

# THE POLITEIA



0001

Mar 20

# Foreword

by **Usman Arif** and **Ollie Flowers**

Written, produced and edited by Sixth Form students, 'The Politeia' was set up in an attempt to create a voice from which the opinions of all students, regardless of political orientation, could be appreciated.

Academic, engaging and politically diverse, the first edition of this editorial is the fruit of the determined labour of all students involved.

On behalf of all those involved, we hope you enjoy what we hope will be the first of many.



“I have come to the conclusion that politics is too important to be left to the politicians”

**Charles de Gaulle**

*cover photo: Nikolai Karaneshev, 2009*

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# The Month Ahead

A week is a long time in politics, as former UK PM Harold Wilson once stated. So it comes as no surprise that the next few months will bear witness to some major political events, including Mayoral and London Assembly elections, as well as leadership contests from both Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Mayoral elections will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> April. The role of Mayor of London was established in 2000, following New Labour reforms. The Mayor is the executive of the Greater London Authority, comprised of both the Mayor and the London Assembly. Currently, Labour's Sadiq Khan holds this position, but his grip seems to be weakening, with incidents of knife crime rising to record levels under his premiership. The top four candidates include Khan, as well as Shaun Bailey from the Conservatives. Rory Stewart, an independent candidate, was one of the 21 rebel MPs, and will be running in this election. Finally, the Liberal Democrats' candidate is Siobhan Benita, who wants to legalise cannabis. Khan is expected to win, however Stewart seems to be the second favourite, his lack of party allegiance proving to be a very attractive feature to many voters.



On the same day, the London Assembly will be voted in as well. The LA exists to scrutinise the work of the Mayor, making proposals to the Mayor, and holding a two-thirds supermajority to amend or veto any proposed legislation from the Mayor. Members are elected via the Additional Member System, a hybrid of FPTP and closed list electoral systems. It is predicted that Labour will struggle to gain a thirteen seat majority in the LA, due to growing criticism of Sadiq Khan's premiership.

Labour leadership elections will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> April. Following Labour's poor performance in the 2019 General Election, Jeremy Corbyn announced he would step down, prompting a race for the leadership between Lisa Nandy, Rebecca Long-Bailey and Keir Starmer. Starmer is predicted to win by many due to receiving the most amount of nominations for the contest. While he hasn't explicitly stated a return to the centrist policies of 'New Labour', Starmer favours a 'broad church'. Lisa Nandy is taking a soft left stance, similar to Long-Bailey.



Unlike Labour, the Liberal Democrats' leadership contest is still in its infancy. Since Jo Swinson lost her seat in the 2019 General Election, Mark Pack and Ed Davey have been interim co-leaders, as Layla Moran and Wera Hobhouse have both announced their intention to run. Furthermore, Christine Jardine is expected to run, with Ed Davey being discussed as a potential candidate. However, this is all in the early stages, so the next few months will be very interesting for the party, as its future lies with these potential leaders.







*The Clown is No Fool*

# Boris Johnson: Charismatic Talisman or Egotistical Charlatan?

by

Ollie Flowers

As questions over Johnson's character and fitness for office linger in the corridors of Westminster and beyond, a dive into the Prime Minister's history as far back as his time as president of the Oxford Union shows controversy has seemed to follow him continually. So is our new Prime Minister the 'monster' the liberal media would have us believe? Or is he the clumsily loveable yet sharp and pragmatic 'man of the people' he has come to brand himself as?

From the second Boris Johnson stepped foot onto the Balliol College quadrant in Oxford, it seems he was marked for success. A fellow Etonian writing in *The Times* remembers Boris as being "defined by negatives"; someone who was remarkably unremarkable, and spent more time fraternising with the upper-middle class landed gentry of stereotypical Eton than he did delighting in academia. However, there must have been something of an intellectual rebirth as by the time he reached Oxford, Johnson had metamorphosed into a dead cert for political stardom. The position of President of the Oxford Union was, and continues to be, a considerable marker for future success (Michael Heseltine, Michael Gove, Michael Crick, and Damien Hinds all held the title within a fifteen year period) and Johnson's ebullient style of debate and undeniable charisma led many to already identify him as a potential future Prime Minister. It was clear that even from his teenage years Johnson had recognised how he could cultivate magnetism with a notable air of the berserk to create a political character that proved to be

frustratingly irresistible.

If Johnson's road to power was clearly mapped out however, warning signs were already appearing on the dashboard. Membership to the infamous Bullingdon Club, where it's alleged £50 notes were burned in the faces of tramps, would haunt Johnson throughout his career and the image of the callous, entitled, bigoted aristocrat was only set to worsen over the course of his foray into journalism, where a string of prejudiced remarks would add to the skeletons in his closet.

In 1996, while a journalist for *The Telegraph*, Johnson went to the Labour Party Conference and wrote a piece reviewing the quality of the "hot totty" present; for *The Spectator* he advised men to deal with a female publisher by "patting her on her bottom and sending her on her way", and so the reputation for sexism became evident. In 2000, for *The Spectator*, he criticised "Labour's appalling agenda, encouraging the teaching of homosexuality in schools and all the rest of it", as well as calling gay men "tank-topped bum boys" and comparing gay marriage to bestiality: the latent homophobia was now not so latent. Johnson also referred to African people as "piccanninies" with "watermelon smiles"; Muslim women as "letter boxes", and condoned Islamophobia as "a natural reaction". By my own calculations Johnson had, over the course of his stint as a journalist, managed to directly offend approximately 60% of the population, and yet he remains a man of the people: how has he done it? Whether distasteful comic, blithering buffoon or calculating attention seeker, the sort of

remarks made by Johnson have usually been unequivocally condemned, and yet he has been elected the most powerful man in the country. One would think that this sort of controversy was left behind at the printing press, but it has in fact played to his strengths from as soon as the career in politics began to take flight.

Fast forward to 2008 and Johnson is elected Mayor of London; it seems the wider public had fallen for the bumbling, blundering Etonian, the air of imminent accident and injury acting as an enticing charm to the everyman. But was this simply a veneer of incompetence under which laid capable pragmatism, or was this really the circus act that the “Roll up, Roll up” signs of the media would have London believe? If the newly elected Mayor of London really was the circus act people thought, then it was in public that the clown started to take over. The infamous zipline incident, bowling over little Japanese children in a game of rugby, wading waist-high in a pond on a fishing trip, the list goes on. Years of demonstrable ineptitude would hopefully be counterbalanced by adept political management: the reality is more mixed. Whilst it is true that the murder rate and incidents of knife crime were marginally lower by the time Johnson had finished, it was concluded in a report by the Home Office that stop-and-searches, long championed by Johnson, had “no discernible crime reducing effects”. Furthermore, despite claiming to have “led this city through riots”, in 2011 Johnson declined to cut short a holiday to help deal with civil unrest. Poverty rates amongst Londoners remained largely the same throughout his tenure, so it seems that all London was left with after Johnson was the spectre of a £43 million bridge that did not come to fruition, more of the same, and a few sniggers: hardly the work that was anticipated of an Oxford wunderkind. But politics has changed. Whereas before Blair a politician relied on genuine credibility and popularity to make it in politics, all that is needed now to survive is a favourable relationship with the ever-influential tabloid media and a unique selling point. Both of which Johnson had in spades.

And so begins the second stage of the Johnson trip to power: political rebel and darling of middle-England. Sticking it to the Westminster bubble, albeit oafishly. This was typified by the genuine biggest turning point in recent

political history: the EU Referendum. An event that cut through the British political system and beyond, exposing the psyche of forgotten Britain, Brexit was a damning vote against the status quo, a political earthquake that Johnson had found himself at the epicentre of. If ever there was evidence of Johnson’s astute political canniness, this was it. Johnson could sense years of dissatisfaction and disillusionment, a yearning for change amongst the electorate, and decided he would be the face of this change. By misaligning himself from the current system, he had cultivated a strong following. To many, he represented change that was long overdue following the misery of austerity under the Cameron-Clegg coalition, the irony being of course that Johnson consistently defended the banks following the 2009 financial crash and had unequivocally voted in favour of austerity measures in the years following. Despite all this, Johnson was now the figure of change, the figure of the people. Does this speak of Johnson’s brilliantly acute awareness of the will of the common man, or does it speak of opportunistic cowardice, someone willing to plunge the country into ruin at the expense of personal gain? The short answer is, it speaks of both.

And so Johnson was the architect of chaos. Since the election, political bedlam was wreaked upon the nation. Cleverer than at first glance, the move to support Leave by Johnson, and thus implicitly criticise the establishment, contributed to a general mood of disillusionment and anger amongst the public. It was during this time that Johnson embraced the role that would make him Prime Minister: the role of the master-antagonist, chipping away at the authority of a government that was being torn apart at the seams. Following a disastrous 2017 election, the Conservative Party was clearly crying out for new direction and therefore, having blatantly put personal gain before the interests of his party, Johnson announced his candidacy for leadership in 2019. Popular amongst party members, (inexplicably, the man who had once said “I could not fail to disagree with you less” had earned a reputation for straight talking), Johnson looked set to win from the outset of the race. Almost immediately after he was sworn in, Johnson had the whip redrawn from 21 rebel MPs. This is interpreted two ways: fans of Boris would argue it was an effort to promote governmental unity in the



face of a turbulent time in British politics, while those offering more pessimistic analysis would claim that this is yet another act of cowardice and repression motivated purely by self preservation. My judgement will come later. Now that Boris had a degree of impetus and togetherness in his minority government, the decision was made to attempt to prorogue Parliament in an effort to deliver on the People's vote (albeit unconstitutionally). There is undoubtedly a debate to be had over whether prorogation of Parliament was a return to or a repression of democracy. Parliamentary democracy had ceased to function, and so the Johnson administration had decided to bypass the political system and honour the votes of the electorate. Heroic or despotic? It seems this depends on the motivation of the action: judging by Johnson's self serving, careerist history, it certainly seems hard to deny that once again Boris acted purely out of a desire for survival, for he knew that if he were not to deliver on his one mantra 'Get Brexit Done' the end would be on the horizon. There does not seem to be a huge amount of honour in that.

The final act of Johnson's career so far would perhaps be his most defining: the 2019 general election. Populism was sweeping the Western world, the wave was still riding high, and Johnson looked set to dine out on the crumbs left from the populist banquet of recent European elections. Marine Le Pen of France, Norbert Hofer of Austria and Viktor Orbán of Hungary had all benefitted from the rise of populism and Johnson, again demonstrating his canny political foresight, knew that this would be his way into a long term Number 10 residency. The simplistic mantras, the smearing of opposition and the shallow ad-hominem arguments were all chillingly reminiscent of the more sinister foreign elections in recent times, but it worked. Johnson had shown that the cleverest move possible in the current climate is to appeal to the baser nature of the electorate. An electorate who had been lied to and deceived by the system and were in need of something new. Ironically enough, that something new had been the epitome of establishment: the aristocratic Eton and Oxford educated son of the landed gentry.

When Johnson's behaviour is cumulatively taken in to consideration, his motivations seem clear. Johnson's political astuteness appears self-evident. From the second he stepped in to any

form of office his motivations have been clouded and concealed behind a coating of comical incompetence. He has managed to sidestep his way into higher and higher responsibility all whilst seeming completely driven by emotion and heart. Not even Johnson's biggest supporters would deny his opportunistic edge and yet to many it seems he wills what is best for the people of his beloved Union. Not only does the man have an innate ability to rally and fight for all those he represents, he can also put smiles on the faces of them whilst doing it. Clever? Yes. A deceptively sharp politician? Absolutely. And yet, I am sure that if I were to ask the average man on the street whether they wanted a good politician or a good man to lead them, the vast majority would reply with the latter. This is where Johnson begins to falter.

Look past the comical use of Latin, the witticisms and the shaggy appearance, and one begins to see Johnson for his true self. From the second his first article was published in the Telegraph, Johnson has embodied the stereotypical self-entitled arrogance of the upper class that his voters had grown to detest. This was arrogance typified by bold attempts to lie to a nation in an effort to deliver on a hastily made promise that was never fulfilled. An unashamed bigot, the man who now poses as a one nation conservative evidently has an in-built hatred of those he differs from, which manifests itself as callous cruelty. Showing almost no loyalty to any Conservative Party government throughout his career, every single career move made has been out of self-interest only. From withdrawing the whip of those who undermine him to embracing populism at its most flagrant, his only motivation has been to fulfil a right seemingly bestowed on him by way of birth. When the facts are truly evaluated and taken into consideration, the makeup of a fun-loving, benevolent clown begins to melt away, leaving only a Machiavellian fraud. A man that lies so often it has begun to be taken as standard procedure should not be hailed as a great leader. Boris should be called out for what he is: a wolf in sheep's clothing. A toxic, incendiary leader who, despite all his cleverness, should be nowhere near the reigns of power.



# The Red Wall: What Happened?

by  
Usman Arif

Who knew that Boris Johnson's JCB digger stunt on the 10th of December would be a harbinger of things to come?

Paint the polystyrene red and you have the 2019 election result.

Labour's worst defeat since 1935, a loss of 60 seats with a gain of only one, comes as the Conservatives enjoy their greatest victory since 1979. Political analysts differ widely on what they believe contributed to such a victory, and one theory is that the single-issue nature of the election coupled with the firm stance the Conservatives had on the issue, meant that they had the edge.

Differing opinions and theories aside, one key element of the election result was the fall of the 'red wall'. Important figures such as Laura Pidcock, and the legendary Dennis Skinner have fallen to the Tories, both losing their constituencies composed of former mining communities. The crumbling of the North's 'red wall' was mainly attributed to the Conservative's Brexit stance, the 'Get Brexit Done' slogan resonating with Northerners who were, quite frankly, sick of hearing about it. Now that Johnson secured his Commons majority of 80, he had to prevent the 'red wall' from reassembling, which meant thanking voters for "breaking the voting habits of generations" and stating that everything he does as PM will be devoted to "repaying that trust".

So, what will the PM do to repay that trust? This single-issue nature of the election means that once Brexit has been dealt with, the North's loyalty will waver depending on what Johnson has done for them during his term as PM. The

radical change in the political landscape could be considered an anomaly if Johnson doesn't play his cards right. On December 19th, Johnson announced through the Queen's speech that economic growth must be 'genuinely felt across the North's communities'. His 'Get Brexit Done' slogan has been replaced by his new catchphrase – 'levelling up'.

It is well-known by now that the North has been neglected by politicians in London. Remunerative and skilled jobs are being replaced by low paid, unskilled employment with little job security and reports by the Nationwide Building Society highlight the dismal state of the housing market. That's not even to mention the poor transport infrastructure; something that is essential in a region where it's not interconnected like London, but rather a collection of fragmented enclaves.

The North-South divide is said to have come about as a result of a variety of political and economic factors. The main economic factor that severed the South from the North was industrial decline, in which Margaret Thatcher played an undeniable role. Thatcher and her government believed that new industries would emerge to fill the decline of manufacturing employment. However, employment did not rise in the North. Jobs in the financial sector blossomed, while large swathes of the North fell victim to coal mine closures, setting the stage for a party that sought to empower unions, and thus the North-South Divide was further cemented. A deep-rooted hatred for the Conservative party was instilled in



these coal towns following the 1984 miner's strike.

Another example of extreme regional inequality is evident in the transport sector. While HS2 is making an attempt (however disastrous) to connect the South to the North, the first departures are set to be in 2028. That is another eight years of poor transport the North must soldier through. However, leaked reports are projecting that the total cost could be £106 billion, which leaves the government in an uncomfortable position: do they quit now and avoid incurring further costs? Or does the size and scope of the project warrant completion? And the most crucial question, will this lead to prosperity in the North? Or will they face a 'brain drain', with skilled workers leaving for the South? There is an argument to be made about increasing productivity in the North, yet the paltry increase in time for some journeys leave people questioning its significance. As of the 31st of January, it seems Boris Johnson has suggested that HS2 will go ahead, stating that the only way forward was to 'keep digging'. However he mustn't be too hasty in dusting down the old JCB excavator; it is expected that he will face fierce opposition in funding this.

So, what have Boris Johnson and his cabinet done so far to address this regional inequality? The PM has pledged to create duty-free ports, which would boost regional economies, such as Middlesborough. Rishi Sunak has stated that under the EU Customs Union and EU State Aid laws, these free enterprise zones would be almost impossible to form. However, the lack of bureaucracy and regulation will mean many new opportunities for the local residents, including investment and employment. Furthermore, Chris Skidmore, Science Minister, has pledged 'investing £800 million over five years for a new research institution in the style of US ARPA'.

ARPA, the Advanced Research Projects Agency is a US agency that funds and promotes innovative research projects. Additionally, there are plans to create a prestigious science centre, similar to the MIT in America. This injection of funds and projects into the North will lead to a greater demand for high paying, skilled jobs, exacerbate employment and spur on a new wave of economic growth led by innovations in the North.

Boris's comments on HS2 suggesting work will go on as normal come as no surprise. To discredit HS2 in any way would be very damaging to his reputation, as it clashes against what he and Skidmore have been encouraging since his election victory; high-risk, high-reward projects. No matter the cost, HS2 and its completion will certainly shape his career in some form. Will it reduce inequality in England, inequality that will be decreased due to a rise in employment, a rise in skilled labour, and foreign investment from firms that will see the North of England as a hub of innovation that will deliver revolutions in emerging sectors, such as green technology, and well established sectors, such as AI? Or will it be one of the biggest displays of economic incompetence from the Conservatives since 1992's 'Black Wednesday'?

In the Yorkshire Post, in 2019, the Conservative Mayor of Tees Valley, Ben Houchen, stated 'Boris and the Conservatives are committed to the North in the long term, and voting for us means voting for a better life', in response to the pledge of duty-free ports. However, time lags, rising costs and the overall success rate of this research and development are yet to reveal themselves, meaning that only time will tell whether Johnson will hold on to his Northern seats, and keep the 'red wall' from rebuilding.





# Rory Stewart's Vision for London

by  
Alec Hodgson

The former MP for Penrith and the borders is known for his elegant speeches (a speech he gave on hedgehogs in 2015 was remarked as ‘one of the best speeches I have ever heard’ by Eleanor Laing) and his social media activity, but what is his vision for the place Clive James once called the “city of cities”?

Rory Stewart fought the battle for Tory leadership on a centrist campaign in which he frequently extolled the virtue of consensus politics. His personality propelled him from virtual obscurity to fifth in the leadership contest. He was one of 21 Tory rebels to have the whip removed by Boris Johnson after voting to oppose a no-deal Brexit.

He believes that his status as an independent will allow him to be a pragmatic mayor who is able to improve the lives of residents through practical thinking rather than grandiose ideals. Rory Stewart refuses to reduce the enormity of the issues facing Londoners to facile slogans.

As part of his drive to capture the vote of the disenfranchised and indifferent, Mr Stewart has launched a sizeable campaign called ‘London Speaks’ in order to “find out what Londoners really care about”. As part of this process, he has pledged to visit all 32 of the London boroughs as part of his walks in which he engages in candid conversations with members of the public in an attempt to gauge what the man on the street cares about.

He believes that currently London is “bound” by “party politicians and their

parties” and that instead, under his leadership, London “can be independent – representing all of its citizens – not dividing them”. He maintains that the polarising ideologies of the right and the left have paralysed democracy in the country, preventing a more efficient system of governance, preventing those who need it most from receiving help.

One of his most striking policies is his plan to rethink our streets by introducing more trees in order to promote London’s green credentials and help create a model for a vibrant sustainable city. This is part of his drive to create more invested citizens who are encouraged and enabled to take an active role in their communities.

The latest polls put Rory Stewart third at 13%, whilst Sadiq Khan leads with 45% of the vote. This is not surprising considering Mr Stewart cannot rely on the unconditional support that the Tories and Labour enjoy, instead he has been forced to build his base through his enthusiastic social media account.

His campaign is encapsulated by a fundamental belief that, “less politics and more action is needed”.



photo: Chris McAndrew, 2017

Rory Stewart's  
official MP portrait.



# Knife Crime in London: Who's Really Responsible?

by Humza Rafi

In the 12 months ending at March 2019, there were 43,516 knife crime offences in the UK. So, who's to blame? Accusations and accountability are being violently thrown around by all parties in a desperate scramble to perhaps shift the blame for one's own responsibility.

As we move through the 21st century, society seems to be as fragmented as ever. Hate crime has risen by 11% over the last year. Over 320,000 people are now living on the streets, a rise of 4% every year. And now, as of 2015 21.6% of the entire population is in relative poverty. Every person faces inevitable daily challenges, and yet with so much hatred and animosity our society preaches to our children, we can no longer claim our country is safe.

Knife crime and violence is an increasingly worrying issue, particularly in London, and leads to some of the most disturbing and distressing stories we hear on the news. With more young people carrying a knife, lurking underneath their jacket in a seemingly desperate bid to 'protect oneself', people are becoming far more anxious, building up to a climactic outburst of violence that households will witness on the news.

A lot of what we see and hear from the media, either conscientiously or unconscientiously, unduly connects knife crime with race. Acclaimed rapper and author, Akala, has spoken extensively on the real causes of knife crime and the real factors affecting the rate of knife crime- not just in London, but across the country. His research has led him to confidently say that race has nothing to do with these offences, and that "there are 1.2

million black people in London, in a bad year 50 of them will kill someone, that's less than 0.004 per cent". The statistics do show that race is just a convenient excuse; an easy way out simply by generalising an entire community and placing the blame on 'black people as a whole'. Yet, this method of sweeping condemnation, particularly subtly executed by newspapers such as The Sun, The Express and of course The Daily Mail, does nothing except provide their readers with the more 'sensational' aspects of the news without truly conveying the complete factual information or providing any kind of solutions to these problems.

Despite my pessimism and my cynical attitude to attempts at truly eliminating knife crime from our streets, the Government has said that they "will be introducing these new orders to stop gang members carrying knives" (former Home Secretary Sajid Javid). So, to what extent will the Government go to, so as to aim to completely reduce the knife crime violence? Unfortunately not very far. Instead of actually tackling the issue first-hand and attacking the root of where knife violence stems from, the Government seems to have missed the point once more. In the foreseeable future the Government has stated that the prison population is expected to grow considerably, and there will be greater punishment and retribution for those convicted of knife crime. From a secondary perspective this may perhaps appeal to many, and be seen as a deterrent from committing such despicable crimes. However, with considerable evidence, it is clear to see that harsher punishments handed



out by oppressive governments have never been shown to actually reduce levels of crime. Despite America's \$1 trillion average expenditure on crime control and drug supervision, the recidivism rate is about 70% - meaning 70% of offenders are rearrested within five years of release from the criminal justice system. Furthermore, Valerie Wright, Ph.D., Research Analyst at the Sentencing Project, has theorised that enhancing the severity of punishment will have little impact on people who do not believe they will be apprehended for their actions. She puts forward that "simply threatening the population with harsher retribution really does nothing to shrink the rates of crime". The British Government's new policy of striving to increase prison population is what I view as a sorry excuse for punishing the working class and disregarding

the black community in Britain, without providing any real solutions to preventing the crime itself.

I see only one way to tackle knife crime - major investment into deprived areas. We'd all like to live in a world where kids as young as twelve are carrying football boots rather than blades, where teenagers can have a safe school to go to, and are truly able to have hobbies and interests - things our future generations can look forward to. The harsh reality is that decades of deprivation and underfunding have left those in our most vulnerable community vying to be the most 'macho' in a vicious circle of crime. It's our governments' responsibility - and until they stop dodging the harsh reality, knife crime levels and violence are going to continue to grow.

*photo: Amir Hesaminejad, 2017*

# What do the Iraqi People Really Want?

by  
Karar al-Atia

A country ripped apart by wars, Iraq has been a victim of conflict for almost 50 years. During the Saddam Hussein regime (from the late 1970s until 2003), Iraq was involved in a number of civil wars as well as wars with some of its neighbouring countries, including Iran and Kuwait, leading to a death toll of over 250,000. Even after this regime, Iraq was still a target and so still faced widespread violence from extremist groups and other forces.

For the first time we are seeing protests all over the country calling for change and demanding peace. Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, the streets of most major cities have been flooded with

protesters who have had enough of living under constant fear. The point of these demonstrations is not only to call for peace but they are also a platform for young people to demand the government to address key economic issues. For those aged between 18 and 24, unemployment is currently at around 20% which is 12.1% higher than the unemployment rate for the entire labour force and so this may be the reason why 18.9% of the population live in relative poverty, according to reports written by the Borgen Project. Iraq is one of the richest countries in the area, however due to the corruption in the government, this wealth does not reach the population and so only

those in power benefit. Iraq also has many oil and natural gas reserves yet to be discovered and so this country has the potential to financially flourish.

Another issue that has divided the country is the killing of General Soleimani on January 3rd. Iraqi opinions on this issue are split. Many Iraqi supporters of Iran entered a phase of mourning whereas those completely against the Iranian regime rejoiced. Soleimani was the leader of the elite Quds force and his murder marks a significant point in the Middle Eastern conflict. Iraq suffered from even more attacks as the Iranian military sent 22 missiles to various US bases in Iraq. This not only caused shock but also angered many and especially the protesters as they began to see that Iraq was being victimised and it would be the Iraqi people that suffered the most with the highest death toll from external attacks of over 3000 innocent civilians. The protesters began to focus their attention on these foreign forces and demanded for countries such as America and Iran to withdraw troops and militaries from the region with the hope of calling for peace which is something all Iraqis have been wishing to have for generations.

Since the protests began, they have become increasingly more violent with the government backed forces struggling to contain the protesters and often resorting to violence to do so. This only causes further outrage and so since October, almost 700 people have been killed and 15,000 injured. However, this did not stop the protesters who continued to increase in

numbers and on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the largest demonstration took place with more than 1 million people attending. During this protest, chants such as “Death to America” were called after Trump refused to listen to the Iraqi officials and withdraw American troops.

Many protesters believe that these demonstrations against the government and against America will help restore Iraq to the safe and prosperous country it was before 1970. The Iraqis do not want their country to constantly be associated in wars and they no longer want to be the victims of conflicts that many of them have no say in. Some believe that America and Iran are using Iraq as their battlefield to solve their disputes (such as the killing of General Soleimani) and Iraqis in general want their country to be an independent nation that is respected by others as this is the first step to preventing violence and establishing a new and better Iraq.

With the country divided in so many ways, such as religion and political opinions, there will always be disagreements. However, what all Iraqis agree on is the dream of being able to wake up in a safe country, where their children will be able to go to school and come home safely and a country where the youth can work and help look after themselves and their families. They believe that this is only achievable if foreign interventions are removed and corruption in the government is abolished. The only question is: how will they get there?



*photo: J. Botter, 2004*

**Rural Iraq in 2004 - now  
battered by the impacts of  
war.**



# The UK's Military Involvement in the Middle East

by  
Nye Flowers

The relationship between British politics and the Armed Services has been a turbulent one since the conception of the modern British military way back in 1707, following the Acts of Union between England and Scotland. Since this there has been significant change both to British politics and the armed services. However, what is clear is that throughout the turbulent 19th and 20th century, the symbol of the military in Britain has become increasingly important. Both the first and second world wars became major turning points for global politics, seeing the end of tyrannical regimes and the establishment of political states. Even with the hindsight now granted to us in the 21st century, to suggest that military conflict has not shaped current global affairs would be naïve to say at the least.

There is arguably a modern global war, centred on the Middle East, an area of much controversy ever since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. While there has been periodic western involvement in the area dating back to the Anglo-Afghan wars in the early 19th century, modern Middle Eastern conflict has become a serious global affair. To some extent, Middle Eastern policy of governments has defined their premierships, especially for Western super powers USA and Britain. The Iraq war of 2003 and later involvement in Afghanistan 2006 onwards became key issues in British politics, notably instrumental in the resignation of Tony Blair in 2007.

Currently, there are two official detachments of British forces in the

Middle East operating as part of 'low-intensity operations', Operation Shader and Operation Toral. The first began in Iraq on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and is the operational code-name for the UK involvement in fighting Islamic State. By 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014, the involvement of British forces had extended into Syria, having previously been characterised by a humanitarian relief effort. The UK effort extended further following the vote in the House of Commons, on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015, to allow British airstrikes against ISIS in Syria.

While the large majority of the British impact has come from some 1700 airstrikes reportedly killing 4315 enemy fighters, the operation also includes approximately 1400 British Army personnel, Royal Navy destroyers, providing protection to US aircraft carriers and the Royal Air Force (RAF) providing reconnaissance and humanitarian relief worth £230 million. The operation has, to date, cost £1.75 billion. Elements from numerous regiments of the British Army, including the 2 PWRR, the 1 & 2 Rifles, 2 Yorks, 2 Lancs, 22 Engineers and 2 & 4 Scots Regiments have all been involved. From the RAF, C-130 Hercules, Voyager KC3, Reaper UAV, Chinook, Tornado and Typhoon aircraft have all been deployed, alongside the ground effort to provide protection and security for British personnel. The Royal Navy has also contributed Type 45 destroyers and Type 23 frigates, as well as Astute or Trafalgar-class nuclear powered submarines to the UK effort.

The official lists of personnel, vehicles and resources all demonstrate the capability and



capacity of the UK to dominate conflicts. However, the question inevitably arises, what is the human cost of such war games? Indeed, while there is something to be said for the UK's military readiness, the cost of such operations goes far beyond economic hurdles.

Two servicemen were killed and another two were injured since the beginning of Operation Shader. In addition, Islamic State executed two volunteer aid workers and one journalist is still missing. The philosophical question asked of what right the UK has to operate and kill in a foreign country and what has our impact been on the civilian population has yet to be answered.

Operation Toral has lasted since 2015 and is the UK contribution to NATO's Resolute Support Mission, which aims to provide stability to Afghanistan following many years of conflict. Since the end of UK combat operations in Afghanistan from 27 October 2014, the UK has provided a detachment of 1000 soldiers to the NATO effort in Afghanistan. There has been a terrible cost for British lives in Afghanistan since operations began in 2001 under the name operation Herrick with a total of 454 British military personnel being killed while on operations in the country. On operation Toral itself, two non-combat losses have been recorded as a result of UK involvement in the area.

At present, operation Toral 6 is the latest name for UK contributions to the country with

the 1st Battalions the Royal Gurkha Rifles and Royal Anglian Regiments, as well as the 3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment having served on operations there. The RAF has again provided support for ground troops including Puma and Chinook aircraft.

While it remains to be seen what impact UK involvement in the Middle East is having, it is unlikely that we will see an end to operations in the area in the years to come. Despite more worrying conflicts being seen around the world, for example Russian aggression against Baltic states or instability in Somalia, the UK government will be keen to remain a part of the Western influence in the Middle East. Although, on the whole, the UK military is shrinking, becoming better trained and better equipped as a result, it is hard to imagine a future Prime Minister, Boris Johnson included, who would forfeit the UK footing in a crucial global region. Contrary to popular belief, it is my opinion that the UK must maintain its strong military history, in order to fair well in the inevitably unstable future. Russian aggression, the rise of populism and Brexit will only further call into question the UK's position on the global stage. If we truly intend to maintain our current reputation as global superpower, then we must show ourselves to be a strong and reliable nation. One sure fire way to do so, is to continue, if not enforce, current UK military deployments and substantiate our place as a powerful nation.



*photo: Allan House, 2006*

**British soldiers firing flares to illuminate enemy positions outside Basra, Iraq.**



# A Guide to the US 2020 Election

by  
Harry Bowman

In the UK, it is the common consensus that Donald Trump is a bumbling fool, we mocked him with the Trump Baby Blimp and only 19% of Brits have a positive opinion of him. Yet across the pond millions look set to vote for him and may well secure him a second term in the upcoming presidential election. This shocking parity in political outlook may seem anomalous at first, yet a deeper insight into the American political system will reveal how this society could possibly lay the foundations for such a controversial, populist leader to come into power.

While the Democrats are divided and arguing between themselves, Trump has united his Republican Party, according to a poll by Gallup, 94% of Republicans approve of Trump's performance in office. In his impeachment trial only one Republican senator voted against him and he turned former enemies into allies. In 2016 both Alaska senator Lisa Murkowski and South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham argued against Trump becoming the Republican nominee. But both of them were on the Senate floor supporting their President through his trial. His party has become fiercely loyal to him and this was highlighted in the 2018 mid-terms where several Republican members of Congress lost their votes. They didn't fully support Trump and may well have lost their seats as a result. Trump will be confronting a split Democrat party with a Republican movement that is more confident in their man than ever before, and will be faithful to him in the upcoming vote.

advantage. Coming into 2020 the Republican National Committee (RNC) had an estimated \$63 million to hand compared to the Democratic National Committee's \$8.3 million. The RNC has raised \$215 million so far to support Trump and Republican candidates including \$20.6 million in November, a record for the party and more than twice as much as the DNC's \$8 million. Trump has raised \$46 million in the last quarter largely as a result of his supporters reacting to the impeachment proceedings. Trump's digitally driven campaign is giving him a huge fundraising and organising advantage over whoever the Democrats choose to be their Presidential nominee.

Arguably the most important factor for Trump's popularity is the economic boom that he has been presiding over. The current unemployment rate in the US is 3.5% which is the lowest that it has been since 1969. Under Trump GDP growth has consistently been between 2% to 3% and even reached 2.9% in 2018. Wage growth under Obama sat at around 2% but has risen to 3% under Trump. The President tends to boast about these numbers even suggesting the "economy is the best it has ever been" while making it very clear that he thinks he should be receiving the credit for these figures. While he throws around these numbers and compares them to his predecessor, many Americans look in awe at what Trump has achieved. However, this fails to appreciate that Obama inherited a country in the midst of an economic crisis and a deficit of nearly \$1.5 trillion which he managed



to cut to less the \$500 billion. Under Trump the deficit has ballooned back up to \$984 billion in 2019 and will go over a trillion in 2020. The trade balance has also declined under Trump with the trade deficit reaching \$891 billion in 2019. It has not been all rosy for the economy under Trump as his extensive tax cuts and short-term spending bills fail to address the national debt that he vowed to erase during his presidency. But until the media starts to look at the economy more holistically, Trump will easily be able to spin his argument that he has created the strongest US economy ever and continue to cash in on the popularity this creates.

However, re-election is by no means a certainty for the President as he has to deal with a strong anti-Trump movement and the constant unpredictability of politics. Currently Trump's disapproval rating sits at around 54% the Democrats could cash in on the anti-Trump sentiment to strengthen their position ahead of the November polls. Yet this is where the issue is, the Democrats cannot agree on how best to take down Trump and provide an alternative to the current President. Some believe choosing a progressive politician, such as Elizabeth Warren, who can appeal to the party's base of minorities, younger voters and women, while others believe they should choose a more moderate figure, such as Joe Biden, who can appeal to working-class whites and suburban Republicans who may stray from supporting Trump. Some would like to see a new, authentic and bold take on the Democrat

movement, like what Bernie Sanders represents. These divisions play directly into Trump's hands, as while the Democrats are not presenting a united front, they are also not posing a clear alternative to the USA. But if the Democrats can unite themselves once they have selected their nominee, and not continue intra-party scraps then they can create a serious threat to Trump's prospects of a second term.

Moreover, politics is just too unpredictable for Trump to be assured that he will be re-entering the White House as President-Elect. Take 2012 for example, where Mitt Romney appeared certain to win and had not even prepared a concession speech in case he lost. Then Obama won a second term against the odds in spite of his mere 42% approval rating. The very opposite could happen to Trump, an election night swing towards the Democrats could leave him high and dry and ending his run as President.

The fact is, no one knows what can or will happen when it comes to the vote in November. A variety of events could occur by then which could strengthen or cripple Trump's image as a leader. The Democrats could fall apart as a party or the Republicans could lose faith in their President. However, a second term for Trump does have to be taken as a serious possibility, he certainly appears to have an advantage for the moment. Who knows what we will see come the results in November, but I would advise following US politics intently as it is set to receive a real shakedown before the election.



photo: Will Thomas, 2016

Anti-Trump protests at a Trump rally in 2016.



# How to Exploit the Rise of Populism

by  
Fin Pointing

Over the last few years you might have noticed something going on in our democracies. Out went the bland grey-haired strong-and-stablists, and in came a new wave of fiery politicians. They were bringing sexy back, revolutionising politics into a soap-esque extended drama of controversy, slander and passion. They were here to solve all of society's ills, and hold the other to account for their crimes against humanity. They were the champions of the people - they were populists. No matter where you live in the world, there'll be one on your doorstep; Johnson, Farage, Trump, Putin, Lukashenko, Erdogan, Le Pen, Modi, Duarte, Maduro, I could go on. Populism is here to stay, and in 2020 it's the gateway to power.

So, how could we exploit this? Let's say we want to get into the highest office of the country as fast as possible, and let's assume it's a democracy to make our lives a bit easier. Well, before we start, we need two key prerequisites to be in place already - the first being hardship. If we're talking about the UK, we're in the perfect breeding ground for populism. This country has absolutely faced hardship in the recent past; neoliberalist policies under Thatcher and Blair decimated local communities across the countries, selling them off to aid the economy. The disenfranchised masses, now without their community, have experienced a complete loss of identity before their eyes - but now it's time to find a scapegoat.

The second prerequisite, perhaps more important in recent times, is interconnectivity. The rise of freely available platforms such as

the internet, more particularly social media, have meant that every single person has a voice and every single person can be heard. There's just one issue with this - when information is more easily accessible, lies are also just as easily accessible too. This is perfectly demonstrated by the rise of 'fake news' fringe sources such as Breitbart, the Drudge Report and InfoWars - who, in an Orwellian twist of events, have managed to deflect the criticism back to mainstream news outlets. (What's ignored in these exchanges is that the crimes of mainstream media don't absolve those of fringe media, but I digress.) What social media has been great at is personalising media too. Smaller outlets have smaller audiences, so can specialise in more niche topics; an example could be Dominic Cumming's blog where he can easily respond to requests from readers. So, in the UK, do we have access to social media? Yes. Perfect.

Now that we've covered the prerequisites, we haven't got all day - we need to speed this up. So what can we throw into the mix to get to the five year goal? One could be the presence of algorithms in everyday life. Every action we take, every move we make, every decision, thought and behaviour, is tracked. Google knows you're reading this. They know who you are, where you are, your gender, sexual identity, income, ethnicity, family. They have access to data that knows you better than you do. They don't need you to tell them this stuff anymore either, they can just infer it from other pieces of data - Target can famously predict the pregnancy of its customers before they're even aware, regardless of whether

the person consented to sharing. So, what can they do with it? Sell it, of course. When people regurgitate buzzwords in new combinations like 'data is the new oil', they're somewhat right - it's unavoidable in 2020. And social networks love data. Now, they can captivate people in just 5 seconds, keep us on their platform for as long as they want, all through targeted recommendations. Of course, this has led to the rise of clickbait - why hear about Hillary Clinton's economic plans when you could be hearing about potential links with pizza shop paedophile rings? The truth doesn't matter when you need to get people's attention to survive. And to make things worse, traditional media has been left blindsided to the overnight revolution, and is still catching up.

Perhaps the more dangerous catalyst, however, is ironically traditional media. As part of a bid to compete with fringe media, established outlets have begun to introduce more and more 'personalities' with opinion pieces hidden under the guise of news. There are two narratives that can be taken: one will be fully backing this brand new candidate and their efforts, while another will be and highlighting the ridiculousness of the candidate. Either way, the candidate has what they need - attention. However, what's potentially worse is that a new candidate energising the masses can't be ignored by journalists (especially as the 24/7 media cycle demands more and more content), therefore an obligation is felt to cover them. Yet, current journalistic practices are not robust enough to handle populists. In the pursuit of impartiality there is always an assumption of balance, that there are multiple sides to every story, and that nothing is clear cut. And as such, an immense deal of analysis will be poured into the slightest action of any candidate. Could they mean this? Maybe they meant that? This results in a false balance that allows populists to thrive - no matter what they do, there's always the chance of redemption.

We have the prerequisites, we have the catalysts, everything's in place - now we need a trigger. Usually this takes the form of a major event, however it's not always necessary - eventually the pressure cooker bomb will blow. For us, it was the 2008 financial crisis. By no means was this the sole cause of our ills - the cracks existed long before - but it definitely helped speed up the process. A big complex

issue was doing direct damage to the people of the country, and to make things worse it was tied to the easy target of the EU. Now the cracks are starting to show, we need a scapegoat. There are three routes we can take here; we can target immigrants/minorities, the rich, or the political system. This is why the EU is the ideal target - it is directly linked to immigration, while also as a neoliberal economic system greatly benefited the rich at the expense of local communities. And to top it all off, an immensely complex political and bureaucratic system ties the package together. Perfect.



photo: Gage Skidmore, 2016

**Donald Trump's rallies have become infamous for causing outrage.**

Unfortunately, some effort is required - don't worry, not much though. We need to make some brash outlandish comments that get as much attention as possible. It doesn't matter what you say, in the slightest, so long as there's even just a hint of an inferred message behind it. Take for example Trump mocking disabled journalist Serge Kovaleski. Trump's comments were wholly insensitive, demeaning and insulting, yet they attracted attention just as intended. What did this do? Because the media were now scrutinising these comments, the wider context to the comments was investigated and reported as part of the story analysis. Did the wider context exonerate Trump from his actions? Absolutely not. But, did it also discuss ideas of an elite media class? Yes. The treatment of Trump's comments created a false balance, as if he could even possibly have been vindicated. And that's why these publicity stunts are so effective, however obnoxious and repulsive. Not only will you have the insane fringes who wholeheartedly believe the extreme comments, but more importantly you'll also have the collateral damage - the people who



see the message only because of the attention generated. All this controversy is here to fuel our real motives - shifting the Overton window. This is essentially a gauge for the political zeitgeist - where 'centrism' and political normality is within a community, relative to the global consensus. Normally, if we're struggling so much for power that we're resorting to centrism, our agenda is outside of this. So we need to ensure that we get as much press coverage as possible to normalise our agenda, and eventually start shifting peoples' opinions too.



photo: Gage Skidmore, 2018

**Nigel Farage, somewhat indirectly, was essential for the rise of Boris Johnson to take place.**

All the pieces of the jigsaw are together now, so all we need to do is use this new framework to achieve our objective - power. This is the culmination of months of hard work, so we can't fail now. We need to keep on churning out controversial moments, keep our real message vacuous yet present, and dismiss the competition as the enemy. Then, hey presto! It's independence day, or a new dawn, or a silent revolution, et cetera. This formula is how Johnson was able to win after years of Tory rule – he wasn't Cameron or May, he offered an alternative - he was Boris. He had a new option, he had the drama, and he had our attention. His form of populism isn't as extreme as Trump's, but it didn't need to be – Farage did the heavy lifting for the past 10 years, for which he could receive a knighthood. This formula isn't a revolution in the political world, it's tried and true in developing countries, but the revolution is adapting to major global

democracies; the unsinkables. I never thought I, the leftie liberal socialist snowflake scum, would be saying this, but - maybe the Tony Blairs of the world have a point. Centrism poses a real threat to democracy, if it continues in the way it is.

But, maybe it's not all doom and gloom? What we conventionally associate with populism is extremist policies - Trump's Muslim ban, Le Pen's burka ban, Putin's LGBT clampdowns. But when we take a step back, this formula doesn't always have to be to the detriment of the people. Bernie Sanders is attempting to use this formula to shift America's Overton window towards what we'd consider centralism in the UK. Sure, the direction of change is left, yet this isn't inherently negative - his policies could be considered equivalent to what Clement Atlee's were for the UK. Populism isn't an ideology, it's a style of campaigning and governance - and can absolutely be used for good. if so chosen to do so.



photo: Gage Skidmore, 2016

**Bernie Sanders, 2020 US Presidential candidate.**

And that's what's always forgotten when discussing populism; these extreme political shifts aren't the cause of our ills, but rather it's the symptom of something far worse in the system - disenfranchisement. The rise of populism is almost cathartic; the everyday people of the country finally being heard after decades of being ignored, almost an expression of rage at our so-called representatives. Maybe it's even more mundane than that - maybe just an expression of rage at everyday life? Everything about our lives is predetermined at this point in time, like we truly have lost control of our own lives. We all live within the confines of the same system, yet it creates such a divide that we can't claim equity. Populism is taking back control - but it doesn't have to be bad.





photo: Carol Highsmith

# Capitalism and the Free Market: Force of Evil?

by William Higgs

Despite being the biggest driver of economic growth in all of human history, capitalism seems to be under attack from a new generation of politicians. It is argued that capitalism is unfair, selfish and creates inequality, an argument that not once considers the greater misery of socialism.

One of the most central principles to capitalism and the free market is the idea that one can only improve their own circumstances by improving the circumstances of others. This is because in order to generate capital, one must provide goods or services that are in demand, or create a market for a new good, then sell such goods. This is a fundamental principle of capitalism, a principle which enables innovation, competitiveness and hard work. In economic systems like that of Cuba, it is possible to get paid by the government by doing as little work as possible for the duration of your shift. The amount of money a worker, their colleagues and the business receive from the government does not vary with the effort a worker puts into his or her job. This sort of economic model is unlikely to drive innovation, growth or change. While it does hold true that innovation and effort could gain a worker respect from their peers, it could enrich their job experience, and it could enable the worker to become proficient in different skills, none of these virtues hold any monetary value in such a society. If you apply a capitalist economic model to an establishment such as a restaurant, in order to generate capital, you have to provide good quality food at a reasonable price in order to compete with others vying for a greater market share, which in turn reduces prices for consumers, closing the productivity gap.

Capitalism tends to reward those who are efficient, industrious, financially prudent, and those who seek to better their own position by innovating and creating goods that others will buy; in a capitalist society it is always possible to rise and better your own position, by creating wealth. It is said that the financial position you were born into will determine how successful you are. This is true to an extent, but the virtue of capitalism is that this can be changed. This system has been the biggest driver of prosperity in the world. Take China for example; under Mao, between the years of 1958 to 1962, somewhere between 40 and 60 million people starved to death, according to Yang Jisheng, author of 'Tombstone'. Since the abolition of the Communist Party of China in 1982, China has lifted over 680 million people out of poverty and has reduced its extreme poverty rate (those living on a dollar a day or less) from 84% to just 10%. This is because China has rejected its socialist ways, and has embraced free market capitalism, reducing barriers to free trade. This allowed people from the poorest decile of society to lift themselves out of poverty by setting up businesses and engaging in free trade with one another. It is now the second largest economy by GDP, beaten only by the United States.

Friedrich Hayek, author of 'The Road to Serfdom', argued against the apparent immorality of capitalism, likening those in a socialist society as 'slaves'. His moral defence of capitalism is enlightening and well worth a read. In short, Hayek believes a society which squanders its wealth from those who have the determination, drive and innovation to make a profit is an immoral society, and that such a society would lead to every aspect of life being



planned, with all personal liberties thrown to the side, essentially making human life very difficult indeed.

Inequality is endemic in capitalism. Giving people freedom and choice over their lives will inevitably lead to people making different choices and so lead to different outcomes. It is a sad fact of capitalism that many will be forced to live below the poverty line if they cannot provide the skills the job market requires. A liberal method of reducing inequality would be to enable equality of opportunity from a young age, as an aid to employment, or to fill a skills shortage, however there is no method to eradicate inequality completely while still operating

as a capitalist society.

The incentive of profit is the best way we have of generating wealth. Part of this motivation comes from the fact that in a capitalist society, one can pursue wealth and that almost anyone can become successful regardless of what family they were born into. The free market drives change and healthy competition between businesses, drives down costs and raises quality in order to gain a larger consumer base. As Winston Churchill once said, “The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries”



With the recent protests that have engulfed the region of Hong Kong, due to resentment of the overreach of Chinese authority, a question that has been central to the development of democracy has arisen. What do we consider liberty to be? It seems such a simple question in a Western democracy such as ours, which, for all of the political chaos that consumes our daily news cycle, is relatively strong in its preservation of liberty. The right to a defence when on trial, the right to not be detained for extensive periods without allegation and the right to assemble are all truisms in modern Britain. However this is not as cut and dry as one would hope, especially when it comes to freedom of speech. Whilst the Americans have the right to free speech enshrined in the US Constitution, which was declared absolute by the Supreme Court case, *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, our laws surrounding freedom of expression

are more complex. The 1998 Human Rights Act lays out the United Kingdom’s law surrounding free speech.

“1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

2) The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health



or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.”

This law has two main tenets: that free expression is a universal right, and that it is subject to legal restrictions. The latter is, evidently, where the problem with UK law arises. There are clearly restrictions on speech which are necessary, such as the illegality of an incitement to crime or speech which creates a present danger (often metaphorically referred to as “Shouting fire in a crowded theatre”). However, the more controversial clause of this law is the restriction “for the protection of health or morals”. This means that speech that harms another person’s health or morality is not protected by law. This, unlike the majority of this piece of legislation, is far more subjective than would be ideal for a law as critical as this. What we must ask ourselves is: what does this clause mean, and is it reasonable?

The protection of health is, in theory, the more straightforward part of the clause; it restricts speech that puts the health of another person at risk. Whilst this is hypothetically reasonable - after all, incitement to violence is a crime - once mental health is taken into account, the waters become far more muddied. According to the NHS, stress “might affect how you feel physically, mentally and also how you behave,” meaning that stress has an impact on physical, mental and social health. One could infer from this that speech that causes stress puts the health of the listener at risk, and under the Human Rights Act, is not protected under law. This clearly is unreasonable, as by this chain of reasoning, any argument that gets even remotely heated is not protected under law. In fact, any speech that leads to any negative emotion, including a difference of opinion, would not be protected under law, as it increases the risk of stress, which is a health risk. The inclusion of the protection of health is clearly

too broad for this legislation.

The protection of morals is perhaps even more broad and open to abuse than the protection of health. As anyone who has been in Britain during the Brexit fiasco could attest to, people have different opinions. And as they can also attest to, there are plenty of people who will ascribe bad intent to others who disagree with them. This is where this law could become truly deadly. If a person can be seen as putting forward an “immoral opinion” then their opinion would not be protected by law. The problem is that someone has to judge whether an opinion is moral or not, and given the proclivity of people to label others as having bad intentions, it would be dangerous for this decision to be made by lawmakers and law enforcers of a country. The protection of morality cannot be deemed as a suitable justification for restricting speech as the judgement of this is too easily influenced by political and personal opinion.

So given that this clause is faulty, the next question we should ask ourselves is: how or should the clause be replaced? Clearly a dystopia where all dissenting opinions from the government are prosecuted is not anywhere close to reality in Britain. However, it does not mean that it is not a reasonable issue that should be addressed. I propose that the clause in question should be entirely removed, as to ensure that no person is put at risk in the future, if there ever comes a day in which government oversteps and chooses to restrict reasonable speech in certain situations. Whilst nobody should endorse hateful opinions, the ability for people to imply bad intent where they may not be any is what makes this legislation so deadly. We must root out hate in our national rhetoric, whilst being careful not to give legislative power to a fallible government who may, and in many countries such as China do, overreach their role in the restriction of liberty.





# THE POLITEIA

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