolved assembly elections, the EU referendum, changes to electoral boundaries and the Tory leadership election.

If you believe that Corbyn can win, write a victory speech to be made outside 10 Downing Street in 2020. Identify the factors behind his success. Try to include vocabulary such as solidarity, participation, internationalism, mandate and democratic socialism.

If you believe that Corbyn is likely to lose, write an *Observer* editorial for either after the election or Corbyn's resignation, whichever is sooner. The *Observer* is a social democratic/liberal paper that holds many of the criticisms of Corbyn described above ([www.tinyurl.com/hddwwz8](http://www.tinyurl.com/hddwwz8)). Try to include vocabulary such as dogmatic, unilateralism, atavistic (looking to the past), triangulation, floating voters.

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