

Can Jeremy Corbyn Stem the Tide of Neoliberalism and Militarism?

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

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Jeremy Corbyn has won the British Labour Party's leadership election by a landslide. Corbyn comes from the left of the party, a party that over the past 30 years has shifted further to the right whereby it has become regarded as 'Tory-light' – a slightly watered down version of the Conservative Party. Labour has signed up to 'austerity', neoliberalism, US-led wars of imperialism and has ditched any commitment to public ownership of key sectors of the economy.

Tony Blair helped create 'New Labour', which fully embraced privatisation, deregulation and anti-trade union legislation: a toothless Labour Party that offered no real opposition to neoliberalism.

It would be naïve to think that Corbyn can reset British politics. Not all within the party support him, and the corporate media and British Establishment will set out to smear and ridicule him at every turn. Politics is often about compromise and, despite his admirable principles, we could see Corbyn ending up disappointing many of his supporters.

However, having set out this proviso, Jeremy Corbyn appears to have struck a nerve with large sections of the electorate. He stands on an anti-war and anti-austerity platform, is committed to investing in the public sector, wants to get rid of Britain's nuclear weapons and says he wants to renationalise profiteering public sector utilities. He wants a fairer and more equal Britain. In reality. All this could amount to is a milder, gentler form of capitalism.

The right-wing establishment paints this as harebrained leftist radicalism. That such a relatively benign political platform would provoke this type of reaction shows how far to the right British politics have become. Neoliberal extremism has come to be regarded as being the centre ground of politics, certainly within the ranks of senior politicians and commentators belonging to the corporate media.

What Corbyn seeks is in many ways no different to many Labour leaders from previous generations. And what he seems to be advocating is not a type of full-blooded socialism that seeks to replace capitalism and take into public ownership the commanding heights of the economy. His aims are in some respects quite moderate.

After three decades of spiralling inequality, the financialisation of the economy, the destruction of manufacturing industry, the endless signing up to US-led wars and an overall attack on ordinary people's standard of living, Corbyn has much to do even if some kind of shift away from the extremism of neoliberalism is to be achieved.

Since Thatcherism, all three main parties in Britain have been pro-big business and aligned with the neoliberal economic agenda set by the financial cartel based in the City of London

and on Wall Street and by the major transnational corporations.

During the last general election that took place earlier this year, the likes of Chatham House, Centre for Policy Studies, Foreign Policy Centre, Reform, Institute of Economic Affairs and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (most of which the British public have never heard of) had already helped determine the pro-corporate and generally pro-Washington policies that the parties would sell to the public. [Pressure tactics](#) at the top level of politics, massively funded [lobbying groups and the revolving door](#) between private corporations and the machinery of state also helped shape the policy agenda.

As if to underline this, in 2012 Labour MP [Austin Mitchell described](#) the UK's big four accountancy firms as being "more powerful than government." He said the companies' financial success allows them privileged access to government policy makers. Of course, similar sentiments concerning 'privileged access' could also be forwarded about many other sectors, not least the [arms industry](#) and global agritech companies which have been [working hand in glove](#) with government to force GMOs into the UK despite most people who hold a view on the matter [not wanting them](#).

The impact and power of [think tanks, lobbying and cronyism](#) meant that during the 2015 general election campaign the major parties merely provided the illusion of choice and democracy to a public sold to them by a [toothless and supine](#) corporate media. The upshot is that the main parties have to date all accepted economic neoliberalism and all that it has entailed: weak or non-existent trade unions, an ideological assault on the public sector, the offshoring of manufacturing, deregulation, privatisation and an economy dominated by financial services.

In Britain, long gone are most of the relatively well-paid manufacturing jobs that helped build and sustain the economy. The country has witnessed the imposition of a low taxation regime, underinvestment in the public sector, low-paid and insecure 'service sector' jobs (no-contract work, macjobs, call centre jobs – much of which soon went abroad), a real estate bubble, credit card debt and student debt, which all helped to keep the economy afloat and maintain demand during the so-called boom years under Tony Blair. Levels of public debt spiralled, personal debt became unsustainable and the deregulated financial sector demanded the public must write down its own gambling debts.

The economy is now based on (held to ransom by) a banking and finance-sector cartel that specialises in [rigging markets](#), debt creation, [money laundering](#) and salting away profits in various City of London satellite tax havens and beyond. The banking industry applies huge pressure on governments and has [significant influence](#) over policies to ensure things remain this way.

Absent from mainstream political discourse has been any talk about bringing the railway and energy and water facilities back into public ownership. Instead, privatisation is accepted as a given as massive profits continue to be raked in as the public forks out for private-sector [subsidies](#) and the increasingly costly 'services' provided. There is no talk of nationalising the major banks or even properly regulating or taxing them (and other large multinationals) to gain access to funds that could build decent infrastructure for the public benefit.

Nothing is ever mentioned about why or how the top one percent in the UK increased their

wealth substantially [in 2008 alone](#) when the economic crisis hit. Little is said about why levels of inequality have [sky rocketed over the past three decades](#).

When manufacturing industry was decimated (along with the union movement) and offshored, people were told that finance was to be the backbone of the 'new' economy. And to be sure it has become the backbone, a weak one based on bubbles, derivatives trading, speculation and all manner of dodgy transactions and practices. Margaret Thatcher in the eighties handed the economy to bankers and transnational corporations and they have never looked back. It was similar in the US.

Now Britain stands shoulder to shoulder with Washington's militaristic agenda as the US desperately seeks to maintain global hegemony – not by rejecting the financialisation of its economy, rebuilding a manufacturing base with decent jobs and thus boosting consumer demand or ensuring the state takes responsibility for developing infrastructure to improve people's quality of life – but by attacking Russia and China which are doing some of those very things and as a result are rising to challenge the US as the dominant global economic power.

The 2015 general election campaign not for a minute concerned itself with the tax-evading corporate dole-scrounging super rich, the neoliberal agenda they have forced on people and their pushing for policies that would guarantee further plunder, most notably the [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership](#) (TTIP).

As an individual, Jeremy Corbyn has at least succeeded in opening up a debate about some of the issues outlined above, something that has for too long been absent within mainstream politics. Given the nature of those issues, however, and the deeply entrenched power of pro-Washington think tanks, global capital and the British Establishment, which despises anything or anyone with even a moderate leftist agenda, it would be very easy to get carried away with Corbyn's victory and inflate what he could realistically be expected to achieve.

It could take a decade to have a tangible impact on rolling back the corrupt policies and their outcomes that took three decades to bring about. And, even then, this assumes we would be operating on a level playing field – left-leaning politicians in Britain have always faced hostility from the Establishment, not least [the intelligence agencies](#).

Jeremy Corbyn seems to be a credible alternative to the current crop of mainstream politicians, not just because of what he says but because of the reactions he elicits from this bunch of discredited pro-austerity, pro-war, pro City of London/Wall Street, union-bashing, welfare cutting handmaidens to the rich that have ruined the economy and have helped to devastate countries across the globe with their penchant for militarism. If they are attacking Corbyn, he must be doing something right.

But these are the types of people who have been running Britain for 35 years. They tell the public that their policies are correct even when they have a devastating impact on ordinary people. And how do they sell this to the public? By used the tired mantra that 'there is no alternative'. There is no alternative to illegal wars, selling jobs to the lowest bidder abroad, bowing to global capital, being held ransom to by rigged markets and accepting the corporate hijack of politics, ultimately through the TTIP. 'There is no alternative' – the last refuge of the looters, liars and war mongers who will try to make us believe that people like Corbyn will lead Britain towards disaster simply because he actually does offer at least some

realistic alternative policies.

The people who run Britain are pushing ordinary folk into a race to the bottom. Reduced welfare, weak or no unions, poor wages, low-level jobs, increasing automation – they call this having a ‘flexible workforce’. What they really mean is that in order to stop jobs going to India or elsewhere, workers in Britain should be blackmailed to compete with for example Indian workers, many of whom earn little, work long hours often in poor conditions, have few benefits or rights and are as ‘flexible’ as they come. This is the free movement of capital or ‘globalisation’ they cherish so much and this is the type of ‘prosperity’ the neoliberal apologists offer ordinary people under the guise of ‘austerity’. Doublespeak reigns supreme.

Michael Gove, the justice secretary, and PM David Cameron have both issued warnings that Jeremy Corbyn poses a risk to national security and the economy. Along with Gove and Cameron, the defence secretary Michael Fallon epitomises the pro-neoliberal propaganda that people in the UK have become tired of. In response to Corbyn’s victory, he said:

Labour are now a serious risk to our nation’s security, our economy’s security and your family’s security. Whether it’s weakening our defences, raising taxes on jobs and earnings, racking up more debt and welfare or driving up the cost of living by printing money – Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party will hurt working people.

Here’s something for Gove, Cameron and Fallon to consider. When your policies have already jeopardized national security by inflicting terror on other countries; when you have already sold the economy to the lowest bidder and have attacked welfare, unions and livelihoods; when you have allowed massive levels of tax evasion/avoidance; when you and your neoliberal policies have allowed national and personal debt to spiral; when you have driven up the cost of living by handing over public assets to profiteering cartels; when you have flattered away taxpayers money to banks; when you allowed the richest 1,000 people in the UK to increase their wealth by 50% in 2009 alone while you impose ‘austerity’ on everyone else – then what else can you offer but to roll out a good old dose of fear mongering about Corbyn simply because you have no actual argument?

Corbyn does not wish to sign up to more US wars that have led to well over a million deaths. People like Fallon talk about protecting Britain and boosting national security by standing shoulder to shoulder with Washington’s bogus ‘war on terror’ and the destruction of sovereign states like Iraq, Syria and Libya. They do of course sell this to the public in terms of humanitarianism, rooting out terror or securing the safety of the nation. Fallon’s propaganda only works as long as folk remain ignorant and apathetic. It is plain for anyone to see the reasons for British militarism if they would only take the time to look up the Project for a New American Century or the ‘Wolfowitz Doctrine’ on the web. The blinkers soon become removed as the hoax of fighting terror or bombing people into oblivion is laid bare.

Fallon, Cameron et al are playing a dangerous game by hanging onto Washington’s coat tails. For instance, they will continue to try to fool the public about ‘Russian aggression’ because they have signed up to Washington’s plan to undermine and destroy Russia. They will never mention that the US instigated a coup on Russia’s doorstep in Ukraine. No, in the twisted world of doublespeak that comes easy to unprincipled politicians like Cameron, Fallon and others, we must focus on non-existent Russian aggression. A multi-polar world

has no place in the US's its agenda of unilateralism.

Fallon says Corbyn is a danger. What bigger danger can there be when the likes of Fallon is pushing the world towards major nuclear conflict by standing shoulder to shoulder with [US foreign policy aimed at Russia](#) in Syria and Ukraine?

The pro-Washington brigade of senior politicians in Britain are following the US into a dead end. The US economy is bankrupt. There is only jobless growth, if there is any growth at all. Stock market bubbles – like real estate bubbles, like creating money out of thin air, like rentier capitalism that produces nothing but only extracts royalties or interest, like [treasury bond imperialism](#) which has allowed the US to live beyond its means at the expense of other nations – is ultimately a dead end for US 'capitalism'. It is unproductive and parasitic.

Demand is flat and will remain flat because consumers are in debt and their wages are stagnant or falling. The biggest contributor to US GDP is the military-industrial complex – the arms companies, the military, the surveillance agencies, the logistics corporations, etc. The US can keep on printing dollars and extracting dollars from other nations via offering its treasury bonds.

But the dollar is in decline. Less countries need it for trade and the less that it is required, the less it has a value, the less the US can continue to function as a viable economic entity. Its only response is a military one to prevent countries like Russia and China from moving off the dollar and encouraging others to do so, especially in the energy field where the petro-dollar system has been the backbone of US supremacy (the backdrop to the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere are partly about [pipelines, control of oil and gas and retaining the dollar as the vehicle of energy trade](#)).

Britain hangs onto Washington's desperate attempt to enforce dollar supremacy. In the absence of vibrant, productive economies, militarism is all that remains in order to attack other countries and prevent them from rising (currency wars, sanctions or other means appear not to have had the desired outcome, as least as far as Russia is concerned). Imperialist wars, the anti-Russia/China propaganda we witness and the 'refugee crisis' [are all connected](#) and can ultimately be traced back to the failing economies of the US and Britain whose rich have bankrupted them for personal gain. And Corbyn recognises this.

To avoid more war abroad and more austerity at home, Britain must reinvigorate its own economy and become a productive entity again. The British left fought against the financialisation of the economy in the eighties under Thatcherism. Coming from the left of the Labour Party, it might be easy to argue that Corbyn represents a leftover from a bygone era. With the breaking of much of the union movement in the eighties and Blair having helped to destroy Labour as a credible (potential) leftist party, he might be regarded as too little too late.

But at 66, Corbyn has tapped into deeply held sentiments that exist across all age groups: that something is fundamentally wrong in Britain and needs addressing. The fact he is appealing to young people suggests Corbyn might not be the final setting of the sun from a bygone era but hopefully the beginning of a dawn.

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Articles by: [Colin Todhunter](#)

About the author:

Colin Todhunter is an extensively published independent writer and former social policy researcher. Originally from the UK, he has spent many years in India. His website is www.colintodhunter.com
https://twitter.com/colin_todhunter

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