

Galloway's win only signals more trouble to come

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I am not celebrating George Galloway winning the Rochdale by-election.

Galloway is a man who has never got over his days in student politics. He has never embraced the reality of complexity. Nor has he understood the need for coexistence in our communities. That does not make him a suitable MP. Nor does it mean he has a bigger narrative to offer. But it does make him a perfect lightning rod when there is an issue requiring that a protest vote be registered. He was the conduit for that vote last night.

I am not very surprised that the Muslim voters in Rochdale turned out to support him last night.

Labour totally failed them, in so many ways.

The Tories are an anti-Muslim mob. It is not just Islamist views that they despise. That would require nuance beyond their comprehension. Their contempt for those of Muslim faith is broader and almost universal in significant parts of that party, as Baroness Warsi and Caroline Lucas made clear on Question Time last night.

The LibDems did not appear to campaign in a seat they held in 2010.

And unsurprisingly Reform had nothing to say to Rochdale.

So, Rochdale turned to someone who would say that a significant number of people in the constituency were unhappy about the way they are being treated, however unsuitable he might be and however poor a constituency MP he has always turned out to be.

The bizarre reality of this is that Labour's hardline Zionist stance succeeded in delivering an Islamist MP whilst the Tories and Reform's faux Christian fundamentalism led to dire electoral performances.

Is this outcome going to help? I fear it won't. When Muslims are rightly feeling alienated

from British politics, Labour's dismal failure at every level, and not just in candidate selection but also in its deeply troubling hardline Zionist support, produced an outcome that can only reinforce extremism when that is the last thing we need.

Let me be clear that I find Zionist, Christian fundamentalist and Islamist beliefs equally troubling. All promote positions that are intended to create exclusion, and so division. That is not what a multicultural society needs. But with the Tories promoting Christian fundamentalism and Labour becoming hardcore Zionist is it in any way surprising that Muslims feel under attack and alienated?

We are in a horrible mess. Those I might describe as 'ists' of all sides are spreading intolerance. That they are doing so is a threat to us all.