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Britain

Radicalisation on right and left while centre crumbles in Britain

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Dave Kellaway assesses the political situation where creeping fascism is advancing, the Labour centre is not holding but radicalisation to the left is also significant.

1. Creeping fascism ratchets up a gear

The forms of creeping fascism are:

- the continued rise of Farage's racist Reform UK
- this overlaps, including in membership, with a Tommy Robison/fascist led street mobilisations
- a disintegrating Tory party adopting increasingly hard right authoritarian policies.

Reform support still growing

The Caerphilly by-election, where Reform failed to win but went from 2 per cent in the previous election to 36 per cent shows that the national polling, consistently showing it over 30 per cent is, if anything, underestimates its support. Taking all the council by-elections since the last general election, Reform averages the highest of all parties at 30 per cent. This figure is not dependent on exceptionally low turnout. Analysts have explained how Reform are bringing previous non-voters to the poll. Caerphilly had a bigger turnout than most Senedd elections.

Reform is aiming to consolidate by forming branches in as many constituencies as possible. Its progress towards over 900 local councillors helps this base building. Funds are plentiful and it is professionalising its operation with many staff defecting from the Tories. It aims to contest many more seats than ever before in the May 2026 local, Scots and Welsh elections. Tory MP Danny Kruger, who was still on the up in Badenoch's party, is the latest recruit and recently twenty councillors in Hampshire and Dorset have also changed camp. Voices inside the Tory Party are openly calling for an electoral agreement with Reform to save what is left of the party.

At the moment polls show there is still a majority in against having Farage as prime minister and Caerphilly shows there a potential for tactical voting to block Reform's progress. Unfortunately for Starmer, Labour is so unpopular that it may not be seen as the fulcrum around which anti-Farage forces will coalesce. Nationalist, Green or left parties like Your Party could well be that focus. It would be a disaster for the Left, and would not even necessarily work, if the majority of movement thought the only way to stop Reform were to rally around Starmer's bankrupt government in some vaguely progressive alliance.

Fascist current is building

Tommy Robinson certainly pulled off a political coup with the 100,000 plus demonstration on 13 September in probably the biggest fascist led demonstration ever in this country. Apart from the anti-migrant, anti-Islamic slogans we also saw the emergence of the sort of Christian Nationalist sentiments we have seen in the USA. Linking all migrants and asylum seekers to sexual violence and paedophilia was another reactionary falsehood that animated the mobilisation. In the weeks before and after this mobilisation we have seen the 'Raising of the Flags' campaign led by fascists. Union Jacks and the flag of St George have been put up, Six Counties style, on lamp posts. Kerbs or even roundabouts have been painted red, white and blue. Robinson also presents himself as a Zionist fighting

anti-Semitism and was invited by senior politicians to visit Israel. When the controversy about Tel Aviv Maccabi fans erupted he immediately said he would be calling on his supporters, many of whom are football fans, to come out in their support.

Tories still shifting right

Within the Tory Party, there is a language and developing policies which mark a total break with the historical trajectory of this hugely successful political current. One nation conservatives like Michael Heseltine have openly condemned it. Robert Jenrick, defeated leadership candidate, on the other hand has enthusiastically joined up with the fascists raising the flags and has made a video in Handsworth in Birmingham where he whined about not seeing any white faces. Just last week a junior minister, Katie Lam, has called for a retrospective expulsion of millions of people who already have indefinite right to remain in this country – because we need a ‘coherent culture’. This pivot to the right has not benefitted the Tories – they lost their deposit with only 2% of the vote in Caerphilly.

We cannot exclude an electoral deal between the Tories and Reform or an absorption or reconfiguration of both currents into one party by the time of the next election. Like Starmer, Badenoch might not make it as leader that far.

A growing shift to right internationally

Creeping fascism here is integrally connected to the shift to the right internationally. Trump leads this with his assault on bourgeois democratic institutions – using and manipulating the law to attack political enemies, witchhunting the left and even progressives from universities, media and other institutions. He has sent the military and ICE (migrant control force) into cities to mostly harass and expel Black, Latinos and migrants. It is reported that many actual fascists from groups like the Proud Boys have been recruited to ICE.

Meanwhile Le Pen’s National Rally is looking well placed to win the next French Presidential elections, Meloni is consolidating her electoral coalition in Italy, Orban continues to rule Hungary. Across the world hard right or neofascist currents like Modi in India are growing.

Key sectors of the imperialist states and of the ruling class have concluded that the relative open democracies that stood alongside the post war boom can no longer be allowed. To re-establish their profit rates, wages need to be held down and social spending further radically reduced.

They are also refusing to pay for real solutions to the climate and ecological crisis. Reform and Badenoch have followed Trump in abandoning serious targets for net zero carbon emissions. They are increasingly supporting more robust, authoritarian political parties to carry out this offensive against working people. Senior civil servants are already in contact with Reform and corporate lobbyists are paying much more attention to Farage.

2. The centre is not holding

Starmer’s Labour government elected with its hollow parliamentary landslide on barely 33 per cent of the popular vote is in a deep crisis. It lost 35 per cent of its vote in Caerphilly and its national polling has been around 12 percentage points lower than its general election score. A recent poll – an outlier no doubt – placed it neck and neck with Zack Polanski’s Greens. As the by-election showed it is losing support to its right – to Reform and to its left – to Plaid. Elsewhere the Scot Nationalists, the Greens, the left independents and potentially Your Party are winning on the left of Labour.

Strategic partnership with capital

Starmer's poorly elaborated strategy is fundamentally to develop a partnership with private capital to build more houses, maintain the NHS and to achieve growth so that it will be seen as providing some necessary services in contrast to the Tories but without breaking with the fundamental framework of austerity. . Extending public ownership or taxing wealth have been ruled out as an alternative way of providing funds for meeting people's needs. This strategic partnership further dilutes an already timid environmental strategy. Its £28 billion eco energy strategy has been cut back sharply, developers have successfully sabotaged regulations that protect biodiversity and fossil capital has already got Labour to row back on its 100% green energy electricity generation by 2030. It looks like Labour will cave in on the further extraction of oil and gas from the Rosebank field.

The Guardian has revealed how the big corporate donors to Labour have got an early payback with many contracts:

The Autonomy Institute identified a total of 125 companies that were awarded central government contracts worth £28.8bn after previously making £30.15m of donations to a political party. About £2.5bn worth of those contracts were awarded within two years of the donation.

They include consultancy firm Baringa Partners, which donated £30,061.50 to Labour in January 2024 and received £35,196,719 worth of government contracts between July 2024 and March this year. Grant Thornton donated £81,658.37 between March 2023 and July 2024 and has since been awarded £6,541,819 in contracts.

Labour isn't working

Certain limited, positive reforms such as extending nursery provision, increasing breakfast clubs, giving renters a few more rights and improving the labour laws are meant to keep its MPs and unions onboard and show electors it can bring real change. However these crumbs do not in any way balance the continued cost of living crisis, the dramatic housing crisis, the ecological crisis, devastating poverty with food banks still flourishing, the deficiencies of the NHS or the crumbling infrastructure such as water supply.

Growth is still weak, food inflation is still above 5%, sewage is still being spewed into our rivers and seas while profits flow to the shareholders and a lot of the other proposals are still having no effect.

Housing plans are in complete disarray as specialists say the 1.5 million target for houses built by the end of this parliament is a joke. Worse the response to this setback is to double down on the strategic partnership with the private developers. The latter will be allowed to build even fewer 'affordable houses' and the number of social rent houses will make hardly a minor dent into the homelessness figures. In any case, the housing crisis is not a crisis of supply or red tape but fundamentally one of affordability and the eradication of local authorities ability to build significant number of homes.

Labour is out-Reforming, reform – with little success

During the general election campaign Labour's response to the threat of Reform was to practically ignore it because it was eating into Tory support. Since then it has desperately tried to mirror its anti-migrant narrative. Each week the Home Secretary, first Cooper, now Shabana Mohammed have searched for new ways of showing it is as tough on migrants and asylum seekers as Reform. So the period before you can claim permanent leave to remain has been

doubled to ten years and new reactionary conditions imposed like A level English and volunteering. Predictably none of this has stopped Reform's progress.

Labour has continued the Tory offensive against the right to protest and democratic rights. Mass arrests of people holding up cardboard signs continue. Starmer is said to be considering banning certain slogans on pro Palestine marches. Despite this, hundreds of thousands – mostly people who were more likely to vote Labour – are continuing to turn out regularly on the streets. Labour still does not recognise Israel is carrying out a genocide and is fully behind the Trump plan that is a colonial mandate rather than even a small step on the way to Palestinian self-determination.

Incompetency of Starmer and his team

Another reason for Starmer's poor ratings is his faltering political leadership and management of his team even in delivering his own policies:

- failure to check out Mandelson's relationship with the paedophile Epstein
- the regular loss of ministers like Rayner and others for infringements of the ministerial code of conduct
- the flop of the digital ID cards launch
- exaggerating the impact of smashing the gangs or the one in, one out plan
- the attempt to smear a Your Party MP with anti-Semitism over the ban of racist Maccabi football hooligans.

Of course a week after Starmer made it a national controversy these Islamophobic fans, whom he defended against the opposition of the local Birmingham communities, rioted in Israel at another match. The club is now not even organising away tickets. As the chant says, it has all gone quiet over there. It seems now Starmer is not even bothering to overturn the ban imposed by police, council and safety groups.

Starmer's response to the government unpopularity is on show at the Labour conference is to step up verbal attacks on Reform while continuing the anti-migrant messaging and to make a few tweaks ever so slightly to his left. Labour looks like (partially?) ending the two child benefit gap and taking some tax measures that will to a minor degree hit the pockets of the wealthy. But this is all relative, since plans to further slash disabled people's entitlement to benefits, cut motability allowances and 'reform' special needs support show that cuts to public spending will continue.

Deputy Leadership won by Powell

As expected the candidate of the loyal, 'constructive' opposition, Lucy Powell, duly won the deputy leadership by eight points, scoring 54%. Given she was the official Starmer candidate, Phillipson did better than the polls indicated.

Although Labour is deliberately not providing a breakdown between the membership vote in the constituency parties and those of affiliated trade union members who bothered to vote polling organisations have roughly calculated that perhaps 43% of the former voted. Survation estimates a party membership of 280,000 – well down of the last official declaration on membership and probably an over-estimation.

For those on the left still in the Labour party this was a small encouragement. Many are banking on this being a sign that someone like Andy Burnham could win a leadership challenge after the predicted electoral disaster of the May 2026 elections.

One thing you can count on after this vote is that Downing Street Chief of Staff Morgan McSweeney and his team

will be working flat out to prevent Burnham being allowed to get a seat anytime before May next year. More in the shadows they will be assessing which candidate on the right and centre of the party will be best placed to replace Starmer if he cannot be saved.

Labour left weakened

The small number of meetings and attendance at hustings during the deputy leadership campaigns suggests that party activism is very subdued. If Your Party successfully organises branches and does not score any more own goals we could see a combined Green/YP membership approach and perhaps overtake LP membership. In terms of activists on the ground those to the left of Labour will have the upper hand.

Those on the left of the party hope that Powell will somehow be able to apply pressure to get the apparatus to stop its war on the left. Recent candidate selections up and down the country seem to be following the McSweeney slogan of putting the left into the tomb. At the same time the fall off in members and unpopularity of the government means even finding people willing to stand has not been easy. For Starmer, one positive consequence of the Powell win will be prominent left MPs will not be jumping ship, at least for a while.

We should not write off what remains of the left inside Labour. The inept launch of Your Party and Powell's win has meant they are staying in a wait and see mode and are not yet making the step to break with Labour. Their number is much reduced but Your Party should not ignore them and activists should work alongside them in the campaigns and trade unions.

3. A radicalisation on the left

All is not doom and gloom in today's political situation. There is a counter offensive against creeping fascism. In the USA the No Kings mobilisations are big and getting bigger. In Italy and France the left has successfully brought millions out on the streets.

The Palestine solidarity campaign here and elsewhere has become a true mass movement. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated in London just a couple of weeks ago directly after the government and the mainstream mass media have mounted a narrative that the Trump ceasefire is a great step forward towards a two state solution. Palestine has been one of the key reasons so many activists and voters have abandoned Starmer's Labour. Many people, particularly younger activists are joining left of Labour groups as a result of getting involved in Palestine solidarity. We are in a different position to the demoralisation we experienced at the defeat of the Corbyn project inside Labour.

Greens surge with Polanski

The Greens are also benefitting from all this mobilisation on Palestine but also from continued protests to defend our environment. Zack Polanski's leadership victory on a platform that included socialist demands as well as a radical green agenda has had a huge impact. Today the Greens have more members than the Lib Dems and the Tories.

Zack is a good communicator on the media and has not backtracked on his progressive policies on migrants, Palestine or the wealth tax. He defends common ownership and reducing the dizzying levels of inequality in Britain. We see him on the streets on protests for Gaza and against fossil fuel corporations.

Importantly he is open to electoral arrangements between the Greens and Your Party. Already in Hackney for example there is cooperation between Green and independent Left councillors, not just on electoral arrangements for next May, but in action bringing disinvestment campaigns into the council chamber.

In the discussions around setting up Your Party some sectarian and ultra left voices have denounced the Greens and opposed electoral deals with them. Many of those who have joined the Greens are ex-Corbyn supporters and some who have joined recently could well have joined Your Party if there had not been all the missteps along the way. Sneering (often inaccurate) about the whiteness or middle class character of the Greens is just unhelpful.

We have an historic opportunity of seriously weakening the hegemony of Labourism on the labour movement but that cannot be done if we fail to get unity in action and in elections with the Greens. Some on the left just do not see the importance of Your Party adopting a clear eco-socialist programme which connects all issues threatening our planet with inequality and the class struggle. What we have seen of Zack Polanski so far is somebody is pretty good at making those links.

Potential and problems with Your Party

Your Party has its problems no doubt. There does seem to be a group around Jeremy – we could call them his courtiers – who are not that keen on Sultana overshadowing their leader and who are extremely wary of losing their position in the leadership of the project. To a degree their reluctance to adopt a delegate type structure for the assemblies and conference seems to arise from a concern that activists opposed to their views (maybe in the organised left groups) would have too much of a platform. The line in the proposed constitution about not having dual membership of YP and another current could be used to stop the intervention of left formations.

Despite all this we need to focus on to the big picture. Up to 300 meetings of 'proto' local YP branches have been held. Some big rallies and meetings have produced positive feedback from participants. Some meetings so far have successfully brought people together, some have not.

The revolutionary left has to understand that if YP is going to be a mass left party then they have to tread carefully and not see all the members just as people they can recruit to their group. To be successful, we need tens of thousands of activists who do not define themselves as Marxist or who do not currently see their priority as smashing the bourgeois state.

Hopefully the fact that lots of left groups will be working inside the new party will help their members reflect on how to work with new activists in an open and friendly way which does not lead them to vow to never return for another local meeting with all those paper sellers. Sometimes it is about language and presentation. For example if you have 10 of your group in a meeting they don't all have to speak and when they speak they should not all sound like the same article in that week's newspaper.

Fighting back for the planet and all our futures

Another positive by product of different left currents working in the same environment may be a less antagonistic approach between them. Working together to steer the new party could encourage militants to question the need for so many left groups given they often have agreements over about 80 to 90% of their policies.

We should not allow the difficulties of having to organise at this stage through the sortition mechanism hold up the progress for the establishment of strong branches in every area. Sometimes goodwill and positive attitudes can work wonders, even in politics.

In Britain and internationally we are involved in a race between creeping fascism producing further defeats for working people and an uncertain future for our planet and the development of a socially progressive alternative that could lead to a truly eco-socialist future. If our side loses the results would be catastrophic.

30 October 2025

Source: [***Anti*Capiralist Resistance***](#).

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