

Unfree Elections - The Corporate Media, UK General Election And Predictable Outcomes

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The famous physicist Albert Einstein was fond of [Gedankenexperimenten](#) – thought experiments – which tested his understanding of physics problems and stimulated solutions to them. For example, when he was a teenager, Einstein asked himself, ‘What would the world look like if I rode on a beam of light?’ Pursuing this question, he eventually came up with the [Special Theory of Relativity](#) and the most famous equation in science, $E=mc^2$.

Imagine, then, this thought experiment. Consider how a general election might turn out if the media spectrum ran the whole gamut from the right – the BBC, Guardian and Independent, for example – to the hard right (the Mail, Sun, Express and so on). Some readers might object that the BBC, Guardian and the Independent are not right-wing at all, but centre or even left-liberal. But, as we have shown in numerous [books](#) and [media alerts](#), these media organisations are embedded in powerful networks of big business, finance and establishment elites. Naturally, these are the one per cent – or even narrower – interests that corporate media largely serve and support. Such media do not even deserve to be called ‘centre’, if the term is to retain any meaning.

In this case, of course, a thought experiment is not required because reality carried out the experiment for us, with the results being all too obvious last Friday. The Tories were returned to Westminster with a 12-seat majority. Notably, they only had 37% support from a turnout of 66%. That means only 24% of the eligible electorate actually voted for a Tory government. Such is the undemocratic nature of the electoral system in the UK. The establishment wins every time.

As Neil Clark observes in an [article](#) for RT, there is a long history of British press scaremongering to prevent any threat to corporate and financial interests come election time. As usual, the Murdoch press led the way, with the Sun [warning](#) on April 30:

‘A week today, Britain could be plunged into the abyss. A fragile left-wing Labour minority, led by Ed Miliband and his union paymasters and supported by the wreckers of the Scottish National Party, could take power... You can stop this. But only by voting Tory.’

The ludicrous warning about ‘left-wing’ Labour – a pro-business, pro-austerity party that has cut its roots from working people – was [repeated](#) across much of the press. Even the ostensible ‘liberal’ Independent, owned by the Russian billionaire Alexander Lebedev, came out in support of the Tories.

After weeks of debate about the likelihood of a hung Parliament and permutations of possible coalitions, opinion pollsters and professional pundits expressed surprise at the relatively comfortable Tory win. But for investigative reporter Nafeez Ahmed, the outcome was predictable. In a piece titled 'How Big Money and Big Brother won the British Elections', published the day after the election, Ahmed [noted](#):

'The ultimate determinant of which party won the elections was the money behind their political campaigns.'

The Tory party was the biggest recipient of donations, 'the bulk of which came from financiers associated with banks, the hedge fund industry, and big business.'

In summary:

'the most important precondition for victory in Britain's broken democracy is the party's subservience to corporate power.'

The BBC's 'Love Letter' To David Cameron

BBC News [marked](#) the Tories' return to power with what read like a hymn of praise to David Cameron on its website. The Tory leader had 'proved the doubters in his own party and beyond wrong by winning a majority of his own at the 2015 general election.' The puff piece claimed that Cameron's 'presentational skills were never in doubt' and pointed to 'his easy charm and ability to appear "prime ministerial" at news conferences and summits'. A photo caption told readers that:

'David Cameron took the traditional route to the top via Eton and Oxford.'

This was Tory PR dressed up as BBC journalism. The sycophancy was so laughable and transparent that it was rightly [described](#) on Twitter as:

'A beautiful example of Toady Tory journalism'

Another Twitter user [noted](#):

'Anyone who thinks #BBC left-wing, read their love letter to David #Cameron <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2015-32592449> ... Dire excuse for journalism.'

Presumably there was no room in this 'love letter' to remind readers of Cameron's inglorious role in Nato's bombing of [Libya](#) in 2011. The illegal Western 'intervention' for regime change was built, as ever, on a campaign of [disinformation and propaganda](#). Today, the suffering of Libya is immeasurable; not least as seen in the desperate plight of those fleeing across the Mediterranean and, all too often, drowning in the attempt. This is a [damning indictment](#) of Western policy. If there truly was a left media in this country, Cameron's record on Libya alone would have been scrutinised by journalists, his decisions challenged, and the consequences of those disastrous decisions for the suffering Libyans laid bare. Instead, in its

shameful silence, the corporate media have effectively exonerated Cameron for his crimes.

Elsewhere on the BBC, there was extensive coverage of the [70th anniversary](#) of VE Day, with militarism and imperialism not far below the surface. Along with the election coverage, it was all symptomatic of the sickness of a society under relentless establishment propaganda bombardment.

Meanwhile, the Guardian's own love affair with that old war criminal Tony Blair shows no signs of abating. Blair's piece of vacuous post-election '[comment](#)' was heavily billed at the top of the Guardian website. He had the nerve to declare that 'Labour must be the party of ambition as well as compassion'. Compassion, of course, was in short supply during Blair's extended stay in power.

Apparently, Blair's hands have not been dipped in sufficient blood to prevent him being regarded as a credible commentator by Britain's flagship newspaper of liberal journalism. Should we describe this as surreal – or worse? This surely desecrates the memory of those who died in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and elsewhere because of the many shameful decisions taken by Blair and the governments he led. But when we live under occupation by a [troll army](#) of corporate news media, war-criminal politicians are never beyond the pale; as long as they are *our* war-criminal politicians.

Another feature of life under this corporate media occupation is that those at the top of the political system are interchangeable. It hardly matters that Ed Miliband resigned in the wake of Labour's pitiful showing in the election. Likewise, with Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats. Other figureheads will be appointed who uphold corporate-friendly, establishment-bolstering policies, with the requisite smattering of largely empty rhetoric about 'tackling inequality' and 'protecting public services'.

The Independent even had the gall to assert in an [editorial](#) that:

'Their two successors would do well to start thinking about a truly progressive coalition of their two parties.'

The reader is supposed to swallow the myth that, in a political system hammered into shape by corporate interests, 'mainstream' parties could possibly deliver anything 'truly progressive'. But this low standard of journalism, indeed media deception, is par for the course. Likewise, a newly elected government – even, as in this case, the return to power of the same dominant party – is presented by the corporate media as having a fresh chance to prove itself. Every time this happens we are supposed to forget the state's relentless promotion of the destructive aims of big business, while the majority of the public are squeezed and the poor, weak and vulnerable trampled upon.

One recent Guardian [editorial](#) took seriously the prospect that an unalloyed Tory government will live up to 'Mr Cameron's professed wish to unify rather than divide.' How much more evidence does the Guardian need that Tory talk of 'unity' – 'We're all in this together' – is a cruel sham? Unforgivably, even now the paper fails to point to the chasm between Tory propaganda and reality. Instead, the Guardian editors are giving the Tories yet another chance to demonstrate their *bona fides* by setting three 'tests' for them – on Europe, the future of the UK, and the challenge 'to do far more to bring the country back

together economically.’ As John McEnroe might have [said](#), ‘You cannot be serious.’

Nowhere does the Guardian mention the [Climate Armageddon](#) towards which we are headed, and which puts these three ‘tests’ in the shade. So much for the Guardian’s much-vaunted [commitment](#) to put climate ‘front and centre’ of the paper.

As for Labour’s capitulation to corporate power, the Guardian has nothing to say and can do little better than come up with such anodyne remarks as:

‘Labour must again learn to tell stories, in a voice – and perhaps an accent – that speaks to the individual ear, and the country as a whole.’

It gets even worse, with inane comments that presumably came across as profound at editorial meetings:

‘In part, this is about ditching jargon, resolving the uneasy inheritance of the New Labour years and finding a new facility to deploy moral arguments instead of the dismal lexicon of technocracy.’

Labour and ‘moral arguments’? The mind boggles at the lack of insight that sees those words committed to posterity after all that Labour has done; not least the *immoral* arguments and deceptions that launched the illegal invasion of Iraq. Attempting to brush the ‘[supreme international crime](#)’ under the carpet with the weasel words ‘the uneasy inheritance of the New Labour years’ is appalling. One wonders whether *any* senior Guardian staff have sufficient self-awareness, and the remnant shreds of dignity, to be squirming uneasily after the paper’s earlier declared [support](#) for Ed Miliband.

The embarrassment about Miliband was felt elsewhere too. Russell Brand promptly broadcast what sounded like a [climbdown](#) on his [Trews](#) YouTube channel, [saying](#) that he had ‘got caught up in some mad The Thick Of It’ moment. He as much as admitted that he had been swayed too easily by those around him:

‘People were telling me, journalists, people who know loads about politics....’

Given that Brand’s eve-of-election argument to support Labour [echoed](#) that of Guardian columnist Owen Jones, it’s [not hard](#) to guess who he was referring to here. Perhaps Brand might consider a no-holds-barred approach in future, and bravely expose the role of BBC News and the Guardian in preventing the [revolution](#) he, and many others, would like to see.

‘The Faulty Logic Of The Lesser-Evil Argument’

In Scotland, voters were able to vote for a major party that had explicitly rejected the ‘austerity’ mantra relayed endlessly by the unholy Tory-Lib Dem-Labour triumvirate. 56 out of the 59 Westminster constituencies north of the border voted for MPs from the Scottish National Party. Labour, who traditionally enjoyed strong support in the ‘heartland’ of Scotland, were almost entirely wiped out there, with just one Labour MP elected (one Lib Dem and one Tory made up the remaining Scottish seats).

As blogger John Hilley [wrote](#):

'Despairing people in England and Wales can take comfort from the tsunami of resistance that's been unleashed in Scotland. Bereft of meaningful choices, the crushing of Labour may be hard to take, but the Miliband lifeboat was really just another pirate neoliberal ship, corporate owned and dutifully captained. Take heart from its sinking, and remember all those "radical" apologists who tried to sell it as a seaworthy vessel for meaningful change.'

Hilley added:

'We also need a new assault on every part of the establishment-serving media, from the simpering Guardian to the gutter Sun.'

This election has made that clearer than ever before. Western politicians are fond of extolling Western 'democracy' and decrying electoral 'charades' in other nations, especially those lined up for possible future 'intervention'. But there can be no truly 'free' elections in the West while corporate media shape and control what passes for news and debate, effectively limiting the choice of policies and politicians available to the public.

Jonathan Cook, a former Guardian journalist who is now independent, nailed the meaning of the general election outcome. First, he [demolished](#) the 'lesser evil' argument that is trotted out each time an election approaches:

'The faulty logic of the lesser-evil argument is apparent the moment we consider the Blair case. If there is no political cost for committing the ultimate war crime, because the other guys are worse, what real leverage can the electorate ever have on the political system? The "left" vote will always gravitate to the slightly less nasty party of capital. No change is really possible. In fact, over time the political centre of gravity is likely to shift – as has in fact happened – ever more to the right, as the corporations accrete ever greater power.'

The reality is that any party hoping to claim power has first to 'seduce' the corporations which, of course, includes the major news media. As Cook observed:

'Without most of the media on your side, no party stands a chance of winning because the media subtly controls the narrative of the election: what count as "the issues", how the leaders and their platforms are presented, what and who is considered credible.'

Genuine change, made ever more necessary by the urgent threat of climate instability, requires no less than a revolution. This can never come from constantly recycling the 'lesser evil' argument. Central to this revolution is disentangling ourselves from the skewed, elite-serving perspective of the corporate media. Cook expressed it well:

'We cannot imagine a different world, a different economic system, a different media landscape, because our intellectual horizons have been so totally restricted by the media conglomerates that control our newspapers, our TV and radio stations, the films we watch, the video games we play, the music we listen to. We are so imaginatively confined we cannot even see the narrow walls within which our minds are allowed to wander.'

This is why Media Lens believes that it is crucial to [challenge](#) the corporate media, to boost the public's understanding of the [reality](#) of [corporate news](#), and to promote [independent journalism](#) which is genuinely in the public interest.

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