

Nuclear War and Jeremy Corbyn - The Fury and The Farce

By [Media Lens](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [Nuclear War](#)

Last month, 250,000 party members voted Jeremy Corbyn leader of the Labour party, [‘the largest mandate ever won by a Party Leader’](#). The combined might of the political and media establishment had fought and lost its Stalingrad, having bombarded Corbyn with every conceivable smear in a desperate attempt to wreck his reputation with the British public.

The more extreme the attacks, the more people caught on. Social media surely played a part in this awakening; but the public simply needed to compare the cynicism with Corbyn’s obvious decency and common sense.

Long lines of media futurologists, having all dismissed Corbyn’s prospects, shuffled back to their keyboards in defeat and disarray. The tide truly had turned; something like real democracy had once again broken out in Britain.

So what to do when your bias has been so naked, so obvious, that it backfires? The political machine knows only one way – carry on regardless!

Thus, the focus has been on Corbyn not singing the national anthem, on whether he would wear a white poppy or a red poppy, or a tie, or do up his top button, or refuse to promise to kneel before the Queen and kiss her hand; all this has been granted national news headlines and incessant coverage.

‘At the heart of his dilemma’, opined a Times leader (‘National Insecurity’, October 1, 2015), ‘is a reluctance to shift from protest to leadership’. Translating from MurdochSpeak, Corbyn has shown a reluctance to shift from principles to obedience in the customary manner.

In his Labour party [conference speech](#), Corbyn generously mocked, rather than damned, the near-fascistic media coverage, noting that:

According to one headline “Jeremy Corbyn welcomed the prospect of an asteroid ‘wiping out’ humanity.”

With perfect timing, an Independent [tweet](#) made the point the following day:

Labour MP warns electing Jeremy Corbyn could lead to “nuclear holocaust”.

The comment was a reference to Corbyn’s declaration that he would not ‘press the nuclear

button' in any circumstance, giving the political and media establishment their first sniff at what they hoped was their great 'gotcha!'.

Rather than celebrating Corbyn as a rare, principled politician sticking to a lifelong commitment shared by many reasonable people, he was portrayed as a dangerous loon risking nuclear annihilation. All without even the hint of a credible threat in sight.



We could provide any number of examples of media propaganda, but a [high-profile piece](#) on the BBC's flagship News at Ten programme last Wednesday supplied a truly stand-out performance. Here, BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg featured in an almost comically biased, at times openly scornful, attack on Corbyn's stance on nuclear weapons.

Kuenssberg started by saying:

Jeremy Corbyn wants debate. Well he's got one. And has run straight into a clash, saying that no Labour leader has said in recent history: if he was Prime Minister, whatever the threat, he'd never use nuclear weapons.

The broadcast then showed her interviewing Jeremy Corbyn:

Would you ever push the nuclear button if you were Prime Minister?

Corbyn replied:

I'm opposed to nuclear weapons. I'm opposed to the holding and usage of nuclear weapons. They're an ultimate weapon of mass destruction that can only kill millions of civilians if ever used. And I am totally and morally opposed to nuclear weapons. I do not see them as a defence. I do not see them as a credible way to do things...

LK [interrupting]. 'So yes or no. You would never push the nuclear button?'

JC: 'I've answered you perfectly clearly. It's immoral to have or use nuclear weapons. I've made that clear all of my life.'

LK: 'But, Jeremy Corbyn, do you acknowledge there is a risk that it looks to voters like you would put your own principles ahead of the protection of this country?'

The content of the question, together with the obvious emphasis and passion, betrayed where Kuenssberg stood on the matter.

Corbyn responded calmly:

It looks to the voters, I hope, that I'm somebody who's absolutely and totally committed to spreading international law, spreading international human rights, bringing a nuclear-free world nearer...'

Kuenssberg [interrupting]: 'And that's more important than the protection of

this country?’

Kuenssberg sounded incredulous, appeared to be all but scolding Corbyn. Almost as an afterthought, she added:

Some voters might think that.

This was her token gesture to the BBC’s famed, mythical ‘impartiality’.

The idea that the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons might *endanger* the British public clearly falls outside Kuenssberg’s idea of ‘neutral’ analysis.

Again, Corbyn gave a reasonable response:

‘We are not under threat from any nuclear power. We’re not under threat from that; we’re under threat from instability.... Listen, the nuclear weapons that the United States holds – all the hundreds if not thousands of warheads they’ve got were no help to them on 9/11.

What does it say about the BBC that the leader of the opposition, in declaring a commitment to international law and global peace, is portrayed as a danger to the country, if not the world, with no counter-view allowed?

In a longer version of the interview, [posted](#) on the BBC News website, Kuenssberg asked a question about Syria that also betrayed her allegiance to an elite ideological view:

Isn’t there a danger, Jeremy Corbyn, as Syria falls to pieces, as Putin flexes his muscles, that, on a whole range of issues, it looks as though you will preside over a party that is discussing everything, rather than leading them anywhere?

No hint here from the BBC’s political editor that Obama and Cameron might be flexing *their* ‘muscles’ and leading Syria, like Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, into total disaster. Why does ‘doing something’ always mean bombing in contemporary media discourse? Why is no other course of action conceivable? Why is our media so reflexively violent?

Corbyn replied:

Isn’t it better that you reach consensus and agreement within your party where you can. You recognise the intelligence, the values and the independent thinking of all MPs...

Again, Kuenssberg interrupted, displaying impatience – perhaps even exasperation:

...even when [inaudible] changes around you, things happen...

Corbyn exposed Kuenssberg’s thin veneer of impartiality:

You seem to be stuck in the old politics, if I may say, where leaders dictate and the rest follow or not at their peril.

Returning to the piece broadcast on BBC News at Ten, Kuenssberg then showed archive footage of Corbyn, presumably from the 1980s, helping to put up an anti-nuclear weapons campaign poster. Her accompanying, shouty voiceover told viewers:

Getting rid of nuclear weapons has always been his ambition. But now he wants to be the Prime Minister. And the Labour Party this week decided to stick to its policy of keeping nuclear weapons – Trident submarines – despite him.

She continued:

This morning, though, many of his top team seemed aghast that he'd totally ruled out their use, even as a last resort.

The BBC then broadcast no less than five senior Blairite Labour figures all opposing Corbyn: Andy Burnham, Shadow Home Secretary; Maria Eagle, Shadow Defence Secretary; Hilary Benn, Shadow Foreign Secretary; Angela Eagle, Shadow Business Secretary; Lord Falconer, Shadow Justice Secretary; and Heidi Alexander, Shadow Health Secretary.

The BBC did not allow a single person to express support for Corbyn's very reasonable and popular stance.

Why, for example, did BBC News not interview John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer? Why not include other prominent Labour figures such as Diane Abbott who [notes](#):

Jeremy Corbyn's critics seem to think that leadership consists of a willingness to kill millions.

Or Bruce Kent, Vice-President of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, who [says](#) of Trident:

It is manifestly useless as protection against accidents, suicidal or non-state groups, or simple human error. Their nuclear weapons did nothing to save the US in Vietnam or the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Or senior Guardian columnist Simon Jenkins who [writes](#):

I can recall no head of the army and no serious academic strategist with any time for the Trident missile. It was a great hunk of useless weaponry.

Jenkins goes on to expose the ugly and rarely-reported truth of Trident:

The sole reason for Trident surviving the Blair government's first defence review (on whose lay committee I sat) was the ban on discussing it imposed by

the then defence secretary, George Robertson, in 1997. Members were told to “think the unthinkable” about everything except Trident and new aircraft carriers. It was clear that Tony Blair and his team had been lobbied, not by the defence chiefs, but by the procurement industry.

Or why not include a spokesperson from [Scientists for Global Responsibility](#)? The UK-based organisation [says](#) that:

the UK needs to place a much greater focus on the use of scientific and technical resources for tackling the roots of conflict, such as climate change, resource depletion and economic inequality, rather than prioritising the development, deployment and sale of yet more weapons technologies.

Kuenssberg claimed in her summing up from the Labour party conference in Brighton that voters were hearing ‘noise rather than nuance’. A sublime example of what psychologists call ‘projection’.

She concluded that Corbyn becoming Labour leader was:

thrilling for many but it’s dangerous too. Mr Corbyn may strain to stop disagreements turning into public destructive disputes.

Danger! Threats! The nation is at risk! Ignorance is Strength.

If Corbyn achieves nothing else, we should be grateful that he and his 250,000 supporters have flushed the political and media establishment out of the pages of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and into the light.

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