

Where are we now?

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There is something raw and exciting about an election night. For someone who has been an eager election result observer since the 1970 general election, which brought Ted Heath to power, that excitement never fades. On occasions, I have lived in hope. Often, I have had to take my pleasure by smiling as those justly turned out of office suffered as they tried to hide their despair at the voters' rejection of them.

That being said, and having [already noted](#) the trends developing as the English council election results are announced, let me try to stand back and appraise what these already incomplete election results in England might imply, with a particular stress upon the word might, because the results are incomplete as yet, and this was, of course, not a general election, and local council results do not necessarily reflect what might happen if the level of turnout seen in those polls were to be repeated.

As opinion polls forecast, the overall message being delivered is one of rejection of the two-party hegemonic power shared for the last century between Labour and the Conservatives.

Labour appears to be suffering an outcome at least as bad as anyone expected, and there is, overall, very little for the Conservatives to celebrate either. They might have had the old swing in their favour from Labour, but the overall trend is still one of significant seat losses, a pattern they share with Labour, and in both cases, Reform is the major beneficiary.

As I have [also noted in my earlier post](#), and in the video that will be coming out shortly, the pattern behind this trend is very marked. The North and North West, including Manchester, plus old Labour Red Wall seats, are all moving heavily to Reform, as are some coastal regions like Plymouth and Southend, parts of Essex and North Lincolnshire.

It does not take too much analysis to work out what is happening here. Areas of England suffering the greatest deprivation are voting for Reform. Perversely, they are the areas that will suffer most heavily as a consequence of Reform's policies and the

attacks that they will undertake on the provision of healthcare, education, social care, social housing, special educational needs support, and support for local economies. People do, however, appear to be indifferent to this. In the face of neoliberalism's failure to deliver well-being for people on the periphery of England, as well as in old industrial towns, people are voting for self-destruction because there is no hope. It is hard to come to any other conclusion.

Perversely, it is also true that these areas, which often have the lowest migrant populations in the UK, are also heavily sold on the anti-migrant rhetoric that Farage sells, when in London, which has the greatest ethnic diversity and largest ethnic minority populations, Reform is making no progress at all. The perverse appeal of Reform is, therefore, made clear both economically and socially.

It is important to note that the rejection of neoliberalism also extends to the Liberal Democrats. They have had a perversely successful night, increasing their seats and the number of councils that they control, but their level of support as measured by share of the vote has, overall, fallen quite significantly. They have won because, unlike Reform and the Greens, they know how to work within a first-past-the-post electoral system, concentrating their votes in areas where they are likely to win, and succeeding as a result.

Whether this is a long-term strategy for them is not clear. The rejection of neoliberalism is apparent throughout the sentiment expressed by voters in this election. The sense of rejection they feel toward a hierarchy of power that has very obviously and deliberately left them behind cannot be avoided, and the Liberal Democrats do belong in the upper echelons of that hierarchy.

So where are the Greens? Three things need to be said. First, so far, they cannot claim that they are Labour's heir apparent on the left because, in terms of electoral results, that is not what we are seeing. They are picking up a lot of second places, but, in our current electoral system, that is not good enough, and they must know it.

Secondly, I think we have to be clear that the media assaults on Polanski, which are very often deeply antisemitic in their tone, are working. The hypocrisy in the mainstream media on this issue is quite extraordinary and needs to be called out time and again, but other parties are not doing that because they are gaining as a result, and so the exceptionally dirty fight against Polanski, which is following the same patterns as that used against Jeremy Corbyn, is clearly working. The Greens have to broaden their appeal and their leadership base to overcome this problem. The other parties also have to walk their talk on antisemitism. Labour, in particular, is not.

Thirdly, and I cannot avoid saying this, the Greens need something to say. From feedback received from people I know, it was Green Party strategy to listen on the doorstep during the course of this campaign, and not persuade people of what the Greens might offer. In some areas, they tried to replicate the Liberal Democrat offering

on issues like potholes, which has worked so well for them in local elections, while in others they ended up sounding almost as managerial as Labour. If I am confused as a result as to what the Greens were really trying to say in this election, then quite reasonably so will other people be, and unless the Greens can get their policy-making processes streamlined and into effective action, the chance that they are going to deliver the necessary counterbalance to Reform as Labour collapses looks to be very low indeed. I can only be despondent about this and urge them to get their act together.

So, at this stage, and ignoring all the implications of the Welsh and Scottish parliamentary votes, which are going to be constitutionally massive, where are we?

The conclusion is clear. We are in a country divided. That division is real. It is drawn on the lines of wealth, income and social division. Those whom neoliberalism has left behind have made it clear that they've had enough. That, however, may not be enough to drive Reform into government. Whilst they have won many seats in these elections, this is on the basis of low turnout, with the angriest being those who turned up to vote. This may not be indicative of what may happen in the general election, although I think that the division is still real and, under the first-past-the-post electoral system, could still be catastrophic.

When the Tories might be desperately avoiding an alternative to shutting up shop and closing down the whole show, we cannot rule out the possibility that they will form a coalition with Reform after the next election to impose neo-fascist government on this country.

The problem is that a Labour Party which has been deliberately gutted of anyone with the talent to think, lead, formulate strategy or deliver a plan is still in government, possessed of the theoretical power to change our electoral system to restore greater democracy and better representation within future governments, but with no indication of any ability to do so.

What, then, do I feel this morning? I am worried, but I am not yet despairing. I have to cling to hope wherever it might be found, even if, at present, it is hard to locate.