

# Thoughts on the election (2015)

## Introduction

Who needs another political analysis? Are there not hundreds of pundits poring over the election?

My voice is pointless in this world and my thoughts of little consequence; however, people ask for them anyway – even folk outside of the UK. So I will briefly give you my first impression before I get multiple emails.

In case you have been asleep for days, here are the results:

Party	Seats (MPs)
Conservatives (Tory)	331 (+24) The Speaker traditionally does not vote in debates.
Labour	232 (-26)
SNP	56 (+50)
Lib Dem	8 (-47)
Plaid Cymru	3
UKIP	1 (+1 since last election, -1 considering by-elections)
Greens	1 (no change)
DUP	8
Sinn Fein	4
SDLP	3
UUP	2
Others	1

## Surprise; what surprise!

The stand out feature of this election is the massive surprise, even shock, that the Tories gained a small majority when all the polls suggested a hung parliament. They were amazed when the Lib Dems were crucified. They were shocked that Labour did so badly. Even the Tories themselves were amazed at the result and did not expect it at all.

Well none of this is amazing.

Staggering differences between the polls and the polling has happened before, especially in favour of the Tories (such as 92). This has led to the phrase, 'shy Tories' who do not tell the pollsters how they will really vote. So there is no great surprise that the polls were so wrong.

Secondly, the fate of the Lib Dems and Labour has been predictable for years. Without blowing any trumpets, years ago I said that Ed Milliband was un-electable when he became leader and at least two years ago, if not longer, said and wrote that the Lib Dems would be decimated for breaking the public's trust so badly and betraying their core voters by allying with the right.

The fate of Ed Milliband is sad but obvious. He should never have been elected leader of the party. I believe him to be a sincere, but weak, man hopelessly out of his depth. He was tarnished (as Ed Balls) by being a senior member of the Blair and Gordon Brown governments and that was never going to go down well with the voters. They both voted for

the Iraq War, supported Blair's lies, and presided over wasting money. They both had no chance and it is no surprise that Ed Balls lost his seat.

Added to this was Ed Milliband's geeky nature and gaffe-prone character. Though this should not be a factor (the point should be does he have what it takes?); nevertheless voters are shallow in the main and such a person will not be elected. This is why Cameron is electable despite lying, having a poor track record (when properly analysed) and being stuck in the pockets of the rich. His 'smooth operator', 'Teflon Dave', image goes down well with the public. Compared to Ed Milliband, Cameron seems more able and statesmanlike.

The night before the election, I predicted that Cameron would remain in power; that Labour would lose significantly and that the Lib Dems would only have a handful of seats (they now have 8 out of 56). I also predicted that UKIP would get lots of votes but hardly any MPs (they have one; less than their previous two) and that the Greens would be fortunate to get one seat (they did keep Brighton Pavilion).

If I could predict this, why did all the pollsters and pundits express such surprise? Paddy Ashdown, still in cloud cuckoo land on election night, refused to believe the exit poll (which was more restrained than the actual result) and said that he would eat his hat if it were true (he did not).

This proves a significant point; the political class live in a greenhouse world of their own kind divorced from reality. Thus they cannot see outcomes of their own decisions and aspirations. They are blind to the world that you and I live in. The world and his wife knew that Ed Milliband could never win the election, but Labour didn't.

Furthermore, Labour are supposed to be the champions of the working class and upholders of social justice and fairness. Yet their policy was Tory-lite; continuing austerity policies and doing nothing about the gap between the mega-rich and the working poor. They should learn from the SNP who did adopt such leftwing policies and thrashed Labour in Scotland.

### **A change in traditional politics**

Apart from the feature of multi parties today, politics has changed to some degree.

Firstly, huge numbers do not vote (the precise number is not known yet). This election the turnout was the highest since 1997 since approx. 66% voted. In fact this means that over a third of eligible voters did not vote and this figure has been even higher in the past. Scotland is the exception where the turnout was 71.1; two parts of Scotland had a turnout of 80%. The UK is 76<sup>th</sup> in the world ranking of voter turnout (for example, in Australia it is 94.5%).

What this says is that either people are apathetic about government (which considering the arguments and bluster is less likely) or that people feel disenfranchised by the political elite and believe that their votes are pointless. This is largely to do with the electoral system.

The second feature is that the Tories are celebrating with gusto about a majority of about 8.<sup>1</sup> This shows how things have drifted. In the past such a slight majority would have been

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<sup>1</sup> Of 650 seats (minus 1 for the Speaker, minus the 4 Sinn Fein MPs who do not take the oath) the number needed for a majority is 323. The Tories have 331, that is a majority of 8. Some people have said 10 but that cannot be correct.

viewed with disappointment but after a five-year coalition even this majority is considered an achievement.

For example, it means that the whole Cabinet will consist of Tories. All the ministerial departments will only have Tories in them. This bodes ill for a country that experienced draconian cuts under a coalition where the Lib Dems claimed to hold back the worst of Tory policies. What will happen now?

One problem for Cameron is that this slight majority gives his backbenchers great manoeuvring capacity. It means that only nine backbenchers need to choose to rebel in order to defeat a government motion. Since very many more than that are opposed to being in the EU, he could have serious problems with a split Tory party; just as John Major had after 1992.

The slender Tory majority being celebrated shows that politics are changing and must be reformed.

### **The electoral system in this country is bust**

We've known for years that the first past the post system and the boundaries of constituencies are hopelessly useless for years; but no one is going to do anything about it since the two main parties rely upon this system for getting the majority of their votes.

Thus we have very serious anomalies. For example:

- The Tories will now be in power for another five years despite two-thirds of the voting public voting against them.
- Virtually all Scotland, virtually all the North East and North West, most of Yorkshire and the Humber, most of Wales, much of the Home Counties and London and almost half of the Midlands voted against the Tories but will be governed by the party they did not want. [The Tories are strongest in the South West, the South East, East Anglia and East Midlands.]
- UKIP polled over two and a half times more votes than the SNP (3.9 million compared to about 1.454 million) but only got one seat while the SNP got 56.
- The Green party only got one seat despite gaining 1.1 million votes; nearly as many as the SNP.
- The NHA, despite being a new single-issue party, gained 20,210 votes and outperformed the Lib Dems in several areas, beat Respect, the BNP and other parties, but gained no seats at all.

What is certain is that while the first past the post system was acceptable in a two main party system, which was the situation for a century, this is not any good when you have a multi-party candidacy, which is what we now have. As well as the many independents, we now have well-established parties, such as: the Lib Dems, SNP, Plaid Cymru, UKIP and the Greens – that all were included in TV debates. We have the SDLP, DUP, Sinn Fein and others in Northern Ireland. Then we have lesser parties, such as the new TUSC, the NHA, Yorkshire First, Respect Party, CISTA, English Democrats and others.

Unless the nation tolerates injustice, there has to be electoral change to some form of Proportional Representation.

The upshot of this is that much of the population is going to feel aggrieved for some time. When the planned £12 billion of welfare cuts start hitting the already poor this grievance will spill over into anger. This bodes ill for the country. In fact it did not take long for large

demonstrations against Tory cuts and austerity to erupt in London and Wales. When £12bn more arrive we could see rioting on a scale as the old poll tax riots.

All of Scotland except Edinburgh voted against austerity measures. When more austerity comes, the Scots are going to be very angry indeed. This is exceptionally dangerous.

Furthermore, if almost all Scotland voted for a separatist party, the likelihood of an independent Scotland is greater than ever. If Cameron does not offer Nicola Sturgeon some kind of juicy bone, we could see constitutional crisis as well as social upheaval in Scotland. On the other hand, if even more favours are given to the Scots,<sup>2</sup> there will be massive protests in Wales and the North of England.

### **The nature of the result**

The result is truly deplorable. It represents the achievement of lies and focusing on the capacity of people for selfishness put over in a well-orchestrated fashion by American electoral advisors.<sup>3</sup>

The key real issues (as I explained in a previous paper) were the running down of the NHS to near collapse and the state of the economy. In both areas the Tories have done great damage – yet they have been returned!

I will try not to repeat earlier papers here; suffice to say:

Although the ploy of mentioning, time and again, the fabled Tory success in dealing with the economy, the fact is that the economy is much worse off. The national debt has at least doubled under their watch and they borrowed more in five years than Labour did in 13. Growth is at a much lower level now than it was under Labour prior to the 2010 election. By any measure this is a failure. One famous and influential economist has called for George Osborne to be tried for treason and executed for the damage he has done to the country and economy. Another said that a child would have made better decisions, while yet another said that a toss of a dice would have produced better policies.

The policies of austerity have now been effectively trashed left, right and centre. Economists on both sides of the fence have written extensively that austerity measures damage the economy and do not help it.<sup>4</sup> The facts of the last five years illustrate this effectively. In the past austerity measures wrecked economies<sup>5</sup> and they do not work. The Tories should admit that the reason they adopt them is ideological (they hate the welfare state) and not economical. Another five Tory years will ruin Britain; possibly forever (is that the objective?).

This bodes very badly for the poor, the working people under pressure, the disabled, young unemployed, anyone needing a home and young families. Conversely, the rich will get richer and the top 0.1% will get even more fabulously wealthy.

The NHS will collapse unless the Tories reverse their policies and previous reforms. They should come clean that dozens of Tory MPs stand to gain from every private contract which takes work from the NHS and gives it to entrepreneurs with less experience and

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<sup>2</sup> They already have free prescriptions and tuition fees paid for by England.

<sup>3</sup> Also, there is the possibility of fear brought into the closing days of electioneering by the Tory scaremongering of a fatal SNP/Labour coalition which made some people vote Tory. These 56 MPs are going to have significant influence anyway; that is the process of our democracy.

<sup>4</sup> Most recently Paul Krugman (an American liberal) but others have included libertarians.

<sup>5</sup> In early 30s Germany they reduced the GDP by 25%.

commitment. The results so far have been shocking, including many unnecessary deaths. How anyone can trust them when they promised in 2010 to ring fence the NHS budget and then imposed £22 billion of efficiency savings (cuts – mostly to vital staff).

Perhaps the saddest outcome is that the constant appeal of the Tories was to false promises about the economy, which everyone believed instead of checking out the truth, and the commitment to lower taxes (despite raising very many in the last five years). It was a blatant appeal to selfishness. Poor working people struggling to keep their head above water, have voted for this promise – despite the fact that the Tories have reduced the real value of wages of working class people and diminished the value of savings by over 17%.

In a very real sense this election could be characterised as turkeys voting for Christmas.

The real loser in all this is the truth, in two ways.

The first is the lying of politicians; the shocking barefaced lies of calling black white and getting away with it. The second is the folly of voters who did not check out the truth but trusted manifestos and false promises, without even checking to see if previous promises were kept.

### **Media influence: has it changed?**

One could also argue that the influence of newspapers with vested interests continue to browbeat weak people, despite all the claims that social media and the Internet have reduced this power.

It is certain that the elite establishment can very easily herd the population like sheep without a shepherd. The proportion of those voters who think carefully, who weigh up the options properly and who are not callous or selfish, is very few. I am tempted to name a few good people who tried in this election, but I will refrain.

Much was made in the run up to the election that social media and the Internet would dominate public opinion and that newspapers have had their day. This proved to be false.

For example: Russell Brand has millions of Twitter followers and hundreds of thousands watch his regular TREWS YouTube videos. He was considered so important that Ed Milliband and the Greens visited him to be interviewed. Brand then issued a command to vote Labour (excepting voting Green in Brighton), despise holding the repeated opinion that we should not vote but campaign for social revolution. Cameron was widely castigated for calling both Brand and Milliband a joke. However he had the last laugh and Brand's influence proved to be a miasma when Labour was trashed.

Also we had various people (usually in the employ of press barons) telling us that studies have proved that the influence of the press on voting turnout was zero. Of course no study can prove this since in living memory there has not been an election where the press did not seek to influence voters. Without a proper control, there can be no comparison.

In fact, this election suggests that the old-fashioned paper press did have an influence and the majority of newspapers were rightwing. Remember that the Blairite revolution had the unusual support of Murdoch. Interestingly, the Sun newspaper in Scotland broke ranks and urged a vote for the SNP. This also adds to the evidence.

Thus it seems that social media and the Internet generate a lot of froth but, in the end, do not have pervasive power; however, the influence of newspapers is still strong.

### **What can we learn from all this?**

Don't trust what pollsters, politicians and pundits tell you. It's the votes that count.

Worldly politics are a sham. Spin counts more than truth and evidence; the appearance of leaders counts more than policies and results.

The political class live in a greenhouse world of their own kind divorced from reality. They are out of touch with the electorate and no longer represent the voting population.

The media, and still the press, can dominate elections with spin or fear.

The voting public is largely selfish. They vote for what politician promises to give them the most.

The nation is divided and this is dangerous.

Scotland overwhelmingly voted against the government that rules over them. This is dangerous.

The politics of caring, progressive reform, and humanitarian action are out of fashion; unless you live in Scotland – where you cannot implement them.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that Labour will now become (again) a rightwing Blairite party to attract voters.<sup>7</sup>

Again it has proved to be pointless voting in this broken system (which is why I didn't).<sup>8</sup>

It will be easy for a future antichrist to get into power on the basis of false promises if this election is anything to go by.

Christians will need to redouble their efforts in the next five years since things will get worse for the poor. There are already a million people using food banks<sup>9</sup> and over four million people in food poverty, despite living in one of the richest nations on earth. Head teachers have now complained to the government that local measures to help starving schoolkids is ruining their budgets. Large numbers of teachers bring food from their own homes to feed schoolkids; many of whom have fainted from hunger in class. This is despicable and an offence to God. Christians must support the poor.

Cameron's claims of supervising Britain as a family and caring for the needs of all, of stating that '*we are all in this together*', are going to be held accountable to the Lord on Judgment Day, and not favourably.

### **What do Christians do?**

They do what they should always have done; seek to glorify God,<sup>10</sup> obey the law of Christ<sup>11</sup> and try to do good to all people.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Labour was only mildly leftwing, it was slightly right of centre but was still trashed. Plaid Cymru and the Greens are as left as the SNP but only have four seats altogether. The Lib Dems claimed to be left and progressive but supported draconian austerity measures of a rightwing government.

<sup>7</sup> Blair always claimed that a leftwing Labour party is not electable.

<sup>8</sup> I would have voted NHA if they had a candidate in my constituency.

<sup>9</sup> Most of them are not benefit scroungers (the system is vetted carefully) but working poor.

<sup>10</sup> Ps 86:12; 'I will glorify Your name forevermore.'

<sup>11</sup> Gal 6:2; 'fulfil the law of Christ'.

We must remember that we seek a heavenly city, a spiritual country,<sup>13</sup> and that our treasure is in heaven.<sup>14</sup> We are only passing through this earth as strangers and pilgrims that should not get caught up in worldly events.<sup>15</sup>

Thus believers should not be involved in human politics; it is far beneath them. This is to say nothing of the terrible corrupting power in politics. The very best that politicians can do is re-arrange the deckchairs on the Titanic; it is pointless and we have much more important things to do.

This is not to say that we should ignore injustice, or the poor or the weak; not at all. I have often written on the need to champion the cause of the poor and to condemn those who oppress them. But this is to maintain a witness to what God thinks of this, not to get into human politics. We are to be a testimony to the truth and glorify the law of God; not submit to corrupt politicians on the right or the left. Involvement in political parties will damage your spirit.

Our mandate to do good to all also means that we should actively engage in practical relief of the poor and needy locally whenever we can; even if it is just giving money. Giving food to a single hungry person glorifies God far more than years in politics.

Apart from all that, how many poor Christians have been active in a political party and supported some or other leader, only to later find that this person was iniquitous and his policies led to great unrighteousness, or even the death of millions. Without any doubt many Christians in the world have voted for people who were literally the servants of the devil. On the Day of Judgment, God will want to know why they did this.

The focus of believers is Christ and Christ alone. We look to him who is our light and life. The world will change, this way and that; political parties will go up and down, but the course of the world will continue in darkness as God has shown us. Keep out of that evil system and serve Christ.

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<sup>12</sup> Gal 6:10; 'as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.'

<sup>13</sup> Heb 11:16; 'they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.'

<sup>14</sup> Lk 12:34; 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

<sup>15</sup> Heb 11:13; 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.'