Death of Democracy (Pt. 2): Why I'm not voting again

By Dr Jacob Salder, Alliance Manchester Business School

Read Part 1 of this blog post [here].

In the end I caved. Having nailed my colours to the mast in a post-election blog stating I would not vote[i], on the day guilt and civic duty got the better of me. And it was, as I had expected, a complete waste of time.

But this was not solely for me. This was a complete waste of time for 51% of the electoral turnout. A 51% who voted unequivocally for a rethink on the current trajectory of the UK. A 51% sickened by the harm that has been done through a decade of austerity. A 51% resisting the great British prolapse that Brexit has become.

Considering the extent of the failure I would fully expect anyone associated with it to hang their heads in shame in the knowledge this will now cost essential services, jobs, livelihoods, homes and, in all likelihood, lives. This is the point at which a Leader of the Opposition resigns with immediate effect in the cold embrace of their defeat. Not so Jeremy Corbyn, who instead has the temerity to inform us that despite the electoral result, despite shedding a spectacular 20% off the number voting Labour in 2017, he did in fact win the argument. And I'm sure this moral superiority will serve him well, keeping him warm and stoked alongside his generous MPs pension, as the patronage of UK foodbanks continues to swell.

Similarly sanctimonious was Ed Davey. Speaking in the Commons directly after the election, he lambasted the injustices of the first-past-the-post system and its inability to effectively reward the Liberal Democrats with their just desserts. Instead it compensated a 56% increase in votes with one fewer seat. The response from the victorious Conservatives was predictable: they laughed. And well they might, knowing full well that for a party like the Lib Dems, the system is stacked permanently against them.

Since the election there has been a sickening level of moral superiority from the Left, probably a result of its desperation to find something positive to grasp on to in the face of such humiliation. I have discussed this in a previous blog, raising the question of how the socially liberal side of the political spectrum make a perpetual habit of losing elections despite the fact they have the numbers[ii]. I have looked back as far as 1979, and for every year we see that votes for those parties focused on social welfare and citizen rights significantly outstrips votes for the Conservatives, as the largely sole representative of the socially orthodox establishment. And yet, Conservative government prevails.

Year	Government	Tory	SLA*
2019	Con	43.9%	50.9%
2017	Con (min.)	42.3%	52.4%
2015	Con	36.8%	47.1%
2010	Con (coal.)	36.1%	55.1%
2005	Lab	32.4%	60.3%
2001	Lab	31.7%	62.1%
1997	Lab	30.7%	62.7%
1992	Con	41.9%	55.1%
1987	Con	42.3%	55.1%
1983	Con	42.4%	54.5%
1979	Con	43.9%	52.8%

* Lab, LD, SNP, PC & Green

It is this sickening moral superiority of the Left which, to me, is fundamentally unforgivable. Many commentators blame the Conservative's application of disinformation alongside an insurgency of jingoism and racial superiority amongst little Englanders for the election result. I don't. The Conservative election strategy and application of dirty tactics was entirely predictable. And also relatively ineffective, considering the actual increase in votes it achieved compared to 2017. The loss here came fundamentally from a Left where factions are too busy trying to claim sole right to their territory that they cannot coordinate and unite.

This is most prevalent in the constituency of Ashfield, Nottinghamshire. A Labour stronghold since 1979, in 2019 the seat was lost to the Conservatives. The interesting thing here is the Conservative candidate themselves saw a reduced share of the vote, 2.4% down from 2017. What worked in the Conservatives favours was

an 18% swing away from Labour in favour of the Ashfield Independents, a left-of-centre local interest party led by a former Lib Dem candidate. Such competition of course came back to bite both parties in the proverbial, splitting 52% of the vote to leave them with a representative only 39% wanted.

The success of the Ashfield Independents illustrates something Labour in particular, and the left in general, must learn and learn quickly. The Party's success emerged through their winning seats on the local council, and using these to address key local issues with a recognised material effect on the community. In an interview with the BBC[i], they claimed people weren't actually interested in issues like Brexit, but instead in local amenities and services: public transport, the high street, community facilities. Across a decade where the Left has been busy navel gazing, deciding whether its objective is social mobility or class warfare, redistribution of wealth or sustainable development, municipalisation or devolution, it has forsaken the basic needs, and thus understanding, of core communities.

So for what I expect to be a continuation of the downgrading of the UK over the next 4-5 years, I'm not going to blame the Conservatives. They're too easy – and too obliging – a target. I blame the parties of the Left and their sickening moral superiority which has facilitated this government and many of its predecessors. And I here make a vow to never vote for any of them again. I cannot, and will not, waste my time patronising a set of worthy and noble intentions when there is no chance of winning. Particularly when, given the right coordination, winning is fundamentally achievable, if not inevitable. Because if nothing else, the lack of will to compromise and coordinate displays a fundamental contempt for constituents of the Left, a contempt which places political philosophy and Party interests over citizen welfare. And one which relies on not party activism but the exploitation of the general goodwill of social liberals to compensate their failures for yet another electoral term.

And this is an open call to social liberals; convince me otherwise. I'm on Twitter – *@DrJacobSalder*. Convince me it is worthwhile voting for you. Convince me you can actually win and build a government and an electoral system capable of effective representation. Convince me I'm not wasting my time participating in this process to simply satisfy your worthy but pointless moral superiority.

[i] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-48255078/ashfield-council-independents-take-control-from-labour

[i] https://centreforbrexitstudiesblog.wordpress.com/2019/11/20/why-im-not-voting-in-2019/

[ii] https://centreforbrexitstudiesblog.wordpress.com/2019/12/16/progressive-but-strategically-naive-how-the-left-threw-away-another-general-election/