

# Brexit and Its Discontents. “The Condition of Democracy in Britain”

The Dispossessed, the Vulnerable, the Prey and the Exploiters

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*“If protection rackets represent organised crime at its smoothest, then war risking and state making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy – qualify as our largest examples of organised crime. Without branding all generals and statesmen as murderers or thieves, I want to urge the value of that analogy. At least for the European experience of the past few centuries, a portrait of war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives.” — “War Making and State Making as Organised Crime”, **Charles Tilly** in “Bringing the State Back In” Cambridge University Press; 1985*

*“Governments will use whatever technology is available to them to combat their primary enemy – which is their own population...They (governments and corporations) take whatever is available, and in no time it is being used against us, the population. Governments are not representative. They have their own power, serving segments of the population that are dominant and rich.” — **Noam Chomsky** in conversation with Fiona Harvey, *The Guardian* 2013.*

At a time when the elite political class and wealthy middle class of Britain are working to reverse the democratic decision to leave Europe, it is worth looking closely at the condition of democracy in Britain, an island that contributed significantly to political inclusiveness and empowerment historically, through the Magna Carta in 1215 and Habeas Corpus in 1679. These two acts elevated the common man from position of objectified serf, subject to power, to a position in which the citizen had a degree of autonomy and an (albeit highly controlled, stratified and mediated) stake in the political process.

We should look closely at the current impasse of Brexit, observing the manner in which the media and political leaders are subverting the political process, ignoring the wishes of the majority of Britain’s citizens, and also both mystifying and propagandising the process of how political influence is wielded, disseminated, and acted upon.

Given that Britain’s political class are so vociferous and propagandistic in their criticism of Putin, with their accusation that he is meddling in Britain’s ( and America’s) political process, it is arch and contradictory then, that they are uncritical when George Soros openly interferes with Britain’s democratic process : The Guardian reported in February 2018 that Soros had contributed 400,000 Pounds to the *Best For Britain* campaign group, a think tank and pressure group devoted to keeping Britain in the EU, openly acting against the majority’s vote in favour of leaving the EU.

A closer look at Soros’ actions give us an insight into how power functions across borders

and nations and boundaries in unity with other state bodies, who, in a functioning democracy should be serving the will of the majority, but are simply serving the interests of the elites and corporations: what would the Western media say if Putin openly interfered with the Brexit vote? And yet, it is deemed perfectly acceptable for Soros to both contribute to and campaign for the Remain side.

Think tanks and pressure groups function to coerce and re-direct the democratic process in service of wealthy interest groups and individual ambitions, not to further it.

**Tony Blair** – the man who took Britain into an illegal war in Iraq that killed and maimed millions and created a tragic refugee crisis that transformed the world, is also actively campaigning to reverse the democratic decision to leave the EU, with The Guardian reporting in December 2017 that “Tony Blair confirms he is working to reverse Brexit.’

When interviewed on BBC Radio 4 and questioned as to whether he was disregarding the will of the British people he replied

“the will of the people is not something immutable. People can change their mind if the circumstances change...So when the facts change, I think people are entitled to change their mind.”

The implication here is that the powerful get to tell us what ‘the facts’ are and they also get to tell us when those ‘facts’ change and how they are going to act on those changes. The democratic will is something that is ‘not fixed’; rather it is malleable — and can be ignored. ‘The facts’ are fluid and there to be manipulated by the powerful in a post-truth epoch.



Alastair Campbell with Tony Blair

**Alastair Campbell**, Tony’s Blair’s spin doctor who promoted and cheer-led the devastating war on Iraq also encourages the British public to resist Brexit and to march for a second Referendum with the intention of keeping Britain in the EU. It is ironic that prior to the war on Iraq in 2003, the British public marched on the streets in record numbers to show their

resistance to the war – Alastair Campbell and the other warmongers in the British cabinet ignored them and ignored the British peoples’ democratic participation in the political process by simply storming ahead and declaring war on Iraq anyway.

Now, Alastair Campbell axiomatically expects the Remain demonstrators’ protest to be respected and acted upon, whilst he was content to contemptuously ignore and override those millions of Britons who marched against the Iraq War in 2003.

But even if Britain is allowed to leave the EU, its democracy and opportunities for employment and social mobility are still in a poor state: according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies in 2018 opportunities for home ownership have halved in the last twenty years for those on middle incomes. According to 2018 reports in The Guardian the numbers of homeless people dying on the streets of Britain has doubled in the last five years. The Independent reports that figures for the homeless are at a record level, with statistics showing that on any night, 4,751 people are sleeping rough on Britain’s streets.

Those forced to seek food from charities such as food banks are also at record level: almost four million adults use food banks, and statistics from Trussell Trust also show that children are increasingly represented, with four million living below the poverty line. Child homelessness has increased 80 % since 2011.

Then there is the criminalised and marginalised economy that the poor are increasingly compelled to participate in should they wish to provide for their families – journalist Diane Taylor reported in 2015 in The Guardian that, according to one of the largest ever surveys of the sex trade undertaken in Britain, in excess of 70% of Britain’s sex workers had previously been employed in the healthcare sector, in the education sector, or had worked for charities.

Over a third had university qualifications and 17 % were qualified to post graduate level: the grim clasp of austerity in Britain is not only impacting the underclass – it is now effecting the middle classes.

*Slavoj Žižek’s observations on the dual nature of conventional and concealed state power are pertinent here : “State power itself is split from within and relies on its own obscene spectral underside : public state apparatuses are always supplemented by their shadowy double, by a network of publicly disavowed rituals, unwritten rules, institutions, practices and so on...So the problem is not simply the marginals who lead the spectral half-existence of those excluded by the hegemonic symbolic regime; the problem is that this regime itself , in order to survive , has to rely on a whole gamut of mechanisms whose status is spectral, disavowed, excluded from the public domain...the opposition between state and civil society is thoroughly ambivalent.” (Slavoj Žižek “Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues On The Left” Verso Books 1999)*

In 2014, the [Office for National Statistics](#) in the first ever survey of its kind calculated how much sex workers and drug traffickers contributed to the British economy revealing – astonishingly – that these underground trades made approximately the same contribution to the British economy as did the farming and agricultural sector and they contributed almost as much money as did book and newspaper publishers combined, augmenting the economy by £9.7bn in 2009.

In 2018 Britain has been struggling with a knife crime surge, the Office for National Statistics

(ONS) reporting 39,332 knife offences, the highest number recorded, with 100 killed in London alone — London has more deaths from stabbings than New York.

Acid attacks are also increasing: reports in The Independent newspaper in 2017 cite police studies that show Britain has one of the highest number of acid attacks in the world.

In October 2018, the National County Lines Coordination Centre revealed more statistics which showed the extent to which children were being coerced into the criminal economy, with each county lines foray making £5,000 a day for participants, with profits of £7million made in total amongst them all.

Organised gangs ferry heroin and crack from major urban centers to suburban and satellite towns, doubling the number of gangs in Britain to 1,500 in the last year — these gangs groom children to sell drugs, and they are estimated to collectively earn £7million a day, totaling £2.5billion a year.

And yet this is a war on the poor and vulnerable that is not restricted to wealthy and privileged states like Britain : it is a voracious and rapacious trend worldwide, illustrating that the relationship between the haves and the have-nots has not changed since the birth of the Industrial Revolution, when wealthy land and factory owners preyed on the weak and vulnerable, and the exploitative relationship has not moved beyond that established by the colonial power structures - looking beyond Europe, we see the same oppressive relationships imposed upon those devastated and uprooted by austerity, war and violence.

Those deracinated by globalisation and disenfranchised by commercial forces and interests are then in turn compelled to prop up and support the very same forces that scattered and disempowered them in the first place : in May 2018, the Financial Times ran an article with the headline “Refugee camps are an untapped opportunity for ( the ) private sector...( and the ) World Bank urges private sector interest in refugee camps,” in which the newspaper callously opined that impoverished refugees’ “economic activity (was) held back by restrictions on property ownership, employment and access to capital”

The coerced and persecuted victims of capital (in this case the refugees) are transformed by unscrupulous business opportunists into subservient producers of surplus value.

And the refugee is caught up in such a relationship, limited by it and ensnared by it because he or she has nowhere else to run to.

Refugee camps and their inhabitants are reduced to yet another business opportunity: Kakuma refugee camp is recently the subject of attention as a focus for such economic interest.



Kakuma Refugee Camp

It should be noted that Kakuma is one of the poorest areas in Kenya and the Kakuma refugee camp has 60,000 occupants, many of whom are children and unaccompanied minors.

The United Nations Refugee agency reports that the number of people scattered and uprooted by war and conflict is at the highest level ever recorded in human history, with 65 million people expelled from their homes.

That means one in each 113 people in the world is a refugee.

The poorest sectors of society are forced to prop up the very forces of capital and exploitation that uprooted them in the first place — if they wish to survive.

The poorest amongst us are compelled to submit to a global hierarchy that does not serve the interests of most human beings on our planet. The powerful, the think tanks, the armies, the employers and the criminals that serve them discipline the workforce in an epoch of mass austerity.

Refugees then, are victims of capital and empire that are scattered with the intention of destabilising first their own communities and homelands, leaving them open to the robbery of their mineral wealth at the hands of proxy forces as we see in Libya and Iraq, and as a secondary effect, the refugees are then used to destabilise the workforce of the countries they are compelled to move to by undercutting local working class labour wages.

It is such coercive, engineered mass migration that Kelly Greenhill explores in her study *“Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy”* (Cornell University Press, 2011) in which she analyses case studies of refugees who are the victims of globalisation, that in turn are then used as part of a causal process of consequences that further serves the disruptive and exploitative aims and goals of capital.

Children are also rendered vulnerable in the most fundamental of human interactions — that of providing sustenance and nutrition — in August 2018, The Independent reported that weed-killing chemicals were found to be present in children’s food, including breakfast cereals and snack bars targeted at child consumers. In a report carried out by Prof Meharg

of Queen's University Belfast he warned parents of the dangerous levels of arsenic in children's rice products.

It is not only refugees, the homeless and children that fall into the crosshairs: Once protected by universal health care brought about by Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge's post war consensus in Europe, the vulnerable, the old and the weak are also now becoming economic targets, preyed upon by pharma executives — in a 2018 report by Dave Crow of the Financial Times, a pharma executive claimed he had a "moral requirement to sell the product at the highest price" when Nostrum Laboratories upped the cost of antibiotics from \$474.75 to \$2,392 per bottle. Nostrum Chief Executive Nirmal Mulye commented "I think it is a moral requirement to make money when you can . . . to sell the product for the highest price," going on to say that he worked in "this business to make money... This is a capitalist economy and if you can't make money you can't stay in business."

Divide and conquer is part of the strategy that disempowers the vulnerable and weak, rendering them open to further disenfranchisement — the British have long been skilled in this art : as long as the weak are unable to form a united resistance, the rich will be safe. Studying the literature regarding the British rule in India is instructive since British rule pivoted upon ensuring the weak were divided. General Sir Charles Napier's memoirs stressed that unity amongst a populace had to be avoided if the powerful were to secure their privilege, writing of the Indians the British ruled over that "the moment these brave and able natives learn how to combine they will rush on us simultaneously and the game will be up" (*Life of General Sir Charles Napier*. W.N. Bruce, London, 1835) and with Lord Elphinstone commenting presciently that "Divide et impera' was the old Roman motto and it should be ours."

At the time of British rule in India, Major-General Sir H.T. Tucken also emphasised endless division of the ruled as a means of control, condoning "anything, in short, to divide and so neutralise the strength of the castes and nationalities"

Proxy forces are always useful to power, getting others to do 'the dirty work' and to further the strategy of divide and rule as we can clearly observe by the West's current use of proxy forces in Syria, Mali, Libya and Yemen. General Sir Charles Napier envisaged such a role for the Gurkhas in British-ruled India, writing of them at the time that "the Gurkha will be faithful, and for low pay we can enlist a large body of troops whom our best officers consider equal in courage to European troops. Even as a matter of economy this will be good; but the great advantage of enlisting these hill-men will be that with 30,000 or 40,000 Gurkhas added to the 30,000 Europeans, the possession of India, will not depend on opinion, but on an army able with ease to overthrow any combination among Hindeos ( sic) or Mohammedans or both."

Getting cheap labour and ensuring ethnic division is indispensable to those interested in divide and conquer and setting the weak against the weak, thus ensuring control and the means of exploitation.

A cursory look at the current political epoch shows us the same scenario – Alt-Right warring with Anti-fa, right wing nationalists, fighting with progressives, Sunni warring with Shia, Salafi proxies killing Sufi sects in Mali and levelling their ancient cultural centres, scholarly libraries and shrines, street level conservative patriot groups like the EDL and their assorted supporters fighting the liberal progressives, whilst on the campuses, radical feminists fight

LGBT male transitioners.

The struggle between Brexiteers and Remainers, between Afro-Caribbean machete gangs and their nemeses, between drug dealers and their prey in the inner city ghettos, between feminists and LGBT transitioners, between right wing street gangs and anarchists, German nationalists and refugees on the run, is emblematic of a far deeper malaise -

In the words of **Nafeez Ahmed** in "*Celebrating the Hidden Holocaust*",

"Don't be fooled into believing that this war is over. The war has shifted and expanded in multiple directions. And increasingly, it has crept into the homeland, into the hearts and minds of the American people, the British people, and so on. The starkest evidence of it is its very invisibility. In the comforting illusion of an annual celebration, that sanitizes a global system whose trajectory of relentless extraction is accelerating us toward an uninhabitable planet by end of century. It's not just that we're complicit in this trajectory. It's that, now, they—the system—is coming for us. We're the cannon-fodder. We're the consumers. We're the ones that are plugged into a system that knows only the path of endless, cancerous growth, like blind cogs in a machine, beholden to clickbait, addicted to retail therapy, running after the next high, because we cannot bear the silence and awkwardness of our own selves.

So guess what.

We're the Nazis.

And we're the Natives.

And we're next in line."

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