

## Hackgate: The time for the Courageous State

Published: January 14, 2026, 8:42 pm

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My book, with the title [The Courageous State](#) should be published in September: work on it is progressing well.

It may well prove to be extraordinarily well timed. It argues that we now have a generation of professional politicians with little experience beyond their university careers and Whitehall with almost all of them having been schooled in neoliberalism as if it is the one and only political philosophy to which they can subscribe. And yet, as I argue, that philosophy has a pernicious consequence. It tells them that everything they do in the high office that they hold is basically harmful to the well-being of the people who elected them. At best this leaves them conflicted, lacking in self-confidence, and paralysed with fear about action they should take. Cameron is a perfect example, of course. At worst it creates the paradoxical position where our leading politicians hold the very offices that they hold in contempt and view the staff that work for them with disdain, presuming all of them have chosen to work for the state in some act of grossly misguided folly. Osborne exemplifies such a politician.

But it's timely for another reason. What I argue is that a Courageous State has to intervene to ensure the well being of those who live in a country. It has a duty to deliver real justice, and not just legal justice - although that is important and must clearly be seen to apply to all, without favour, which has not been the case recently, whether with regard to favour shown to the Murdochs or the wholly inappropriate prosecution of the [Fortnum and Masons 145](#). Justice has also to be supplied to those who cannot access markets, to those who are old, infirm, young, disadvantaged by location, prejudiced against because of race, gender, disability or otherwise and to those who suffer as a consequence of the market's externalities. This requires not just a courageous state, but courageous politicians, and a belief on their part in the democratic process and their obligation to represent those who put them in power.

What we are seeing unfolding at this time is very clear evidence that too many, and yes I include Labour politicians in this charge, have forgotten that obligation. They've been corrupted by power. Therefore forgotten what democracy is for. They have forgotten their duty to uphold the state itself so they pass it on in a fit state for a future

generation.

In the process they have let the state be captured: captured by Murdoch, captured by the City of London, captured by wealth and captured by police force who are all too willing to show their bias.

As a result they have failed to regulate: regulation itself has been captured by self-interest, whether of the press, the City, the accountancy profession and a raft of other so-called self regulated structures, none of which have delivered what is expected of them.

And they've let that happen because they have undermined a necessary, indeed essential, part of a government, which is a well resourced civil service; able to form its own opinion, to offer independent advice to ministers, to act impartially, and to deliver regulation that is needed, backed up by strong and independent judiciary, reinforced by an honest police force, supported by effective national and local democracy, all representing part of a coherent whole that underpins the structure of our country.

This has been a failure of the political class. What is extraordinary is that Ed Miliband seems to recognise this. We have an opportunity for change. Hackgate is providing that. It's the only silver lining it is delivering.