

By James Griffiths, CNN/Sep 22, 2017

# What is a ‘Dotard’?

**What exactly** is a 'dotard'? North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had some choice words for US President Donald Trump Friday (22), accusing the American leader of "mentally deranged behaviour."

But it was Kim's use of the term "dotard," that has set the internet alight. While not widely used today, the insult is centuries old, appearing in medieval literature from the ninth century.

Searches for the term have spiked in the wake of Kim's address, according to dictionary Merriam-Webster, which defines the term as referring to "a state or period of senile decay marked by decline of mental poise."

Kim, of course, did not say the word - he was speaking in Korean. "Dotard" was the official English translation provided by state news agency KCNA for the Korean "neulg-dali-michigwang-i", which literally translates as "old lunatic."

Later in the KCNA translation of Kim's address, the North Korean leader advises Trump to "exercise prudence in selecting words," something the news agency seems to have taken to heart.

"Action is the best option in treating the dotard who, hard of hearing, is uttering only what he wants to say," was the full translation given of Kim's quote.

North Korea has a history of using creative language to express loathing for its enemies.

While the term dotard is not familiar to most English speakers today, as evidenced by the flurry of people searching for definitions of it, it has a prestigious literary history.

According to Merriam Webster, dotard comes from the Middle English word "doten" ("to dote"), and "initially had the meaning of 'imbecile' when it began being used in the 14th century."

In "Shakespeare's Insults: A Pragmatic Dictionary," Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin gives several examples of the playwright's fondness for the term. In "Taming of the Shrew," Baptista, tricked by his children and frustrated with Vincentio, commands "Away with the dotard; to jail with him."

Leonato defends himself against Claudio in "Much Ado About Nothing," telling the young soldier: "Tush, tush, man, never fleer and jest at me. I speak not like a dotard nor a fool."

Reflecting its fall from common usage, according to SparkNotes, in modern versions of both texts the term becomes "doddering old fool."

-CNN



An old man rides a bike near banners supporting the referendum for independence of Kurdistan in Erbil, Iraq, yesterday (24)

- REUTERS/Alaa Al-Marjani

By James M. Dorsey

# Towards Kurdish Independence?

**If Myanmar's** Rohingya are the 21st century's rallying cry of the Muslim world, the Kurds could be one of its major fault lines.

Disputes over territory, power and resources between and among Sunni Muslims, Shiites and Kurds fuelled the rise of ISIS in Iraq.

It's no real surprise that the Kurdish issue is now resurfacing with ISIS's presumed demise.

"All the writing is on the wall that there will be another ISIS," said former Iraqi foreign minister and Kurdish politician Hoshiyar Zebari, referring to the group by another of its acronyms.

The initial flash in the pan threatens to be the fact that Iraqi Kurds are certain to vote for independence in a unilateral referendum scheduled for today (25)

If the independence issue did not provide enough explosives in and of itself, the Kurds' insistence on including in the referendum the ethnically mixed, oil-rich city of Kirkuk and adjacent areas further fuelled the fire.

The referendum and the dispute over Kirkuk reopen the question of what Iraqi Kurdistan's borders are even if the Kurds opt not to act immediately on a vote for independence and to remain part of an Iraqi federation for the time being.

The issue could blow a further hole into Iraq's already fragile existence as a united nation state. Iraqi President Haider al-Abadi has denounced the referendum.

His efforts to persuade the Iraqi parliament to fire Kirkuk governor Najmaldin Karim for

backing the poll as well as for calls for parliament to withdraw confidence in Iraqi President Fuad Masum and sack ministers and other senior officials of Kurdish descent could push the Kurds over the edge.

In the latest development, Iraq's top court ordered the suspension of the planned referendum. The Supreme Court ruled last Monday (18) calling for all preparations for today's vote to be halted.

Iraqi military officials as well as the Iranian-backed Shiite militias that are aligned with the military have vowed to prevent the referendum from being held in Kirkuk.

"Kirkuk belongs to Iraq. We would by no means give up on Kirkuk even if this were to cause major bloodshed," said Ayoub Faleh aka Abu Azrael, the commander of Imam Ali Division, an Iran-backed Iraqi Shiite militia.

A possible fight may not be contained to Kirkuk. Kurdish and Iraqi government forces vie for control of areas from which ISIS has been driven out stretch westwards along the length of northern Iraq.

Al-Abadi warned that he would intervene militarily if the referendum, which he described as unconstitutional, provoked violence.

Add to that, the ganging up on the Kurds by Iran, Turkey and the United States. The US backs the Iraqi government even if it put Kurdistan on course towards independence when it allowed the autonomous enclave

to emerge under a protective no-fly zone that kept the forces of Saddam Hussein at bay.

Breaking with the United States and its Arab allies, Israel has endorsed Kurdish independence.

Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan and Iranian Al Quds force commander Qassem Soleimani have warned the Kurds on visits to Iraqi Kurdistan to back away from the referendum. Iran has threatened to close its borders with the region.

Describing the referendum as "a matter of national security," Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said that "no one should have doubt that we will take all the necessary steps in this matter."

Turkey fears that Kurdish independence would spur secessionist aspirations among its own Kurds, who account for up to 20% of its population and that an independent Kurdistan would harbour Turkish Kurdish insurgents already operating from the region.

Al-Abadi alluded to possible Turkish and/or Iranian military intervention to prevent the emergence of an independent Kurdistan by suggesting that the referendum would be:

"a public invitation to the countries in the region to violate Iraqi borders... The Turks are very angry about it because they have a large Kurdish population inside Turkey and they feel that their national security is threatened because it is a huge problem for them. And, of course, the Iranians are on the

same line." The Kurdish quest for some form of self-rule is likely to manifest itself in Syria too. The United States backs a Syrian Kurdish militia aligned with Turkish Kurdish militants in its fight against ISIS. The militia that prides itself on its women fighters is among the forces besieging the ISIS capital of Raqqa.

The Kurds are hoping that an end to the war in Syria will leave them with an Iraq-style autonomous region on the Turkish border – an aspiration that Turkey, like in Iraq, vehemently opposes.

The target of strikes by the Turkish air force, the Kurds hope to benefit from the force's shortage of pilots because of mass purges in the wake of last year's failed coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The air force last month ordered all former fighter pilots flying for Turkish airlines to report for service.

The Kurds may provide the first flashpoint for another round of volatility and violence, but they are not the only ones. Nor are sectarian and other ethnic divisions that are likely to wrack Iraq and Syria once the current round of fighting subsides.

*-Based in Singapore, James M. Dorsey is a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies and an award-winning journalist. This article was originally featured on theglobalist.com*

By Stephen Castle

# Corbyn's stunning rise to potential new leader

**LONDON** — It is always satisfying to prove your doubters wrong and, in the case of Jeremy Corbyn, the left-wing leader of Britain's opposition Labour Party, there were an awful lot of them.

Written off as a hapless loser 12 months ago at his last party conference, Corbyn can expect a triumphant reception at this year's event, which began yesterday (24)

Last year, he was widely depicted as an unreconstructed Marxist and a political dinosaur, destined to lead Labour to electoral extinction. Now, Corbyn is seen, even by some opponents, as a prime minister in waiting — an astonishing transformation for a political veteran who spent decades on the fringes of British politics.

At 68, Corbyn is in many ways a British version of Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., except further left, to the point of superannuation, many once believed. In June, though, he exceeded expectations with a clever general election campaign that revealed him to be a personable, if not downright charming, candidate.

His unexpected ability to connect with voters, particularly young ones, coupled with a building opposition to Britain's decision to leave the European Union, or Brexit, helped him deprive Prime Minister Theresa May of the landslide victory she had expected when calling the vote. With that also went her parliamentary majority, and her authority over an increasingly fractious Conservative Party.

So, not surprisingly, Corbyn has a smile on his famously bearded face these days.

"He'd been mouldering away in musty old rooms for 20 or 30 years, talking to very small audiences," said Steven Fielding, a professor of political history at Nottingham University. "And now this is someone who could be the next prime minister, and whose supporters think he would introduce the most transformative program since 1945."

"Yes, he's going to be enjoying that," he added.

While Corbyn's journey from zero to hero has been remarkable, Fielding says, the party conference in Brighton, England, will bring a new question into focus: whether Labour can shift from a defensive strategy primarily intended to keep control of his party to an offensive one that could take Labour to power.

To do so, Corbyn may need to evolve from the leader of an insurgent left-wing social movement to the head of a party that can garner broad support.

Since his election triumph, there has been an upturn in his image as a down-to-earth politician who rides a bike, makes his own jam and is a multiple winner of Parliament's beard of the year competition. When he spoke at the Glastonbury rock festival this summer, the young people in the crowd chanted his name.

While many of Britain's predominantly right-wing newspapers remain hostile to Corbyn's agenda, their tone has changed. Where the news media once pointed to his failure to sing the national anthem as evidence of his unsuitability for high office, recent articles have debated things like whether Corbyn is turning from vegetarianism to veganism (apparently he is not, though he is eating more vegan food).

The news media "were so amazed that the election did not turn out in the way they expected, and that Corbyn did better than predicted, Fielding said, "that they have been slightly falling over themselves" and into a "perspective which has gone slightly beyond reality."

After all, Corbyn did not win the election, even when up against an opponent, May, who proved to be one of the worst top-level campaigners in years.

To win a general election, he will have to reach out to new voters, and "whether he is in a position to go and win a majority in Parliament is an open question," said Mark Wickham-Jones, professor of political science at the University of Bristol. "We know that the party can mobilize at election time, but whether that sense of Labour as a social movement can become a sense of Labour as a structured political party, we don't know."

Corbyn is a lifelong critic of the European Union who nevertheless campaigned last year for Britain to remain in the bloc. But he did so without enthusiasm, prompting some pro-Europeans to blame him for the vote to leave.

Labour's paradox is that, while most of its voters and its young backers wanted to remain in the Union, many working-class supporters in the party's heartlands deserted it, attracted to the "Leave" campaign's anti-immigration rhetoric.

Corbyn managed to appeal to both sides in the general election by keeping his Brexit policy fuzzy. With negotiations on withdrawal underway, Labour argues that it has accepted the outcome of the referendum but wants to retain close economic ties to the European Union to protect jobs.

How this might be achieved, while restricting the free movement of European workers, as Labour has hinted it would do, has not been explained.

Corbyn seems to be listening to his ally Len McCluskey, general secretary of the powerful union Unite, who advocates Britain remaining in the bloc's single market and customs union.

So Labour is sticking with "constructive ambiguity," opposing May's negotiating strategy, staying vague about what it would do instead, and planning to blame the Conservatives if the outcome is a mess.

So far, that strategy seems to be going to plan, as members of May's Cabinet continue to fight a vicious internal battle over Brexit and to position themselves to succeed her.

In fact, it is working so well that William Hague, a former leader of the Conservative Party who accused Corbyn last year of taking arguments "back to the 1980s," recently issued a unity plea to warring colleagues.

If they continue as now, Hague said, there will be little point in Conservatives discussing who is going to lead them, "because Jeremy Corbyn will be prime minister, sitting in Number 10."

- New York Times News Service

By Grant Duncan

# New Zealand votes for conservatism and the status quo

**After a dramatic** election campaign that looked promising for the centre-left, New Zealand's voters have opted instead for conservatism.

Special votes are yet to be counted, and coalition negotiations yet to commence. But New Zealanders have opened the way for the centre-right National Party's fourth consecutive term in office. National's provisional election night result of 46% is only slightly down from its 47% in 2014.

The incumbent Prime Minister, Bill English, was jubilant on election night. His speech was as close as he could get to a victory speech. English said:

"We will begin discussions with New Zealand First in finding common ground and most importantly forming the kind of government that will allow New Zealand to get on with the success."

NZ First won 7.5% of the votes and now holds the balance of power.

Two of the minor parties that had formerly supported the National-led government on confidence and supply, the United Future and Maori parties, failed to gain any seats. And the ACT Party, which supports National, was returned with one electorate seat only.

The leader of the largest opposition party, Labour's Jacinda Ardern, did not concede defeat on election night, but her chances of forming a government with the centrist NZ First Party and the Greens are much slimmer. The combined seats of

those three parties give a majority of only one. Once special votes are counted, the final official tallies may take a seat away from National and see the Greens gain one, but that will not substantially alter the outcome.

Nonetheless, Ardern can claim a victory of sorts, as she has steered her party out of the doldrums, from 25% in the 2014 election to 35.8% this time.

The "Jacinda effect" was the dominant theme of the election campaign, drawing considerable international attention.

She was chosen to lead the Labour Party just seven weeks before the election, when Labour was declining in opinion polls. She drew an enthusiastic following and dramatically boosted her party's polling, but not enough to claim victory on the night.

National's attacks on Labour's fiscal and taxation plans seem to have worked, even though they resorted to misrepresentation. A clever reframing of Labour's slogan "Let's do this!" to "Let's tax this!" seems to have done the trick, dissuading enough potential swing voters.

On the day before polling day, rolling averages of public opinion polls showed National was likely to lead the next government, at around 44.5%. Labour had forged ahead of National in some earlier opinion polls, but was down to 37.7%. So, the election night result was better for National than polls had been

predicting. Polling companies will be asking why their pre-electoral surveys tended to favour Labour, compared with election results.

New Zealanders have gone for the safe and conservative option. English is a practising Catholic and father of six. His leadership style is uncharismatic, but steady. He lacks the personal popularity and charm of his predecessor, John Key, who handed over the reins of power to English in December 2016.

English will take this election result as a mandate for his party's program. It is not clear yet, however, what policy or office-holding concessions he will have to make to Winston Peters, the veteran leader of NZ First. If English has to sack some of his own party colleagues from the cabinet in order to accommodate NZ First, it is bound to cause internal resentment.

A key question for many western democracies has been "Why is the Left losing?" Ardern was seen as the "brightest hope for the centre-Left".

Labour's rise has been partly at the expense of the Greens, who have fallen from 10.7% in 2014 to 5.9% this time – although special votes will probably give the Greens a boost. The combined Labour–Green vote of 41.7% is well short of National's 46%.

Although the National Party, after nine years in office, was vulnerable to attacks over problems in housing, health,

education and the environment, this has not sufficed to cause a significant swing for change.

Instead of precipitating party-political fragmentation, this election has shifted back towards two-party politics. Both the Greens and NZ First have declined in support. The total National-plus-Labour party vote of 81.8% is the highest it has been under the proportional representation system in place since 1996.

Since 2008, the National-led government avoided austerity policies, and gradually (almost imperceptibly) shuffled to the left, dealing reluctantly with issues that were normally on Labour's territory. The centre of New Zealand politics has shifted leftwards, with a greater acceptance of the role of the state. The free-market fundamentalism of the radical neoliberal years of 1984–96 is now on the fringes.

Nonetheless, inequality and poverty are persistent problems, and New Zealanders are well aware of this. Labour has been unable to take advantage of these significant social issues and to convince enough voters to back their messages about hope and change.

*-Grant Duncan is an Associate Professor for the School of People, Environment and Planning, Massey, New Zealand and this article was originally featured on theconversation.com*