

Jeremy Corbyn's Twitter Storm: The UK Election and the End of the Media Empire

If you were not following the UK election on Twitter, you would never have known about Corbyn's stunningly effective campaign, unreported by a grossly out of touch mainstream media, writes Professor Jane Goodall.

By [Prof. Jane Goodall](#)

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Following the shock British election result, the pundits are out in force.

They talk about the youth vote and mention "austerity" as if that were some kind of theorem.

I'm gobsmacked. Not at the election result – that didn't surprise me at all – but at the spectacle of so many self-styled "experts" so utterly out of touch with reality.

I punch the off button on the radio and return to the iPad.

This appears on my twitter feed:

'I volunteer at a food bank I work as a welfare rights officer I could tell you about people breaking down suicides and sheer fucking misery.'

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— LaurenMarie (@JOJO774) [June 10, 2017](#)

If you want to understand the UK election result, try this for starters: for the past seven years, the British have been living under truly terrible government. Austerity is rife — and real. Rates of homelessness have doubled, wages are so low that people in full-time work are using food banks, the [National Health Service](#) (NHS) is in crisis, disability pensions have been slashed, police and emergency services cut by nearly 20%.

And the upshot of all these desperate measures to "rescue" the economy is that the [national debt has gone up by £555 billion](#) (AU\$956.17 billion), or 53%, since the [Tories](#) came to power. So now they want to sell off NHS buildings, cut the winter fuel allowance for pensioners, dispense with safeguards on pension levels and add a further 6% to the interest on student loans. You'd vote for these guys? Seriously?

The second thing you need to understand about the UK election is that the [Corbyn-led Labour Party](#) ran a stunningly effective campaign. But you wouldn't know this from reading

any of the major newspapers in Britain, or from watching the BBC. They simply didn't report it.

What media hid from you: a small flavour of what [#JeremyCorbyn](#) rallies looked like. 1000s of supporters [#Panorama](#) [@jeremycorbyn](#) [@UKLabour](#) [pic.twitter.com/mxl6lRyraW](#)

— Nusrat Latif (@nusratmedicine) [June 12, 2017](#)

If you were not following the election on Twitter across those seven weeks leading up to 8 June, you would have very little chance of seeing what was actually going on. During the course of the campaign, Twitter became the primary means of exchanging news, views and facts — not to mention memes.

And then there were the rallies. Corbyn fronted 90 of them and they grew like wildfire. By the halfway mark in the campaign, it was clear from the Twitter wires that “something was happening”. Scores of photos appeared, taken by those among the crowd: Corbyn addressing the 3,000 people from the balcony above the courtyard at [Brudenell Social Club](#) in Leeds on 15 May, the 4,000 who gathered on West Kirby Beach in Merseyside on 20 May, the 5,000 in Hull on 22 May 22.

Dissenting tweeters tried to pour cold water: '[A Corbyn rally is a real-life manifestation of a social media echo chamber. Complete waste of time](#)', '[Crowds don't win elections](#)'. The mainstream media agreed. The BBC gave an average of five seconds to the largest rallies, while devoting extended coverage to [May](#)'s desultory staged appearances to small groups of carefully picked supporters.

Corbyn's final rally in Birmingham on 6 June was graced by the appearance of a rainbow, arching high over the gathering who had braved rain and wind earlier in the day, while on the [M6 motorway](#), a [Conservative Party](#) campaign van bearing the slogan “strong and stable” was blown off course and keeled over.

You couldn't, as they say, invent this stuff and the Twitter feed didn't miss a trick. Every slogan the Tories came up with backfired and became fuel for the Labour offensive. “Enough is enough”, Theresa May declared after the June 3 terror [attack in Southwark](#) — the second to disrupt the campaign. Within an hour, [images appeared](#) on Twitter showing police protesting against Theresa May's cuts in 2012 under the banner '*Enough is enough*'.

Having warned repeatedly of the dangers of the cuts, the police were heavily behind Corbyn and, in defiance of confident predictions from the pundits, Labour was coming out in front on national security.

Labour also took the ground from under the Conservative's feet with their economic plan, [backed in a public letter from 130 leading economists](#). Theresa May's attempt to undermine it with a barb about Corbyn's “[magic money tree](#)” became another own goal, as scores of tweets reported that the tree had been found in Tory tax havens in the Bahamas, the Caymans, Panama.

Oi May, we've found the Magic Money Tree! [#bbcqt pic.twitter.com/ROavSgVH2i](https://pic.twitter.com/ROavSgVH2i)

— Karen B (@Karen_Broady) [June 2, 2017](#)

Shadow Chancellor [John McDonnell](#) had [costed all Labour's policies](#), which included restored police numbers, increased funding for the NHS, raising the minimum wage and a million new homes for low-income families. Just as the Tories started trying to make headway with the “magic money tree” slogan, memes went viral on social media, showing the tree with policies and costings on its branches, together with examples of Tory profligacy that could be pruned.

We all know “[it's the economy, stupid](#)”, but Corbyn Labour finally got across the message that there is nothing to be gained from a stupid economy. Trickle-down economics is a fantasy. Austerity brings no gain or compensation of any kind. It is the *cul-de-sac* of neoliberalism and, if 40% of the British people didn't want to vote themselves into it, why should anyone be surprised? The real puzzler is why 42% of them did. If a few interviewers had the wit to ask that question, they might at least provoke some more intelligent and relevant speculation.

The Twitter storm had to cut through a toxic cloud of propaganda and it was making rapid headway. Another couple of weeks, as Macdonnell [claims](#), and Corbyn might have claimed victory. The British public has been subject to decades of brainwashing. From the [Thatcher](#) years onwards, the Murdoch press spearheaded a whole culture of distorted perspectives, vilification and news fiction.

Perhaps seven weeks just wasn't long enough to get the wake-up call across the nation.

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Featured image: [@jeremycorbyn](#) via Independent Australia

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