

## THE CONTINUING SHIFT TO THE RIGHT IN THE TRANSITION FROM NEO-LIBERALISM TO RIGHT POPULISM



Allan Armstrong presents a case that the world is leaving the period of Neo-liberal hegemony and entering a period of increasing Right Populist domination. This is analogous to the earlier move from post-Second World War Social Democratic hegemony, which ended in 1979/80. He emphasises the role of the 2008 Crash in dividing the UK and US ruling classes. This led to the rapid growth of Right Populist politics in these and other states. The Right's winning of the Brexit vote and then the election of Trump ('Brexit, plus, plus, plus') has performed a similar role in the transition from Neo-liberal hegemony to increased Right Populist domination that the election of Thatcher and Reagan had played in the earlier transition.

Allan also examines the role of Scotland's Indy Ref1 in scaring the British ruling class, and the significance of their renewed alliance with reactionary unionism in Northern Ireland. He looks at the response of the Neo-liberal Right, the Social Democratic Left and Irish and Scottish Nationalists to the challenge of the Right Populists. The latter can fall back on the UK state's reactionary Crown Powers and have little regard for the limited forms of democracy bequeathed by Social Democrats and Neo-liberals. They are quite prepared to ditch the devolutionary deals and institutions which constitutional nationalists have built their national self-determination hopes upon. Therefore, the constitutional nationalists have become paralysed in the face of a reactionary unionist offensive.

Some former Neo-liberals have already jumped ship and joined the Right Populist bandwagon. Left Social Democrats, such as Jeremy Corbyn, are also actively, if unwittingly, facilitating the consolidation of Right Populism. Within the Labour Party, Corbyn, his Left Social Democratic allies and the Right are united in support of a new system of labour control to replace the free movement of people from the EU. To provide cover for this, they have hidden behind a notion of the democratic will of the British people expressed in the 2016 Brexit referendum vote. Yet the franchise excluded EU residents (and 16 to 18 year olds). Not understanding that the Right Populists' aim under 'take back control' is to reinforce the UK state, and step up its attacks on a divided workforce, Left Labour believes it can use this state as a vehicle to bring about its Social Democratic economic reforms for British workers. In this they are taking over the mantle of Gordon Brown's "British jobs for British workers". Corbyn and his allies, following New Labour, have also joined with the Right in opposing those national democratic movements, particularly in Scotland, which do provide some challenge to the UK state.

If Social Democratic-led Butskellism, up until 1979, gave way before the Neo-liberal led Blatcherism from the mid 1990s until 2016, we are now seeing a much more rapid transition to

**Maybynism, with its growing accommodation to Right Populism. However, this is likely to be a transitory phenomenon. The recognition of where we actually are politically is a necessity before we can make any real progress.**

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## **1. From global Social Democratic to global Neo-liberal domination; from Butskellism to Blatcherism**

We appear to be going through a period of global change as significant as the transition from Social Democratic hegemony after the Second World War to Neo-liberal hegemony after 1979-80. In the UK, the period of Social Democratic hegemony, heralded by Attlee's Labour government, lasted from 1945-79. The politics associated with this have been termed Butskellism (after Rab Butler and Hugh Gaitskell). This emphasised the Conservative and Labour leaderships' shared acceptance of Keynesian national economic policies and social welfare. A similar phenomenon was found in the USA. It was associated with the acceptance of the New Deal after 1945, by Republicans as well as the Democrats, who had been responsible for its earlier introduction. And in the original six EEC member states, both Social and Christian Democratic parties pursued similar paths sometimes in governmental coalition.

Perhaps this widespread phenomenon could also be called support for the Social Market, but globally Social Democrats were to the fore in promoting Keynesian economics and the welfare state, which were accepted by many Conservatives at the time; just as later Conservatives were to the fore in promoting Neo-liberalism which came to be accepted by most Social Democrats.

There was a growing economic crisis in the 1970s, which took the form of stagflation. This crisis undermined Social Democratic hegemony. The formidable post-war expansion of capital investment, following the massive destruction of capital during the Second World War, had led to high profits. But by the 1970s the rate of profit was falling globally. Keynesian policies, which had worked nationally to smooth over the recessions that took place within an overall period of economic expansion, were no longer able to overcome the global crisis of profitability.

To counter this, the elements of what later became full-blown Neo-Liberalism were developed. This was done first in Right wing think tanks, and then later through governmental attempts to put some of their policies into practice. Neo-liberalism did not start out as a single, fully thought-out, economic or political system, any more than the Social Democracy, which preceded it had. People like Freidrich Hayek and Milton Friedman developed early elements of Neo-liberal thinking, taking on orthodox (state-backed) Marxism and Keynesianism. But other elements, which seemed important at the time, such as the Tory Right, Sir Keith Joseph's support for monetarism, were abandoned. Instead, Neo-liberals moved to support massively expanded credit but now in the hands of more deregulated private banks. A major consequence was the massive expansion of debt, especially personal. The manner in which Neo-liberalism developed was partly determined by new technological development, especially in IT. But the outcomes of particular class struggles were more fundamental.

An early attempt was made in the UK to introduce some of the elements of later Neo-liberalism. However, Edward Heath's 'Selsdon Man' project failed in the face of working class resistance. It took a CIA-backed military coup and the bloody suppression of workers' organisation in Chile in 1973 before the Chicago Boys could step in and promote the roll back of state welfare and economic provision and privatisate of much of this. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher became warm supporters of Chile's General Pinochet. So far though, Chile was just acting as a possible national testing ground for elements of a future Neo-liberalism. It was not until Thatcher took office in the UK in 1979 and Reagan in the USA in 1980 that Neo-liberalism became globally dominant.

This now dominant Neo-liberalism promoted global financialisation, privatisation, the marketisation of social services, and attacks on workers' organisations. Key to the Neo-liberals' ability to reboot capitalist profitability was a new wave of clearances and enclosures in the 'Third World'; and later the breaking down of the economic protectionist walls shielding the Russia/USSR and China behind their

own, party-state dominated empires. The USSR, COMECON and the Warsaw Pact collapsed between 1989-91. This led to a massive transfer of state assets into the hands of local kleptocrats, assisted by the 'Chicago Boys' linked to transnational corporations based in the imperial heartlands.

The USA, as well having the head offices of the powerful Wall Street banks, was also the location of the headquarters to the world's largest transnational corporations in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. The links between UK and US financial sectors were strong. UK banks had helped to develop the eurodollar market beyond any US Federal scrutiny. Even before the rise of Neo-liberalism, the City already represented the most transnational element in the British economy. It had a record of evading and undermining national state accountability. It acted as the prime force within the UK pushing for Neo-liberal financialisation.

The coordination of the new Neo-liberal order came about through new or transformed international institutions, such as the WTO, IMF, GATT, World Bank, NAFTA and the EU. These were set-up by the US or received US backing. Their activities were underpinned by the major financial institutions, especially in Wall Street and the City, with their close links to the US and UK states. Global financial-led economic management increasingly replaced state-regulated economic management. The rapid development of IT provided the main technological force enabling this transition, particularly in the world of finance. However, economic might alone was not enough. So, US-controlled NATO, or just direct US military intervention, was used to bring about and police this changing order.

The methods used to implement Neo-liberalism varied according to whether they occurred in the dominant imperialist or the imperially dominated states. In the first group of states, attacks on trade unions were central. This was highlighted by Thatcher's anti-trade union offensive with its series of confrontations culminating in the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. The Tories passed six anti-trade union laws between 1980-92. These greatly reduced workers' ability to organise. They

also backed yellow unions, such as the Union of Democratic Miners during the Miners' Strike. In the USA Reagan and the US courts used anti-trade union laws and judicial rulings (extended from the reactionary South) and broke the airline controllers' union PATCO.

Working class defeats were successful in considerably reducing trade union density. Union bureaucrats contributed to these defeats, showing more concern for their own privileges than the interests of their members. The process of de-unionisation hit workers in the US even harder than the UK. Existing trade union organisation was weaker, especially in the South. In the USA, non-unionised regions became the focus for much new investment. This went along with transnational corporations investing in new industries in certain 'Third World' states, where draconian anti-labour laws, official military and police forces and unofficial death squads ensured labour cost were low.

It took longer for the core EEC/EU states to abandon Keynesian economics and social welfare. Working class resistance was stronger and underpinned the Social Democratic/Social Market consensus. But, the 1991 Maastricht Treaty represented a significant turning point. However, the EU still had some Social Democratic inspired Social Chapter concessions, due to the greater strength of trade unions in Germany and France in particular.

During the period of Thatcher's ongoing neo-liberal offensive, Tony Benn backed the neo-Keynesian, national statist and social welfare Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). But the Labour Right opposed this. It was in France that an AES-type model was put into practice, between 1981-3, in the form of the Common Programme of the Mitterand PS and Marchais PCF governmental coalition. This national challenge to growing global Neo-liberalism failed. The PS/PCF coalition government did not have a wide enough international base of support to take on the IMF and the other allied global and French Right forces mobilised against it. This is what would likely have happened in the UK if there had ever been a Benn-

led Labour government, with Left trade union official's backing, based on the AES.

In the second group of states, dominated by imperialism, Structural Adjustment Programmes were imposed. Their purpose was to eliminate state owned production, the limited state welfare provision, subsidies particularly for food, and to force peasants off the land. This was done to open up land, valuable resources, and any significant secondary or tertiary industries to the transnational corporations. This was accompanied by US diplomatic, security agency (especially the CIA) and military resort to whatever level of force was required to impose Neo-liberal promoting regimes. The methods used by the US were highlighted, for example, in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. There was no concern to maintain even the pretense of parliamentary democracy in most states in Central and South America. And the Neo-liberals' political approach of resource-rich Africa was highlighted by US and UK support for apartheid South Africa and Mobutu's brutal Congo/Zaire regime.

The collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact from 1989-91 led to global Neo-liberal hegemony - There Is No Alternative (TINA). This did create the political space for a more 'democratic' form of Neo-liberalism to emerge, now that the threat from the USSR had been removed. For example, in Brazil and South Africa, parliamentary forms of government were now supported by the US, UK and EU. Thus, the previously illegal Workers' Party and the ANC were able to form governments. To retain the US and UK governments' or the EU treaty alliance's favour, though, they had to cut their cloth to meet the requirements of the Neo-liberal world order. This they did, becoming decidedly corrupt in the process.

Closer government business connections under Neo-liberalism ensured that corruption remained a central feature of the states involved. This was shown by Thatcher's own dealings with Saudi Arabia, from which her son benefitted. Corruption occurred, despite Neo-liberal inspired attempts to establish new legal contractual procedures. But this was done more to limit cut-throat competition

between businesses, than for any concern for workers, other direct producers, consumers or the environment.

The failure of the 1998 and subsequent Kyoto Agreements on greenhouse emissions provides just one example of the limitations of Neo-liberal agreements based upon maintaining capitalism's relentless drive for profits. More recently, the DUP's involvement in the 'Cash-For-Ash' scandal in Northern Ireland provides a particular UK example of the many scams that Neo-liberal approach to the environment led to.

After the collapse of the USSR, COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, the new political situation also allowed for a further extension of parliamentary forms in the imperial heartlands, e.g. 'Devolution-all-round' in the UK. This was implemented in a form designed to maximise the conditions for greater corporate profitability throughout the North East Atlantic Archipelago (the UK plus the Republic of Ireland).

Thatcher's Neo-conservative approach to social issues such as black, women's and gay rights, had not prevented some people from these backgrounds using the Neo-liberal shake-up of the economy to advance their careers. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair recognised this. The New Democrats and New Labour pushed for a new social Neo-liberalism, ousting the neo-conservative upholders of traditional racism and family values. Women, gays and lesbians were offered the prospect of equal access to the hierarchy of jobs in the capitalist order (smashing the glass ceiling), becoming valued customers in new niche markets, and welcome participants in now corporate sponsored festivals. In this way the New Democrat's and New Labour's social variant of Neo-liberalism displaced Reagan's and Thatcher's neo-conservative, Neo-liberalism. They were so successful in this that the Conservative Party under David Cameron accepted this social Neo-liberalism too.

Once the USSR had collapsed, the previous stark political polarity, between the 'First World' or the 'West', and the 'Second World' or the

'East', became more blurred. Some distinctive aspects of the old USSR-style 'planned' state economy and the Neo-liberal 'free' market economy broke down. The state 'planning' in the old USSR had primarily existed as a form of labour discipline, setting production targets for workers to meet, with a whole host of draconian punishments for failing to do so. After the collapse of the USSR, a lot more businesses and state departments in the West began to make their own plans, with a similar managerial disciplinary purpose in mind. They produced glossy publicity promotions, with articles bearing as little relationship to the reality on the ground as the old *Soviet Weekly*. And in the state-run health and education services, arbitrary targets were set with the aim of mimicking market discipline over the workforce. Meeting targets replaced any attempts at meeting needs.

If the USSR had the advantage of state-controlled trade unions to enforce labour discipline, then under the later social Neo-liberalism state/employer/union partnerships performed a similar role. These were pioneered in social Neo-liberal Ireland before coming to the UK under New Labour.

After the election of New Labour in 1997, the new phenomenon of Blatcherism, a combination of Blair and Thatchers' politics, could be recognised as a contrast to the earlier period of Butskellism. Thatcher acknowledged Blair and Browns' shared commitment to central features of the Neo-liberal order. This included their support for subordination of the UK economy to the City of London, and for the privatisation and the marketisation of social services. And soon, during the Second Iraq War, from 2003, New Labour was to show itself to be even more accommodating to US imperialism than the Tories had been during the First Iraq War from 1990-91.

New Labour followed the Tories in its opposition to effective trade unionism. This was highlighted by New Labour's refusal to scrap Thatcher's anti-trade union laws. In 1997, Blair opted for the much more limited and largely symbolic ending of the Tories' sacking of 14 GCHQ workers in 1989, because they had refused to leave their

union. More significant was how New Labour politicians and the union officials reacted to the Liverpool Dockers' Strike from 1995-8. This was the most important industrial struggle since the Miners' Strike in 1985. The Liverpool dockers organised a new social movement form of unionism, and won a lot of solidarity, including internationally. The dispute spanned the last years of the Tories under John Major, and the first year of New Labour under Tony Blair. But political conditions for the Liverpool dockers did not improve when New Labour took office. And it was the Broad Left, T&GWU general secretary, Bill Morris, who ensured that the dockers received no official solidarity backing.

However, in 2008, a major economic crisis hit the global Neo-liberal order, following the Financial Crash. The centrality of the financial sector had led to a massive expansion of fictitious capital at the expense of productive capital. Once this sector showed signs of severe stress, with its toxic assets and junk bonds, the whole house of cards came tumbling down. This revealed once more an underlying crisis of profitability. Since the Crash, low levels of capital investment have led to one of the most prolonged recessions the world capitalist economy has witnessed, despite much quantitative easing and low interest rates.

Living standards have continued to fall for the majority, with far greater numbers becoming dependent on precarious labour, working in two or more often very insecure jobs with very low wages, and still dependent on ever-shrinking welfare provision. Unemployment was redefined to eliminate those in part-time and other insecure jobs. Thus, the traditional reserve army of capitalism appeared to be declining. But, if capitalism can impose super-exploitative forms of labour, then unemployment becomes less important. There was no unemployment amongst the chattel slaves used on the capitalist plantations in North, Central and South America.

Under the US-dominated Neo-liberal order, China, gained access to new markets and US corporations to the products of cheap labour, especially from the Special Economic Zones. In the process China

became a significant industrial power. The Chinese CP-led government took fright after what was happening in the USSR. Here the party-state was rapidly unravelling under Gorbachev. After suppressing Beijing's Tiananmin Square Riot in 1989, Chinese leaders abandoned their very tight, party-controlled state economic protectionism. They switched to a party-managed opening up of the economy to global economic pressures. This enabled China to rise rapidly up the global economic ladder.

China's previous 'Iron Rice Bowl' welfare provision became increasingly restricted. China's internal migration controls could be as strict as those across the international borders of the US and EU. These two factors contributed to the creation of a highly segmented workforce, with a large super-exploited section at the base of the economy and a small proportion of mega-rich at the top. Corruption became rife. High rates of profit were assured, including those made by US companies investing in China.

However, the 2008 Crash highlighted the fact that, although many US companies had done very well out of existing trade agreements and trade institutions, China now challenged the US's world-leading economic position. A related phenomenon could be seen in the UK. British companies, especially in the City, had profited from their EU-based activities. Successive UK governments, both Conservative and New Labour, had been able to get an exemption from joining the EU's eurocurrency. The UK government also got exemptions from the EU's Social Chapter so it could lower labour costs. The Tories and New Labours' relationship to the EU was never Europhile or enthusiastic, but Eurosceptic. This very much coloured later political developments. But the Crash revealed that, despite all these inbuilt advantages, compared to other EU member states, the UK was falling behind the EU leader, Germany, considerably strengthened after reunification.

German governments had placed more emphasis upon developing productive capital through investment in industry leading to increased productivity. German banks were more linked to the

country's industrial development. British governments, subordinate to the City, and with more global operations, had privileged fictitious capital. As a consequence, the Crash highlighted this disparity, showing up the declining fortunes of British capitalism, so dependent upon the profits made from the financial sector.

## **2. The 2008 Crash leads to a split in the national ruling classes with a section opting for Right Populism**

It was the impact of the 2008 Crash, and the consequent illumination of the economic decline of the USA relative to China, and of the UK relative to Germany (as well as to a growing number of other states outside the EU, e.g. China, India), that led to a split in both the US and British ruling classes. One section adopted a new Right Populist path. This section encompassed both those smaller, more nationally based companies, which had not benefitted so much from transnational Neo-liberalism, and those whose operations were more global than particular trade areas, e.g. NAFTA and the EU. Hedge fund owners were very much in this camp and felt restricted by the limited regulations and multi-lateral agreements which had accompanied the period of Neo-liberal ascendancy.

And, just as the transition from Social Democratic to Neo-liberal hegemony represented a reconfiguration of the existing world order not its overthrow, this is also true of the transition from Neo-liberalism to Right Populism. In both cases, key features of the new order, were already present in the earlier order. Transnational corporations and global financial bodies had been a growing feature of the period of Social Democratic dominance, but under Neo-liberal global domination, they were better able to mould the world to meet their requirements. They could reform old or create new global institutions to meet their needs, without so much national state regulation. The new situation this brought about was highlighted by the 'Big Bang' under Nigel Lawson in 1987, Gordon Brown giving a free rein to the Bank of England in 1997, and Bill Clinton's repeal of the New Deal's Glass-Steagall bank regulatory laws in 1999. And it

was within the period of Neo-liberal global dominance that certain US corporations began to press for the corporate replacement of international regulatory bodies covering labour, consumer and environmental safeguards, and to subordinate all economic decisions to corporate backed transnational courts.

There is another comparable feature between the current transition from Neo-liberal hegemony to Right Populist domination and the earlier transition from Social Democratic hegemony to Neo-liberal hegemony. After the CIA backed coup in 1973, Pinochet's Chile, had anticipated key elements of Neo-liberalism. With the rise of Right Populism, there have also been peripheral precursors of the new order. Right Populism took root not only in Putin's Russia (2008), but also in and Kaczyński's Poland (2006), Netanyahu's Israel (2009), Orbán's Hungary (2010) and Modi's India (2014). However, as with Chile, none of these states had the power to bring about a new global order. But, instead of the election of Thatcher and Bush in 1989/80, it was the Brexit referendum result, then Trump's election, that ushered in the new global order.

And Right Populism had also experienced early setbacks in the USA. The corporate financed Tea Party challenge brought forward Sarah Palin as Republican vice-presidential candidate in 2008. But just as Harold Wilson-led Labour was able to see off the premature Neo-liberal Edward Heath in 1974, so Barack Obama was able to defeat the Republicans in 2008. But, under the conditions of global economic crisis, and trying to work through the Wall Street dominated institutions, Obama was only able to introduce the most minimal reforms, compared to the 1974-79 Labour governments.

Thus, the Right Populists, with significant corporate backing, especially hedge fund holders, fought back in the USA. Donald Trump forced his way into the Republican presidential candidacy, with the backing of Steve Bannon and Breitbart. To achieve this, Trump strongly backed the Right Populist wing of the Brexiteers, led by Nigel Farage, to set a precedent for this type of politics. Trump saw the Brexit campaign as a trial run for his own Right Populist ambitions. 'Dark money' poured into the Brexit campaign utilising

tax havens like the Isle of Man. UKIP backer Arron Banks was an important go-between. And in anticipation of a later significant connection, money donated to the DUP in Northern Ireland ended up financing the Brexit campaign in Great Britain. Trump celebrated the Brexit vote victory, calling his own US presidential bid, 'Brexit, plus, plus, plus'. Furthermore, the most reactionary sections of the US ruling class had long been able to build up their own presence within the US state. The 'military-industrial complex' was a direct product of the many wars needed in the US's attempt to maintain global supremacy. 200 generals and admirals backed Trump.

After the Brexit vote, Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's Right Populist, Front National called herself 'Madame Frexit'. (The FN had also absorbed many Neo-fascists.) She became the focus of a wider Right Populist challenge in the EU, which up to then had been confined to former COMECON/Warsaw Pact, East European states. Since the Brexit vote and Trump's 'Brexit, plus, plus, plus', the Hard Right has been able to breach the EU's East/West divide by taking office in Austria and Italy. In most EU member states, the Right Populists, and in some, even the Neo-fascists have now emerged as serious forces. They have taken on the Neo-liberal politicians and targeted economic migrants and asylum seekers, and longer standing residents, such as Roma and Travellers. And longer-term non-white residents, not necessarily on their present hit lists, are likely to follow. Women have also become prominent targets of the misogynist Right.

The grounds for a wider 'othering' were already prepared by the Neo-liberal promoted UK state's drive against welfare recipients, under both New Labour and Tory governments. This became focussed upon Universal Credit, originally thought up by New Labour's welfare advisor, and later Tory minister, David (now Baron) Freud. A significant political purpose behind UC is to further marginalise benefit claimers, both through personal humiliation and as warning to others not to become part of this 'lesser' group. And to reinforce this 'othering', claimant rules are buttressed by criminal proceedings. The administration of welfare counter-reforms is being increasingly handed over to private companies, which compete for

the contracts. They have an inbuilt incentive to take away any benefits, the better to pocket the money they get from the state. In this they are behaving very much like medieval tax farmers.

Welfare agencies have also long encouraged snoopers to rat on their neighbours. This idea was also incorporated into the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts. In their attempt to draw workers and others into scapegoating, successive governments have pushed to make a link between 'underserving' domestic benefit scroungers, migrants and asylum seekers and criminal activities. So vehemently has this government 'othering' propaganda offensive been pursued, it has been able to disguise the fact most of those claiming UC are in employment - often several precarious, part time, and low paid jobs, and that migrant workers make a net contribution to the economy.

Up until recently, the control and repression of economic migrants and asylum seekers was largely left to the agencies of the state. In this they received the backing of a largely Right-wing media. However, those black West Indians, who were supposed to have been recognised as British subjects since the 1970s, had already found themselves targeted by successive governments' 'hostile environment' policy. White British subjects are able to get visits from their overseas relatives. But black British subjects not only face formidable obstacles when try to arrange visits from their overseas relatives; but upon their own return from visiting overseas family or coming back from holiday, they are often treated very differently to white British subjects making the same arrangements. Under the UK's ever harsher immigration regime, British subjecthood did not bring equal rights, but different degrees of toleration at best, or open hostility at worst.

Successive New Labour and Tory governments have established the conditions, which allowed national chauvinism and racism to come to the fore in the Brexit campaign. It was Gordon Brown who invoked the old Fascist slogan, 'British jobs for British workers'. He also set up British citizen (read subject) tests, further developed by the Tory, Michael Gove. New Labour also introduced its own 'hostile

environment' policy by introducing eight new 'terrorism'-related acts, which gave the green light to Islamophobia. New Labour also opened up eight more detention centres for asylum seekers. And nor did Labour seriously oppose either of the Tories' draconian 2014 or 2016 Immigration Bills. And it was upon the already well-developed 'hostile environment' policy that a then still pro-Remain, Theresa May presided over her notorious anti-immigrant bashing bus campaign and a pro-Remain Amber Rudd presided over the Windrush Scandal.

When Cameron led off on his Eurosceptic 'Project Fear' campaign, he celebrated the new restrictions he had secured on European migrant rights, mainly targeted at eastern Europeans. New Labour and Cameron's Conservatives promoted a similar ethnic (cultural) notion of what it is to be British, highlighted by the exclusion of EU residents from the Brexit referendum franchise. This was in marked contrast to the civic national criteria used in Scotland's IndyRef1. Together, New Labour and the Conservatives paved the way for the Tory Right and UKIP's 'Project Hate'.

Although ruling class Brexiteers had more targets in mind than migrant workers and asylum seekers, when they invoked 'Take back control', they very much wanted to it to be understood by others that this meant limiting immigration. Here it helped the official Tory-led 'Vote Leave' Brexit campaign to have the Farage-led unofficial "Grassroots Out" Brexit campaign make the more overtly racist appeals. Collective trade union and community organisation had been broken in many old industrial areas, so many atomised and alienated individuals looked for scapegoats. Although the Far Right, BNP and English Democrats have been able to establish a foothold in these areas, it was the Right Populists in UKIP and the Tory Right who were able to make the biggest political gains in areas badly affected by the undermining of working class social organisation and solidarity.

The Brexit campaign and the 2016 vote led to a spike in racist attacks. Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered by the 'Britain First' shouting, neo-

Nazi, Thomas Mair outside a library in Kirklees, West Yorkshire. Arek Jozwik was murdered on the streets of Harlow in Essex for speaking Polish. Dagmara Przybysz, a Polish schoolgirl, committed suicide in a Devon school after racist harassment. Since the Brexit vote, there has been a substantial increase in those EU residents leaving the UK, and a decrease in those EU migrants coming to the UK. Many have expressed their growing concerns about the changing political climate here.

If the UK leaves the EU, Brexiteers will further ramp up the racist pressure. May took her new even harsher Immigration Bill to Westminster. In the event of Brexit, this and the earlier draconian 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts would extend to EU residents living in the UK. In contrast to some far Right Tories, Right populists and the far Right, the mainstream British ruling class Brexiteers fully appreciate that any viable capitalist economy requires migrant workers. The UK needs a whole range of labour from the top professionals, the highly skilled, semi-skilled to the unskilled.

Under the proposed new gastarbeiter-type system of migrant worker control those at the top can expect to be granted longer-term UK residency, with the right to bring over their families. Those at the bottom can expect to be given far more limited periods of residency, perhaps only seasonal, with no rights to bring over their families, or even to have them as visitors. And there will still be the desperate non-documented workers (the 'illegals'), fleeing repression, extreme poverty and environmental degradation, who take the most dangerous lowly paid jobs and become the targets of continued scapegoating.

But there are also those, who do not come to the UK to provide their labour, but to invest their ill-gotten gains or inherited wealth in a safe haven. The City can provide them with its particular expertise on tax evasion. Thus, Arabian oil sheiks can move to 'Londonistan' with their domestic slaves, and Russian oligarchs to 'Londongrad' with their gangster entourages. No questions are asked, or if they are, they can easily pay MPs handsomely, especially Tories, to protect their interests.

Some hard-core British racists believe that Brexit opens up the prospect of removing most EU immigrants from the UK, and later perhaps non-white British subjects too. This is a reactionary Right utopia, which mirrors those Right Libertarians who believe that Neoliberalism leads to the abolition of the state. The purpose behind the ruling class promoters of Brexit is not to end immigration, but to reorganise the labour market to increase the rate of exploitation (just as their purpose was not to cut back the state, but divert public expenditure from welfare to the repressive institutions of the state and from nationalised industries to direct subsidies for private businesses).

Clearly elements of the Tory Right, the Right Populists and the Far Right are not going to be happy with such state managed immigration. There was considerable disenchantment from 'down-to-earth', German Nazi supporting workers when, in order to meet the needs of Hitler's wartime economy, the regime brought in workers from Nazi-allied countries, and from amongst the Nazi supporters in occupied countries. Indeed, the Nazis were responsible for the largest inward flow of migrant workers in Europe in this decade. The top tier, although forming only a small proportion, were the main concern of German Nazi supporting workers, and were called *gastarbeiter* (guest workers). The others, who were usually kept quite separate were called *zwangsarbeiter* (forced workers).<sup>1</sup> By 1944, they included 7.6 million mainly Slav workers, with a high death and injury rate. Below them Jewish slaves were either worked to death, or later just consigned to extermination camps. If some Nazi supporting workers had resented the influx of workers from allied and occupied territories, some Nazi employers, e.g. Oscar Schindler, resented this loss of hard-to-replace cheap Jewish labour.

But ruling class Brexiteers are not gearing their migrant worker requirements to a wartime economy, but to the vagaries of the global market in peace-time conditions (at least between the imperial counties themselves.) They want to abolish a major component of the top tier of the UK's current workforce. That is those EU residents

who share most employment rights (including the right to join trade unions) and welfare rights with UK subjects. They are to be relegated to the much more tenuous status of those non-UK, non-EU workers, who are currently tolerated in order to fill particular gaps in the UK's labour market. This will drive down wages and conditions generally. There is another tier of the workforce beneath this, the non-documented workers who can be super-exploited. This has been done through the gangmeisters. It led to the deaths of an unknown number of Chinese cockle pickers, at least 21, drowned in Morecambe Bay in 2004. And this can lead to traffickers importing young women and subjecting them to sex slavery.

Following the period of Neo-liberal ascendancy after 1980, there had still been resistance. And, under the new Thatcher regime, this came primarily from the miners, and from Benn's attempt to win the leadership of the Labour Party. But after years of Social Democratic hegemony, there were also still people well placed within the state, who opposed the Neo-liberals. But as early as 1979, Thatcher showed she had no time for the liberal unionist supporters of devolutionary reform in Scotland and Wales. The Tories' initial promises made to Scotland, during the late 1970s Scottish devolution campaign, were quickly dropped. In Scotland (as elsewhere) there were Tory 'Wets' who soon became 'Moists' (i.e. they dried out under Thatcher) e.g. Alick Buchanan-Smith, Alex Fletcher and Malcolm Rifkind, before the 'Dries', e.g. Michael Forsyth, asserted full control. Thatcher backed the intransigent Ulster Unionists. However, it took some time before she was being able to weed out the last remaining Social Democrat-accommodating 'Wet' from the Tory Cabinet. Today, the Right Populists face similar problems in trying to win the whole Conservative Party over to their project.

Back in the 1980s, a number of the policies were used by the Neo-liberals to win over previously more Social Democratic-accepting groups. One such strategy was the wooing of state and local authority functionaries with the prospect of enhanced power and incomes. To achieve this, they were encouraged to accept the privatisation of the institutions they managed, in return for which they would get

privileged positions and greatly increased incomes. The middle class was also seduced with cheap shares (the 'Tell Sid' privatisation of British Gas). A working class, whose industrial jobs and collective organisations were being decimated by the Tories, was encouraged to look to much easier-to-obtain credit and the prospect of getting their own houses (when local councils sold off their stock very cheaply).

The privatisation of state assets was used most spectacularly in Russia and the former COMECON countries from 1991, in the Neo-liberals' Gadarene rush to appropriate state property. At the end of the day, far from creating a new property-owning democracy, under Neo-liberalism private ownership became even more concentrated. And large numbers faced a new form of debt peonage to banks, making them liable to eviction from their homes. On the fringes, more people became subject to gangster intimidation, as they were unable to pay their debts. In the face of growing alienation and despair, leading to increased drug dependence, gangsterism penetrated more broken communities, particularly within the 'Third World'. Sometimes, the billionaire gang leaders were able to bribe state officials and the police, other times they came into conflict. However, the major banks, with their unaccountable onshore and offshore funds always provided backdoor conduits for gangster money, no matter how blood-soaked.

Nevertheless, it took a number of years before Neo-liberal ascendancy became Neo-liberal hegemony, with Social Democrat leaderships throughout the world accepting the new world order. In New Zealand it was the Labour Party that pioneered Neo-liberalism. In the UK, in the face of Thatcher's continued Neo-liberal offensive, Neo-liberal accommodating 'Dented Shield' Labour became Neo-liberal promoting New Labour. Those Labour defectors who formed the SDP soon joined the Liberals and together they morphed into the Lib-Dems, later adopting the Neo-liberal *Orange Book*. The SNP, under Alex Salmond, pushed for the removal of any state regulation of Scottish-based banks and located Scotland in the Neo-liberal 'Arc of Prosperity', stretching from Ireland, through Iceland to mainland Scandinavia.

However, the global hegemony of Neo-liberalism came to an end with the 2007 Credit Crunch and the 2008 Crash. An early indicator of the depth of this crisis was the resort to techniques first used under Neo-liberalism as Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 'Third World'. They were now imposed as Austerity in the imperially dominated states. The EU's Troika, the City and Wall Street ensured that Austerity was enforced even more stringently in peripheral states like Greece, Ireland and Iceland, and in regions like England's 'Poorhouse North' and the US 'Rust Belt'.

### **3. How Trump wants to use 'America First' Right Populism to reassert US global hegemony and its possible consequences**

The 2008 Crash led to new challenges to the existing Neo-liberal order, from the fringes of the very system it had created. Under growing Right Populist ascendancy, the relative strength of particular businesses is likely to change. The full significance of the eurodollar market, in creating a situation and institutions beyond effective national Social Democratic regulation, was not apparent at the time. Although the City has greatly profited from its arbitrage role in relation to sterling, the rapid development of other financial institutions, including hedge funds, meant they also profited from dealing in dollars and euros. Their ability to make profits became disconnected from the UK state backing for sterling. This wider financial role has helped to maintain the City's first place in global banking. Similarly, the significance of new online media, beyond the control of the existing states, large banks or media corporations, had not been fully appreciated.

And Right Populists want to build upon the Neo-liberal precedents of union bashing to create even more precarious, lower paid jobs. Trump has seen the Republican Wisconsin state governor's attack on public workers and their unions as a precedent to complete the anti-union offensive originally launched by the Neo-liberal Reagan. Some Tory Brexiteers have declared their intention to do the same to the

remaining public sector unions that Thatcher did to private sector unions. The Right Populists make little pretense of supporting the existing, and already very limited democratic institutions, which underpinned the Neo-liberals' political support. Following the 2008 Crash, very few believe (least of all its privileged proponents) that 'We are all in this together'. But the Right Populists want to end Neo-liberal hypocrisy on this score, and to openly celebrate the winners.

The Neo-liberals' short-termism and desire for instant profits created growing environmental degradation, which led to a new multinational agreement, the Kyoto Protocol in 2008. To get around this obstacle to unrestricted profit-making, the Right Populists have promoted and financed 'climate change' deniers and anti-scientific conspiracy theorists to provide them with some cover. And when the Neo-liberal elite's response to this is to hold a special 'climate change' conference in their exclusive luxury resort, Davos, flying in 1500 of the elite 1% in their private jets, we know they offer no real challenge to their Right Populist ruling class counterparts. These members of the wider ruling class are less hypocritical in their dismissal of the environmental consequences of their lifestyles. They just don't give a shit.

Today, in promoting 'America First', Trump wants the US to abandon any earlier concessions made when Neo-liberalism was riding high. Any illusions that the wealth being created under Neo-liberalism and appropriated by the 'masters of the universe', would eventually trickle down to the majority, were blown apart following the 2008 Crash. From then on, the Neo-liberal elite made little pretense of acting other than in their own narrow self-interest. They offloaded the costs of meeting their private debts by getting the Neo-liberal governments to convert these into sovereign (state) debts and then pass them on to the backs of the working class and oppressed of the world.

If Neo-liberalism enabled Macdonalds, Walmart and Amazon to become global zero-hours pioneers of precarious labour, few of their employees were in any doubts about their lowly worker status. Now, however, Right Populism is helping to take this a stage further, so

Uber and Deliveroo can deny their employees even their employee status. They are now all self-employed 'entrepreneurs' selling their services to customers. Except that much of their earnings are creamed off by Uber and Deliveroo using the latest IT developments to insert themselves between service provider and customer. In the UK, Universal Credit, that Neo-liberal wet dream of social provision, already has inbuilt mechanisms which drive some people to suicide. However, its main purpose is to drive people into precarious jobs with insecure contracts, low pay and poor conditions. And there is also a threat of even more massive labour displacement through robotisation. Capitalism's needs for a substantial reserve army of labour may no longer be there in the future. Greater numbers of people could end up being considered expendable.

The contribution of the Right Populists and Neo-fascists to a dystopian world can already be detected in an online media flooded with 'fake news', which makes it more difficult to ascertain the truth. Meanwhile, particular communities of otherwise atomised and alienated individuals have been created to provide political support for Right Populist or Neo-fascist demagogues, either on-line, during elections, or mobilised on the streets.

To enforce Trump's Right Populist, 'America First' economics, he has also reversed the Neo-liberal trend to the lowering of international tariff barriers. They had pushed for the reduction of tariffs through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Uruguay Round from 1986-94, and then by setting up the World Trade Organisation in 1994, followed by the Doha Round from 2001. There was considerable hypocrisy involved, as the US and EU tried to block cheap agricultural imports from the 'Third World'. They could then dump their own states' subsidised food products to eliminate locally owned production and allow the massive agribusinesses to take control of these states' agricultural assets. Nevertheless, under Neo-liberal global hegemony a reduction in tariffs was still the overall trend. Trump, however, intends to impose tariffs not only on China and Mexico, but also upon Canada and the EU, until recently seen as close allies of the US in upholding the Neo-liberal world

order. Therefore Trump's 'America First' protectionism represents a major shift in economic policy and a break from Neo-liberalism.

Trump's Right Populist backers want to abandon multi-lateral institutions and deals, e.g. TTIP, TPP and possibly even the WTO. They also want to end NAFTA, which covered many Latin American states, because it included US concessions, (analogous to the Social Chapter under the Maastricht Treaty) no longer acceptable to major US corporations. This is being done to create a new global pecking order based upon unilaterally imposed 'America First' deals. Trump wants to enforce unapologetic 'America First' control over the global economy. This will lead to considerably more brutal competition, and an even more hierarchical economic system.

The Right Populists' new global system will be based on the outcome of one-to-one state bargaining. With such inter-state negotiations, the outcomes would directly reflect each state's economic power (a product of its total stock of accumulated capital) and also its military clout (where the threat of nuclear weapons provides an additional bargaining tool, even if there is no immediate intention to use them). For most of those states entering such one-to-one negotiations with the USA, this would be like a junior league, light-weight boxer taking on the world heavy-weight champion.

The US, though, is like a heavyweight-boxing champion towards the end of his career. Under normal circumstances, a new younger champion would oust him. However, the US's declining economic position is compensated by its immense military power. So, the world champion, in this case, is allowed the exclusive use of clubs and knuckledusters in the ring, with the additional threat of using bigger weapons too. This factor makes the US far more prepared to start military conflicts. Continuous war has been hard-wired into successive US regimes under Social Democratic-style New Deal and Neo-liberal hegemony (with the UK not far behind). However, the heightened global competition, following the 2008 Crash, has further accentuated this war drive.

Looking to the future, all the means by which the Right Populists intend to attain hegemony are not yet clear. The importance of the IT technologies, which only really took off in the later phase of Neo-liberalism, was still relatively marginal to the system in the earlier stage. Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* has flagged up one possibility in a world of Right Populist hegemony. She outlines a possible future based upon an economy where "predictions about our behaviour are bought and sold"..."in an ominous new 'behavioural futures market', with extreme concentrations of knowledge and no democratic oversight."<sup>2</sup> Facebook and Cambridge Analytica have shown the growing overlap between corporate manipulation of consumer and political choices. Only the most naïve would believe that the demise of Cambridge Analytica means an end to corporate capital and Right Populists' use of such technology to further undermine liberal democracy.

#### **4. The growing challenge from China and Trump's attempts to create a new imperialist alignment involving Putin's Russia**

China though remains a serious longer-term contender for the world economic leadership. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the underlying global competition between the then global hegemon, the UK with its extensive empire, and the rising challenger, Prussia/Germany, became the central drive leading to the First World War. Today, the imperial competition between the USA and China threatens to duplicate this, adding to the possibility of a new world war. The outbreak of the First World War showed that a host of other states had already been sucked into the vortex of inter-imperialist competition. Nobody thought that a world war would start in Sarajevo. Today's proxy wars, particularly in the Middle East, or later perhaps in the South China Sea, have a similar potential.

The final line-up, for any serious military conflict between the USA and China, is not set in stone. Between 1900 and 1914, both of the

UK's previous main imperial competitors, France and Tsarist Russia, became its main allies. Italy deserted Germany at the last minute; whilst Germany prised away the Ottoman Empire, previously propped up by France and the UK. Similar considerations today would go a long way to explain Donald Trump's ambiguous relationship with Vladimir Putin.

Russia, seen as the successor to the USSR under ex-KGB officer, Putin, has been hated as much in the USA, as the 'Russian Bear' was in the UK for much of the nineteenth century. However, if today more sections of the US ruling class see China as their main imperial competitor, then pushing Putin's Russia into becoming China's 'Austro-Hungarian' ally does not make much strategic sense. In the early 1900s, the anti-German, pro-war section of the British ruling class managed to bring about a change of attitude towards Tsarist Russia. Can we see this happening again today with Trump's USA and Putin's Russia?

Whereas Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton, in line with traditional, US anti-Russian sentiment, have been decidedly anti-Putin and anti his Russian Federation, some of Trump's men have worked either directly with Putin (who has also mobilised Russian Neo-fascists), or his Ukrainian ally, Yanokovych. But both sections of the US ruling class - Neo-liberal and Right Populist - have had links with either Ukrainian or Russian kleptocrats, who seized state property after the fall of the USSR in 1991. Many of these kleptocrats have gained a more permanent position in Russia and Ukraines' economic order, forming oligarchies there. The Democrats' attacks on Trump for his Russian involvement are quite hypocritical. The Neo-liberal Chicago Boys were over in Russia (and the rest of the former COMECON countries) as soon as the USSR fell apart. Within Yeltsin's Russia they formed an alliance with the rising kleptocrats to strip the state of its assets. The industrial base of society was decimated, social provision was undermined, and life expectancies fell.

In the face of this economic and social retrogression, Putin was one of the first to resort to Right Populism. Those oligarchs preferring the

high life in the USA or Europe, and who were not prepared to assist him rebuild a strong Russian state, were ousted and hounded if they made any challenges. Those oligarchs who showed their loyalty to Putin's Russia could continue their anti-working class practices, e.g. ignoring any labour protections and withholding workers' wages.

In anticipation of the more recent Right Populists, who provide few material rewards to workers, Putin has offered a psychological compensation mechanism of national chauvinism and racism. Many people, without their own independent organisations, which were ruthlessly hounded by the state and the oligarchs, looked to Putin as a national saviour, and to a whole host of others as scapegoats - national minorities, Muslims, women and gays. Those who questioned this found life dangerous, such as politicians (e.g. Boris Nemtsov killed in 2015), journalists (e.g. Natalia Estmirova, killed in 2009) and performers (e.g. Pussy Riot, jailed for 21 months from 2012). From 2007, after two brutal wars, Putin left Chechenya under the control of a local thug, the homophobic Ramzan Kadyrov.

However, Russia, which remains an economic basket case, did not have the power to extend its Right Populism much beyond its own desired borders - which stretch to most of Stalin's former Russian empire. The outliers for these ambitions can be seen in Kaliningrad (the former German Konigsberg); Russian ethnic breakaways from Moldova - Transnistria; from Ukraine - parts of the Donbass; and the formerly autonomous Crimea; in Russian backing for the South Ossetian and Abkazian breakaways from Georgia (after having brutally crushed the neighbouring Chechen attempt at secession from the Russian Federation). Beyond this 'Greater Russia', Putin has made pragmatic alliances, but is aware that his particular version of Right Populism cannot be exported very widely in the world.

Trump, however, has global ambitions for his 'America First' Right Populism. In order to pursue this course, he is looking to different allies to those the US had inherited from the recent Neo-liberal order. Trump faces difficulties in trying to switch the majority of the US ruling class to a less anti-Russian stance; despite Putin being up for

some deal covering spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. However, Trump is pulling US troops out of Syria, so he can rebuild links with long term NATO ally, Turkey, previously very anti-USSR and formerly very anti-Putin's Russian Federation. Turkish premier, Recep Erdogan, a Right Populist figure himself, is not enamoured, to say the least, with the US's latest ally-of-convenience against ISIS, the Kurdish PYD. And Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, in defiance of the UN, is probably associated with his planned withdrawal of US troops from Syria.

Whereas Obama used drones to replace most US ground troops in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Trump is pushing Israel and Saudi Arabia into the front line. The prospect of fewer American deaths and even more arms sales fits in nicely with his 'America First' strategy. Trump wants to concentrate more of the US's military attention upon China. The manufactured clash with North Korea has probably more to do with containing China than anything else.

Trump and Putin have already found common cause in their attempts to rein in and undermine the EU. Both support Neo-fascist and Right Populist, anti-EU groups, e.g. Jobbik, Golden Dawn, the Front National and UKIP. The Tories also receive considerable sums of money from Russian oligarchs, some of whom, no doubt, quietly act on Putin's bidding, rather than face the long arm of the Russian state security forces. Putin, though, has also wooed Left groups with his anti-EU politics. Red-Brown alliances are nothing new, and no doubt Putin is laughing at his ability to manipulate some of the Left. *Russia Today* is designed primarily (but not exclusively) with this Left Social Democratic and Nationalist market in mind. And, just as people living in the old USSR and Warsaw Pact countries used to listen to *Radio America* or the *BBC World Service* for information suppressed on the official broadcasting stations, so *Russia Today* can publish material marginalised in the west, whilst of course suppressing critical voices in Putin's Russia.

## 5. Trump's planned assault on the EU

Given the US's current economic and military supremacy, Trump's 'America First' strategy could bring some benefits to significant sections of US capital, at least for a period of time. The US's unique position means that 'it can have its cake and eat it too'. It can protect its own markets and force other states to open theirs. The UK with its and British Empire was in a similar position in its heyday.

In the post-Second World War period, the US government, State Department, security agencies and NATO, were backers of the European Iron and Steel Community and then the EEC. These were seen by the US as bodies to counter pressure from the USSR, COMECON and the Warsaw Pact. However, central to this US support was the denial of any independent European military force, which could match the EEC member states' growing economic power. European states, whether they joined the future EEC or not, were pressured to join NATO. These also included most EFTA members, led by the UK. Furthermore, NATO was little concerned whether its members observed any parliamentary niceties, as highlighted by the membership of Portugal and Turkey, and shown by the CIA-backed overthrow of Greece's elected government in Greece in 1967. States outside of NATO, such as Spain and the Republic of Ireland were still subordinated to the US/NATO. All these states were far more pliant, when it came to supporting US imperial interests, than the leading EEC member states, particularly France.

The US backed the UK's membership of the EEC in 1973. Initially this was to ensure that the US's most loyal ally, the UK, kept the pressure on to prevent the EEC developing its own military capacity. France had attempted to follow its own imperial policy outside NATO in the 1960s. Later, the US government supported Thatcher in her stance towards the EU and her initial support for the Neo-liberal Maastricht Treaty. She saw the UK, and the more recent eastern European EU member states, as allies in shifting the EU away from a more Social Democratic, social market order to a more Neo-liberal, 'free' market order led by the USA.

France and Germany, despite being in NATO, resisted US and UK pressure to join the Iraq War. And even some Atlanticists, such as the SNP's Alex Salmond, opposed this and the earlier US war against Serbia. They could see that the promotion of destructive wars, so close to the EU's borders, was not in their own states' interests, and that the ousting of one particular dictator, could well lead to the emergence of ethnic chauvinist or religious supremacists, as happened in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. Support for such forces had never been a problem for US governments - Democrat or Republican.

Apart from the UK in the EU, the other member states supporting and sending military forces to Iraq were sent by Right wing governments, particularly in those Eastern European states previously subordinated to the USSR's COMECON and Warsaw Pact. The UK has continually tried to make alliances with these states to assist the US reining in the power of the EU core states, Germany in particular. With no military forces at the EU's disposal, Germany, its most powerful state, has tried to extend its influence by wielding its considerable economic clout. Germany has done this to its east and south e.g. Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Slovenia and Croatia, and the former USSR constituent republics in the Baltic States and Ukraine, and even to Russia itself. Germany wanted to maintain access to Russia's rich resources, especially oil and gas.

The war-like attitude of the US towards Russia did not suit Germany. It would have been better served by the demilitarisation of the states between Germany and the Russian Federation and the extension of the earlier US/USSR treaties, designed to prevent a nuclear world war breaking out. A much weakened post-1991 Russian Federation would probably have gone along with this. The US, though, was determined to keep Russia down and the EU subordinate to its interests. A good way of reining in Germany, France, or any other member state's independent ambitions, was to raise the tension in eastern Europe.

People in eastern Europe, who had experienced life under their party-police states and the Greater Russian/USSR imperial designs of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, were more ready to support anti-Russian politics, even when this increased tensions. Many eastern European Nationalists looked to the US to provide military support. But some states were too far away for the US to give effective backing, e.g. Georgia after the 'Rose Revolution' in 2004. Russian military forces invaded and prised South Ossetia away.

The US has continued to push for Right wing, eastern European governments to join NATO. In this and other provocative actions, the US has tried to undermine the Russian Federation. Although in 2013-14, the US, under the 'liberal' Obama, made a public attempt to say it would not supply arms directly to the Ukrainian Fascist Azov battalion, the Ukrainian government used the brigade in the Donbass. (Obama's stance was no more convincing than other US attempts to claim its arms only went to 'democratic' forces. e.g. in Syria, when they end up in the hands of various jihadists). So, the US liberals set the precedent for Trump's flirtation with the Far Right. And the US, under Trump, is now looking beyond the EU to other eastern European states, e.g. Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia, with uncertain commitments to those once west European constitutional and legal norms of parliamentary government, civil rights and opposition to nepotistic and crony business contracts.

The US strategy of destabilising the EU's eastern borderlands has undermined the position of Germany, France and other EU states. Unlike the UK, they had been prepared to adopt a non-compliant stance towards the Pentagon's wars. Since the 2008 crisis, which sharpened all the existing inter-imperial tensions, the EU has been forced under US pressure to go along with the US backed, eastern European Right member governments' acceptance of a militarised conflict zone on its eastern border. This has also meant the EU turning a blind eye to these governments' increasingly authoritarian regimes.

And a further blind eye has also been turned to the national chauvinism and racism of the Right Populists in eastern European EU member states. This includes their mounting attacks on Muslims migrants, asylum seekers, as well as upon the long-term resident Roma. The UK has form on this too, highlighted by the eviction of Travellers from their property at Dale Farm in Essex in 2011. They were mostly long-term UK and Irish residents. In eastern Europe, hostility to migrants (especially Muslims) has sometimes gone along with thinly disguised anti-semitism, e.g. in Orban's Hungary and Kaczinski's Poland. However, this is something quite acceptable to Netanyahu's Israel, provided these national chauvinist and racist leaders accept Israeli policy in Palestine and the Middle East. The inability of Germany, France and other key EU states to resist these pressures has contributed to the legitimisation of Far Right parties and the rise of Neo-fascist street forces within their own borders.

The EU displayed another weakness following the 2008 Crash. Whilst the euro has replaced sterling as the second most-traded currency after the dollar, its political and economic foundations are less secure than either of these currencies. Both the dollar and sterling have the firm backing of a single state and of Wall Street and the City. Whatever their limits (and they are considerable) the dollar and sterling have redistributive mechanisms which means that there is not a massively one-sided regional imposition of debt collection in the USA and UK. The collection of 'sovereign debt' is spread throughout these states, even if also imposed mainly on the working class. This compares to the German-dominated European Central Bank's (ECB) draconian debts imposed very one-sidedly upon the separate states of Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain (PIIGS).

Even strong supporters of the EU such as Joseph Stiglitz and Yanis Varoufakis attacked the failure of the ECB's euro backers to treat the euro area as a common currency zone, rather than a top-down controlled hierarchy of member states, with differential access to credit and debt liabilities.<sup>3</sup> The ECB has resisted any more effective economic integration, which would further extend credit and spread debt liability. Any 'help' in these endeavours is tied to punitive

penalties, like the old Structural Adjustment Programmes. These allow corporate businesses based in a dominant creditor state to take control of assets in the debtor states. In imposing its austerity measures upon the PIIGS, the ECB acted just like Wall Street and the City when they operated outside their own state's boundaries. The City, backed by the British government, was every bit as prepared to impose similar measures in Ireland and Iceland, since they lie beyond UK state territory.

Nevertheless, the ECB showed signs of wanting to assert greater control over banks, something anathema both to Wall Street and the City. Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron also toyed with the idea of developing a more independent European military force. This is why Trump and his Right Populist 'America First' backers have decided to go considerably further than the old Republican/ Democrat consensus of trying to subordinate the EU to US imperial interests. They want to break-up or to downsize the EU in order to remove a possible rival, and to end another multilateral trading bloc. And this is why the promotion of Right Populism in the UK through Brexit was so central to the creation of Trump's new global order.

## **6. Trump's 'America First', the Brexiteers and 'Britain Second'**

The UK is obviously no longer in a globally dominant position. The Brexiteers' desire for one-to-one state negotiations will have a different outcome to those being made by the USA. The UK is more in the adult light-weight boxing league. It would clearly win out in one-to-one negotiations with say Jamaica and Gambia, very much confined to the lower end of the junior boxing league. However, when moving to the bigger fish in the world's imperial seas, the poor showing of British Brexit negotiators, in their dealings with the EU, is a harbinger of likely things to come.

The relative confidence of the EU negotiators in dealing with the UK has been a reflection of its relative economic strength, based not so much on finance, but on total economic production. Even the most

loopy Brexiteer hasn't yet suggested the threat of nuclear weapons - conjuring up instead past images of Spitfires, the 'Dunkirk spirit' and the Home Guard to back the virulent British chauvinism to be mobilised against the new 'German Empire'/Fourth Reich'. But, when it comes to British trade with the major states needed to partly replace EU trade (which will continue in some form), the imbalance of UK power is stark, compared to the US and China, two major alternative trading 'partners' and embarrassingly for the Brexiteers, even with former colonial India.

A key British ruling class figure, Nigel Lawson, looked to Brexit "to complete the Thatcher's {counter} revolution." Lawson was in charge of the economy after the 'Big Bang' deregulation, contributing to the consequent consumer boom, mainly based upon expanding credit. When growing speculation against sterling led to the Black Wednesday stock market crash of 1987, the City just added to the international financial pressure. Lawson seems to have learned little from this reality check about the strength of the UK economy in the world. He put 'Black Wednesday' down to the UK's participation in the EU's European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

Leading Brexiteers know that their economic strategy depends upon increased British trade with the USA. They also know the implications - the handing over of large chunks of the economy to US corporations, including servicing the NHS, the flooding of sub-quality produce (famously, but far from exclusively, chlorinated chicken) and the likely acceptance of the notorious investor state agreements - in other words 'TTIP, plus, plus, plus.' They also know that the UK would become even more subservient to NATO. But they are quite prepared to meet Trump's demand for more military spending, and more than likely to provide the military forces for the US's continuing wars. Arms production is the biggest remaining major industrial sector of the UK economy.

Salivating at any post-Brexit prospects, Right wing, senior military and naval officers look forward to increased arms budgets, a greater role for the military in civil affairs, and to new wars. And in this they

have the backing of Tory War Minister, Gavin Williamson. He wants to "strengthen our {read their} global presence, enhance our lethality {!} and increase our mass."<sup>4</sup> So, who are the Brexiteers planning to go to war with? Is it a Spain making renewed claims on Gibraltar; a Germany, which had the cheek to recover economically after the Second World and overtake the UK; or Putin's Russia making UK 'Ulster'-type claims in eastern Ukraine. No, Williamson has said he wants to send the new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, as yet without planes, to "frighten China"!<sup>5</sup>

Behind all Williamson and Johnsons' bombastic empty rhetoric is the further ratcheting up of national chauvinism. This is central to the Brexiteers' plans. And Cameron paved the way for this too, with his planned four years celebration of British military forces in the First World War. The purpose of this was to create the political climate to boost the British armed forces today. The French and German states, (whose citizens and subjects suffered more and in three wars not two) organised joint commemorations around the theme – 'Never again'.

Like the Neo-liberal Tony Blair, or the one-time Vietnam war draft-dodging, now Right Populist, Donald Trump, their families will be exempt from these wars; just as Nigel Lawson can retreat to his French home and Jacob Rees-Mogg can switch his investments to Dublin after any Brexit. Having left the 'clutches' of the EU, Brexit UK would be even more firmly under the stranglehold of the US. The UK would have even less say in its dealings with the US, than Norway has in its dealings with the EU. Politically, the UK would lie somewhere below the status of Puerto Rico!

## **7. Neo-liberal and Left Populist attempts to oppose the rise of Right Populism**

Hilary Clinton and the traditional leadership of the Democrats in the US have tried to form a Neo-liberal opposition to Trump. They have used their base in Congress and a whole number of states, backed by the US liberal press, to try to get Trump indicted. However, the Neo-liberals created the economic, social and political conditions from

which Trump's 'America First' Right Populism arose. They were totally dismissive of the growing decline of incomes, social provision and the general insecurity brought to many working class communities under their Neo-liberal regime.

It was also the Democrats, under Bill Clinton, who brought in the legislation, which led to large numbers of Afro-Americans being imprisoned. Obama repatriated even more Latin American migrants than Bush. Despite vague election 'promises', he did not end US military intervention in Afghanistan or the Middle East. He shifted its emphasis from the use of US ground troops to the use of drones, with their heavy civilian casualties. Hilary Clinton was one of the most bellicose Democrats, pushing for the chaos-causing, regime-change war against Libya, and being very involved in the sabre-rattling directed at Putin's Russia. And when she tried to adopt the 'MeToo' mantle, it was with no regard for her earlier self-serving dismissal of Monica Lewinsky. So, although the mainstream Democrats deny any responsibility for the rise of Right Populism, Trump's election victory represents 'blowback' for the Neo-liberals.

Trump (like Thatcher before, when dealing with remnant Social Democratic resistance in the 1980s) has shown that he knows how to blunt the Neo-liberal Democrats' challenge. One of the first things he did was to bring in major tax cuts for the rich (which of course also greatly benefitted himself and his corporate backers). Many Neo-liberal and Right Populist members of the US ruling class live in gated communities to protect them from the 'lower orders'. Trump and his Right Populist backers promise to extend this exclusive wall principle. They offer the atomised, alienated and demoralised within the imperial heartlands, new walls in order to keep out 'alien' economic migrants and asylum seekers. Trump invoked the 'horrors' of Central American asylum seekers overwhelming the US borders, thus requiring his infamous Mexico wall.

Trump and other Right Populists have understood that, in the Neo-liberals' much-vaunted world of greater consumer choice, not everybody did so well in the imperial heartlands. Consumer choices

were always directly related to incomes. Income inequality spiralled under Neo-liberalism. The Right Populists offer the prospect of the creation of more jobs by eliminating any remaining restrictions, e.g. on environmental protection - opening coal mines in Appalachia and opening up Lancashire to fracking. With trade unions eliminated in huge areas of the private sector, the Right Populists want those dependent on this sector's precarious jobs, to turn on those in the remaining public sector jobs, who are still unionised. The public sector unions will be the subject of increased attacks. This is all part of the Right Populists' desire to break the working class up into competing sections, e.g. private sector/public sector, employed/unemployed, 'fit'/disabled, male/female, white/non-white, citizens/non-citizens. They then draw the dominant group in each of these binaries into forces which can be politically mobilised, Whereas the Neo-liberals had been quite happy to have those who had been increasingly marginalised drop out of wider social engagement and politics altogether.

But the Right Populists also appreciate that the new jobs they offer with even worse pay, conditions and welfare provision need to be supplemented by something else, if they are to retain wider support when workers take these up. Right Populists offer some compensatory pyschological gratification. Through a constant process of 'othering', the losers are invited to turn on particular ethnic groups, Muslims, Blacks, migrants, women, gays and the transgendered. Members of an atomised and alienated working class are encouraged to look to these people for scapegoats and to saviours like Trump.

For those apolitical individuals, to whom the Neo-liberals offered consumer sovereignty over citizen sovereignty, but then lost out in the consumer amassing stakes, Right populists (and Neo-fascists) have created new racist, bigotted, sexist and homophobic identifying groups. These are to be found amongst those who had their earlier more positive class solidarities undermined. Trump moved effortlessly between his role in the traditional Neo-liberal supporting media, e,g. the NBC's *The Apprentice* (plugging the myth

of the self-made entrepreneur), to creating a base for himself within the Far Right social media scene, winning Stephen Bannon and *Breitbart's* endorsement.

And, if lying and conspiracy theories are the staple fare of today's Right, then the Neo-liberal Bush set the pattern with the concocted story of Saddam's 'weapons of mass destruction'. And Neo-liberal precedents for the Right Populist approach can be found in the UK. If Trump has viciously turned upon all those who question him, then BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan's dismissal and Dr. David Kelly's death, under the regime of Blair and his henchmen have been two other precedents. But for the Right Populists, lying and disinformation are not just things resorted to, in order to cover up particular nefarious state activities. They are a central and everyday part of the way they conduct politics.

There have been examples within the EU and the UK of Neo-liberal attempts to stem the tide of Right Populism. In 2017, France witnessed the creation of a completely new Neo-liberal party, Emmanuel Macron's En Marche. Macron won the presidential election with 66% of the vote and En Marche won 350 out of 557 seats in the French parliamentary election soon afterwards. However, following the Gilet-Jaunes protests, Macron's personal support has fallen to 29%. This has made other Neo-liberals, e.g. the Labour Right in the UK, more wary of following this course of action.

Another course is for the traditional parties to accommodate the Right Populists. In 2018, in Austria, the old (Christian Democratic) Peoples Party, now under Sebastian Kurtz, went into coalition with the Right Populist, Alliance for the Future (which had absorbed most Austrian Neo-fascists) in 2018. In Germany, Angela Merkel is feeling the pressure inside the Christian Democratic Union, (CDU) and also from its Bavarian partner, the Christian Social Union, to make the CDU accommodate the Right Populist, Alternative for Germany (which has also absorbed many German Neo-fascists). In Spain the semi-Francoist Spanish state, and the Neo-liberal Peoples Party is resorting to the Neo-fascist Vox party in the courts and on

the streets of Madrid. And here the state's target extends beyond the Catalan Republican opposition, to the mildly Social Democratic PSOE for not being Castilian supremacist enough.

Following the Brexit vote and the election of Trump, Theresa May has taken her party away from of its Right Neo-liberal anchoring, and tail-ended the Right Populist pressure, exerted by Farage and Trump. If Trump has championed his Mexico wall to keep out migrants, then former Neo-liberal, 'hostile environment' promoting May has invoked the 'threat' of a few dozen Iranian asylum seekers, desperately trying to cross the English Channel. She wants to step up naval patrolling and build new 'White Cliffs of Dover' defences. But it's not new walls she offers, but a more heavily fortified 'moat' in the English Channel, in order to keep out 'alien' economic migrants and asylum seekers. 'Project Fear' quickly becomes 'Project Hate'.

Other challenges to the Neo-liberals have come from Left Populists like Syriza and Podemos. However, despite coming to prominence following the large independent street movements, such as the Indignados in 2011, these two new parties went on to adopt essentially national, Social Democratic, neo-Keynesian economic approaches. The difficulty in fighting such internationally entrenched Neo-liberal power as the Troika, from an exclusively national basis, was highlighted by the collapse of Syriza's own challenge. Yet this had been strongly endorsed by the people of Greece in a national referendum. And, although more radical than Sanders or Corbyn, both Syriza and Podemos have shared these two's uncritical attitude to the states they have administered or hoped to administer. Thus, Podemos became divided when it was faced with a more radical constitutional challenge from the Catalan Republicans to Spain's unitary state.

One of the strengths of the Catalan Republican and the Scottish independence campaigns is that they have made many of their supporters more aware of the anti-democratic nature of the states they live in. This cannot be said of most of Syriza's, Podemos', Corbyn's Labour, or Sanders' Democrat supporters.

The fact that Spain's unitary state has been more intransigent in dealing with the demand for national self-determination than the UK's unionist state, propelled the Catalan movement on to a republican path. This goes considerably beyond the constitutional monarchist, 'Independence-Lite', SNP-led, Scottish movement for self-determination. This is not committed to a complete break with the UK. But the UK's Right Populist and Neo-fascist reactionary unionists no longer look to 'Better Together's liberal unionism to stymie radical constitutional change. They have taken notice of Spain's judicial, military and police suppression of national self-determination. And the UK state already has form on this, as the experience of Ireland shows.

## **8. A Right Populist precursor in Northern Ireland prepares the way for the Brexiteer-led reactionary unionism**

The Right populism of some Unionists and many Loyalists, as well as the Fascist forms of Loyalism, have been a feature of 'Ulster'/Northern Irish politics more than a century. The word 'Fascism' has often been used somewhat loosely. In this article it is used to refer to the existence of unofficial street forces, which can sometimes include paramilitaries, able to act independently of the state to impose their reactionary designs. The UVF and UDA, which have been responsible for many deaths, injuries and evictions, meet these criteria. What these Loyalists were not able to do in Northern Ireland, in the early 1920s (or since then), was to establish a fully-fledged fascist state like Mussolini's Fascisti in Italy.

The pre-1972 Orange Stormont regime belonged to the apartheid family – which has included the old 'Jim Crow' South in the USA, pre-1994 South Africa, and present-day Israel. The Fascist wing of Loyalism had not been able to gain complete ascendancy but ended up helping to create the apartheid-type Northern Irish sub-state. It operated in the interests of the British ruling class and its Ulster Unionist allies. This sub-state maintained official paramilitary forces

- the B Specials and RUC, as well as giving the Orange Order a privileged role. Fascist Loyalists maintained their own organisations both to pressure, and, if necessary, physically challenge these official bodies, if they were seen as not being robust enough in their dealing with Republicans or the wider Catholic Nationalist population. There was also an overlap in membership between official and unofficial Loyalist organisations.

Right Populist Unionists, other mainstream Loyalists and the (neo)-Fascist Loyalists hold to reactionary unionist politics. Reactionary unionism is prepared to attack the existing UK constitutional order, whenever liberal unionists have pushed for, or defended political devolutionary reform. Some reactionary unionists were even prepared to take the UK into a civil war in 1914, to prevent the implementation Westminster's Third Irish Home Rule Act. Following Ireland's Partition in 1921, and the Loyalist pogroms used to set up a new Orange Stormont regime, reactionary unionism mellowed over time to a more conservative unionism, once the opposition was sufficiently cowed. This hybrid reactionary/conservative unionism became hegemonic in Northern Ireland until the mid 1960s.

Sensing the change of mood amongst the Nationalists, the UVF, the Fascist wing of Loyalism, had already started killing Catholics in 1966.<sup>6</sup> However this did not prevent a vibrant Civil Rights Movement from growing. From 1969-72, it tried to win the same political, economic and political rights in Northern Ireland that existed elsewhere in the UK. The Stormont regime quickly reverted to a reactionary unionist response, batoning down protestors. But in January 1972 on Bloody Sunday in Derry, the British troops stepped into the shoes of the B Specials and RUC, gunning down rather than batoning down civil rights protestors. This led to the rapid growth of a Republican opposition. This drew much of its support from former Civil Right activists, including Bernadette Devlin/McAliskey – as ‘Republicanism for fast learners’ took root. And Republicanism included a Socialist Republican element.

In the face of the state's armed repression, the IRA was prepared to use armed resistance. The wider Republican Movement had military, political and cultural wings. These challenged most aspects of the UK state and British rule. However, it took more than a quarter of a century for this growing and deep-rooted popular resistance to bring about the end of fifty years UK state-backed, Ulster Unionist hegemony and the Ulster Unionists' and Loyalists' ferocious defence of what remained of their old order.

The Irish Republican challenge meant that the UK state was eventually forced to change course. This was first flagged up in the Conservatives' Downing Street Declaration in 1993 and consolidated under the New Labour's Good Friday Agreement in 1998. However, this 'New Unionism' was introduced, not to dismantle the older Unionist/Loyalist order, but to put the UK state in the position of 'honest broker' between Unionists/Loyalists and Nationalists/Republicans. Pushed by the UK state, Unionism and Loyalism retreated from a position of hegemony to one of uncertain domination.

However, the New Labour UK government buttressed the Unionists by copper fastening their position in the provisions of the 1998 Good Friday and 2006 St. Andrews Agreements. The new Stormont was given a Unionist/Loyalist veto over any prospect of Irish reunification. A talking-shop was set up at Stormont to help manage the sectarian/ethnic divide. But Stormont has introduced no significant reforms. It was set up to allow grievances to be aired, UK state financial subventions to be divided up, and appeals to be made to the UK government to arbitrate. Only two groups were given political recognition, Unionists/Loyalists and Republicans/Nationalists. Partition now took on new forms, which the personnel running the UK state hoped would make Northern Ireland easier to control.

Although there was a Unionist/Loyalist veto over any Sinn Fein moves to get Stormont to move towards Irish reunification, there was also a Nationalist/Republican veto preventing a return to the old

Unionist/Loyalist supremacy. The highpoint of the liberal sugar-coated, conservative unionist, post-GFA order followed the DUP's acceptance of the St. Andrews Agreement in 2006. This led to their new-found modus vivendi with Sinn Fein. Between them the DUP and Sinn Fein divided up Stormont's First and Depute Leader posts. This created the political phenomenon known as the 'Chuckle Brothers' – the DUP's Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness. At this time, when Neo-liberalism was still hegemonic, the prospect of a 'peace dividend' extending to Republican and Loyalist workers seemed possible. Paisley's immediate supporters ditched 'No Surrender' Loyalism in return for the profitable pickings, which their positions in the reformed Stormont gave access to. Ian Paisley Junior, Peter Robertson and his wife Iris, were soon involved in dubious financial activities.

But after the 2008 Crash, UK state subventions that were fed down through Stormont's wider apparatus to the DUP (and on to the only semi-disarmed Loyalists) and to Sinn Fein (and on to their approved community organisations) brought little in the way of a 'peace dividend' to either working class communities. The new context was the ongoing Austerity cuts to education, health and other public services. Resentment was building up, particularly amongst Loyalists. They saw every new post in Stormont and its agencies which went to Catholics as a loss and an affront to their idea of Unionist supremacy.

Loyalist semi-paramilitaries still held sway in some local communities and had to be given state funding to bribe them to behave themselves. But many amongst their ranks still yearned for the pre-1972 years of Unionist/Loyalist supremacy, even if they well knew that all those 'protected' jobs, associated with the old order, were never going to come back.

Furthermore, 'Ulster'-British Loyalists had no desire to become non-sectarian Northern Irish-British. They saw the change of their old RUC to the PSNI, with its Catholic recruitment, as an indication the police could not be entirely relied upon to uphold the old sectarian order. And in 2012, they (and Irish Republicans dismayed for

entirely different reasons) had to witness McGuinness shaking hands with the queen.

In 2012, the Flag Riots were launched in Belfast with backing of Loyalists from the old paramilitaries. These led to the burning out of the liberal unionist, Alliance Party (AP) offices, and the intimidation of their members in East Belfast. The AP's non-sectarian Northern Ireland within the UK was not for them. A reactionary unionist campaign paved the way for the return of the then AP-held Westminster East Belfast constituency to the DUP in the 2015 Westminster general election.

On the basis of this challenge, Arlene Foster emerged as the new DUP leader, ditching the party's recent support for the St. Andrews Agreement, and returning to its longstanding desire to restore unionist majority rule. Populism takes a different form within 'Ulster's Unionist/Loyalist community. It has its own much older versions of the Hard Right's incivility and abuse found online in the rest of the UK or the USA. Long-standing putdowns include 'Fenians', 'Taigs' and its mobilising slogans, include 'No Surrender', 'Ulster Says No'. Sometimes the DUP's politicians have to backtrack on these in public, but in more private gatherings or Orange marches shared by DUP leaders and Loyalist rank and file, Right Populism and its associated reactionary unionism is very evident.

The DUP has also ensured that closer contact was re-established with the Loyalist organisations. The DUP's Emma Little-Pengelly took the South Belfast Westminster seat in 2017. After her marriage, she had deliberately retained the Little surname of her father, a former Loyalist gunrunner, to cement the DUP/Loyalist alliance. Over this period, the DUP was also involved in the 'Cash-for-Ash' Scandal. This showed that whatever else changed in the transition from the old to the new DUP leadership, business corruption remained. In the face of mounting concern over the DUP's role in both the 'Cash-for-Ash' scandal and the obstruction of a new Irish Language act, DUP leaders decided they were happy to let the Northern Ireland Executive

collapse. This ended the liberal illusion of Stormont upholding any ‘parity of esteem’.

Instead the DUP placed its hopes on the 2016 post-Brexit vote, and the further Right moving Tory government to buttress its position. In the 2017 Westminster general election, the DUP took 10 of the 18 Northern Irish seats, an increase of 2, including the South Belfast constituency held by the SDLP. May brought these DUP MPs into her confidence, and in effect gave them a veto over her Brexit proposals. Foster’s reactionary unionism prefigured that which has emerged on the Tory Right, tentatively after the outcome of the Scottish independence campaign in 2014, and wholeheartedly after the 2016 Brexit vote. The 2017 general election cemented the majority of the British ruling class in their support for reactionary unionism.

To win a wider base of support, the DUP wants to turn the clock back. No longer able to provide material privileges to its voting base, Unionists and Loyalists (from the UUP, DUP, TUV and various other Loyalist organisations) have resorted to the psychological compensatory mechanisms used by Right populists elsewhere in the world to maintain support. Unionist and Loyalist organisations, especially the various Orange orders, uphold their ‘right’ to intimidate Nationalists in their streets, homes and schools. Following Little-Pengelly’s electoral victory, the UVF drove Catholics out of their homes in South Belfast’s Cantrell Close, which had been built as non-sectarian housing. Triumphalist Loyalist marches are attended by Unionist MPs, MLAs and local councillors. Stormont and Belfast city council sponsor hate-fuelled Loyalist bonfires.

The PSNI also assists in removing non-unionist residents in Loyalist majority areas, or migrant eastern European Roma from Belfast’s streets and hostels. This symbiotic relationship of the state with national chauvinist, racist and other reactionary forces in promoting discrimination and eviction, is something the wider far Right and reactionary unionist forces in the UK hopes to develop.

The liberal constitutionalism, which informs EU politics, meant that the GFA transcended the anti-democratic, unwritten, UK constitution. The GFA amounted to an international treaty guaranteed by the EU and the US. The significance of the opposition of Brexiteers, including the DUP, to the EU is clear. They see the need for the UK, with its reactionary Crown-in-Westminster powers "to take back control" to restore as much of the old order as possible. And this means ending any 'parity of esteem' including the existing provision for the Irish language in Northern Ireland. This is underpinned by the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Existing UK legal provision for the Welsh language in Wales and for the Gaelic language in Scotland depends on the whim of Westminster, and it is not only the DUP that has shown hostility to the Celtic languages. Opposition has stretched across the unionist spectrum from the Tories to George Galloway and on to the Right nationalist, Stuart Campbell of Wings over Scotland.<sup>7</sup>

The DUP now appears to be in the position of being the 'Ulster' Loyalist tail able to wag the British Unionist dog. That could still change in the future. It did so for a disheartened Conservative and Unionist, Sir Edward Carson, when the UK government partitioned his beloved Unionist Ireland and created a devolved parliament in Northern Ireland under the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1921. And it did so for the Ulster Unionists, when previously ardent UUP supporter, Margaret Thatcher, signed up to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985.

Now, however, in Northern Ireland, there is no longer any pretense that the UK government acts as an 'honest broker'. And instead of the UK state bringing 'civilised' twenty-first century liberal values to the Northern Ireland (in a faint top-down echo of the original Civil Rights Movement), the Great British reactionary Right looks to the DUP to turn back the social clock across the UK. If May still holds on to some of Blair's and Cameron's old social liberalism, detested by the DUP, then the socially reactionary Jacob Rees-Mogg is there in the wings. He has visited Northern Ireland, following a path to 'Ulster' adopted by UKIPs Farage - notice those UK, not just British initials in that party's name. And Farage, in order to further his pan-

UK project, had been fishing in these waters as far back as 2007. This is when he approached the then DUP's Jim Allister when he resigned and formed the even more reactionary 'No Surrender' TUV to protest against Paisley's accommodation with Sinn Fein.

## **9. The shock 2014 result of IndyRef1 pushes a frightened British ruling class towards reactionary unionism and from 'Better Together' to 'Bitter Together'**

When New Labour set up Holyrood as part of the 'New Unionist' 'Devolution-all-round' settlement, they were confident that this would see off any SNP challenge. The first Labour/Lib-Dem coalition at Holyrood even introduced a few Social Democratic style reforms - over land ownership, provision of care for the elderly, the rejection of further privatisation of hospitals, and the ending of student fees. Initially, Labour in Scotland hoped to put some clear pink water between itself and a Westminster dominated by the impact of Blair's and Browns' neo-liberal gallop to the Right. This was time when Scottish (and Welsh) Labour liked to think of themselves as being to the Left of the all-British party. They could take some comfort from the fact that any more radical policy proposals would soon be ditched when British Labour was in office.

In Scotland, there appeared to be continued support for Scottish Labour's somewhat deeper pink Social Democracy. However, then came Iraq War 'car crash'. Meanwhile, growing economic problems faced the working class, with precarious labour replacing more secure jobs, especially for the young, and continued cutbacks in social provision. This showed that New Labour, following the Tories, was continuing to undermine its own post-1945 Social Democratic legacy. And after the 2008 Crash, Scottish Labour began to turn its back on its own recent Holyrood reforming legacy. But with the new Scottish Parliament, Scottish Labour could no longer hide behind the excuse of a Neo-liberal Westminster. Their inability to uphold a Social Democratic legacy at Holyrood was exposed and challenged.

And the fact that Blair, Brown and later Alistair Darling, so prominent at Westminster, all had a Scottish background, contributed to Labour-voting Scots questioning their Scottish-British Unionist identities. And this change was most marked amongst those from an Irish Catholic background. They had previously been the most loyal to Labour and had been strongly opposed to Scottish independence. However, the SNP's move from its earlier ethnic Scottish Nationalism (with its Presbyterian component) to a new civic Scottish Nationalism did much to encourage this change. Meanwhile, Scottish and other Unionists remained trapped in their own versions of ethnic hybrid British Nationalism.

The SNP was undergoing a slow process of social democratisation. This replaced an earlier, unstable alliance of Left urban and Right rural Populists. That divide had led to virtual 'civil war' in the party in the 1980s. As the SNP switched to a centre Social Democratic stance to challenge Labour, it did not have to offer a more radical Social Democratic alternative. The SNP just took over the mild Social Democratic ground being abandoned by Labour. The SNP increasingly became associated with the reforming policies Labour had introduced in Scotland. They defended these policies against Rightwards moving Labour at Westminster and Holyrood. Scottish Labour leader, Johanne Lamont's aptly named Midwinter Commission ensured this.

But it went deeper than that. The SNP leadership successfully appropriated the 'national', but now as Scottish, in that post-1945 British Labour social democratic jewel in the crown - the British National Health Service. It was able to do this, without in any way fundamentally questioning the inherited pseudo-market, target-setting methods of managerial control, whether in health or in education. Instead of promoting health and education on the basis of need, with their workers and service users taking the lead, social Neo-liberalism was also adopted by the SNP government ministers running these services.

SNP ministers gave full backing to the highly paid managers (many of whom used private health and education). They argued that things had not got so bad as in England. But a Scottish worker or family member on a long hospital waiting list, or whose child is in an under-resourced school, is little more likely to take much reassurance that things are much worse in England, than their English equivalents are likely to take from being told that things are much worse in the Republic of Ireland or the USA.

Nevertheless, in the face of New Labour's gallop to the Right, the SNP had been able to form a minority government with the support of the Scottish Greens at Holyrood in 2007. However, the 2008 Crash knocked the stuffing out of Alex Salmond's 'Arc of Prosperity'. His adversaries now dismissed this as the 'Arc of Insolvency'. Salmond's courting of Scottish based banks (he was employed by the Royal Bank of Scotland) and even of Donald Trump (in competition with Scottish Labour's former First Minister, Jack McConnell) looked damaging. The SNP lost seats in by-elections. Surely the economic benefits of continued UK state membership, the better to mitigate the effects of the Crash, would be self-evident.

However, it was New Labour, now led by Gordon Brown, and his Chancellor, Alistair Darling, that had decided to introduce Austerity to bail out the bankers and offload the most of costs of the crisis on to the working class. Darling even entered the 2010 Westminster election, promising cuts more severe than Thatcher's! Thus, it was not so surprising that old-style Labour-supporting Social Democrats in Scotland began to turn to the SNP and helped to give them an absolute majority of seats in the 2011 Holyrood election. But the Scottish Labour leadership was still trapped in its own bubble of entitlement and self-importance. As a consequence, its leaders learned no lessons from the SNP's electoral victory. The Scottish leadership, egged on by the self-delusional Jim Murphy, argued that Scottish Labour had lost because it hadn't been Blairite enough!

The SNP now had a mandate to introduce an independence referendum. Cameron's Con-Dem government conceded this, after

sounding out Labour politicians from their majority Unionist party base in Scotland. Wendy Alexander, a highly motivated careerist with business backing, had already told the previous Labour government "to bring it {the referendum} on".<sup>8</sup> This was another example of the self-delusion of those New Labour figures who now moved in elevated circles. However, the main reason why the government conceded the referendum, was because the opinion polls showed support for Scottish independence to be languishing in the lower 30s percentage points range.

Yet, Labour could probably have remained the leader of the eventual 'No' victors following IndyRef1. The majority of the British ruling class and the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition government had still been in post-1998, liberal unionist, Devolution-all-round mode, when the Scottish independence referendum was announced in 2012. This had been highlighted by the government's acceptance of a further extension of devolved powers for the Welsh Assembly the year before. However, to enable Labour to take the lead in the Scottish referendum campaign, a third 'Devo-Max' option would needed to have been added to the 'Yes' and 'No' to Scottish independence options on the ballot paper, with the possibility of a transferable vote. Some SNP business backers supported this.

But to win over the working class in Scotland, any new 'Devo-Max' powers would have to have been linked with the prospect of some more Social Democrat reforms. Yet, instead of doing this, Labour backed the binary 'Yes'/No' choice, and then proceeded to join the Conservatives and Lib-Dems in 'Better Together'. A pleased Cameron then decided to run an essentially conservative unionist campaign, defending the constitutional status quo. He was quite happy to have Labour front 'Better Together' in Scotland. They could make liberal unionist 'promises' of more devolved powers, which weren't on the ballot paper, and which they had no power to deliver. And Gordon Brown stepped in at the last minute, when the very real prospect of a 'Yes' vote loomed. But after the 'No' vote he was soon consigned back to his 'box'.

The SNP leadership, still under Salmond, had decided that the best way to campaign was to stay in the centre ground and to woo business and the more conservative voters. Little would change for the majority under the SNP's 'Independence-Lite'. The existing union jack flagged institutions of the UK state, and Scotland's commercial products and services, would display the saltire instead. Central to setting the parameters of a conservative/liberal independence campaign, was Salmond's desire to drop the SNP's longstanding opposition to NATO. Salmond wanted to highlight the SNP's respectability and its readiness to participate in the existing global Neo-liberal order. He hoped that a new Holyrood would provide some trickledown Social Democratic reforms.

To hold on to and gain more Scottish business backers, the SNP leaders wanted to replace Scottish Labour as the main source of Holyrood and local government patronage. The SNP marched through the institutions of the UK state - local councils, Holyrood and Westminster - as well as increasing their representation at the EU's Strasbourg, where they would become model Scottish Europeans. Salmond hoped to gradually prize control away from the Westminster head office through a Scottish junior managerial buyout. This independence by stealth, coupled with the SNP's ultimate 'Independence-Lite' aim - a monarchical union (back to 1603-1707!) subordinate to the City of London, and the British High Command - was designed not to frighten the SNP's existing or potential business backers.

Salmond also hoped to make links with any still critical Social Democratic, liberal unionist forces in the rest of the UK. Some could see that the maintenance of the UK as a major imperialist power was completely counterproductive for a state, which was slipping down the global economic hierarchy. Maintaining the costly trappings of a lost empire held back economic and social reforms and only served to buttress the privileges of a reactionary British Establishment. Support for the costly Trident is the centre-piece of the UK's grossly overblown imperial window dressing. Therefore, the renewal of Trident was to be opposed. The House of Lords is another costly

archaic relic, and a key part of the anti-democratic Westminster set up. SNP politicians were told not to take seats in the House of Lords. But, at the same time, they accepted the monarchy, none more so than super-royalist Salmond, during the IndyRef1 campaign. This also meant they accepted the UK state's Crown Powers and would confine themselves to the constitutionally acceptable, even when "Britain waived the rules".

Salmond and his supporters, including Kenny Macaskill (who, as Scottish Justice Minister, upheld the dubious role of the Scottish court in the US state framing of Abdelbaset al Megrahi over the Lockerbie bombing) railroaded acceptance of NATO through an SNP conference in October 2012. However, they were not prepared for the closeness of the vote, nor for the defection of many members, including two MSPs.

The IndyRef1 campaign was to mobilise completely unanticipated forces. The conservative and reactionary unionist Right had extensive media support from a BBC (falling back in default mode to the meaning of the 'B' in the first letter of its title), and from *The Express* and *The Daily Mail*; as well as from the leaders of those sections of the UK state lying beyond any democratic scrutiny. The liberal unionists could depend on the *Times*, *Guardian*, *Daily Record* or *Scotsman*. Only, in the final stages did the *Herald on Sunday* come out in support of independence. Therefore, independence supporters had to create their own presence in the streets, communities and on-line media across Scotland, as they entered the struggle against British Unionism and the Neo-liberal order.

Over the years, since the formation of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) in 1999, the majority of Socialists in Scotland had given their support to Scottish independence. The last Socialist party to adopt Scottish independence was the Socialist Workers Party in 2011, when it could finally be justified on anti-Tory grounds, now that Cameron had replaced Brown at Westminster. Despite the split in the SSP in 2004, many from both sides joined with SNP dissidents, Left

Scottish Green members and various social campaign members to form the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) in November 2012.

RIC was based not on Scottish Nationalist, constitutional monarchist principles, but on Scottish 'internationalism from below' and republican principles. RIC went on to organise three conferences in Glasgow, with 800 (2012), 1100 (2013) and 3000 (2014) in attendance. RIC took its case to England, Wales, Ireland, Catalunya, Euskadi, Greece and other places. It also pioneered the electoral registration drive in the city schemes, which had long been abandoned by Labour. There was a whole host of autonomous organisations constituting the wider 'Yes' campaign, and these proved to be the bedrock of the IndyRef1 campaign. The most beneficial aspect of the official 'Yes' campaign, adopted by all other campaigning groups, was its emphasis on civic national principles, inviting support from anyone who lived in Scotland.

This drive from below very much changed the conservative/liberal independence campaign originally envisaged by Salmond and the SNP leadership. Winning over Scottish Labour supporters became central. This wider Scottish, 'Project Hope' became counterposed to the British, 'Better Together's 'Project Fear'. Under this pressure, the SNP went through a process of completing its Social Democratic transition. After the referendum was over in September 2014, this process was further underpinned by the influx of many new members, many who were ex-Labour voters. Nicola Sturgeon's election as SNP leader by acclaim in November 2014 marked another stage in the party's social democratic makeover.

The unexpected closeness of the final IndyRef1 result, 55% 'No' to 45% 'Yes, was not experienced as a fundamental defeat. 97% of the potential electorate had registered, and 85% had voted, in a 'democratic revolution'. This was unprecedented in the UK's electoral history. Given the split amongst Scottish Socialists, the SNP was able to hoover up the majority of previously Labour-voting, but now Scottish independence supporters. Only the Scottish Greens

maintained an alternative Scottish independence foothold in Holyrood and some local councils.

The 2015 Westminster general election brought another blow to the British Unionist parties. The SNP won 56 Scottish seats, the British unionists 3 - one each for Labour, the Tories and Lib-Dems. Back in the 1980s, Thatcher had thrown a challenge to the SNP. You can have Scottish independence if you ever get a majority of Westminster seats. And now instead of the 30 that would have been required to win independence, the SNP held 56! The issue of Scottish independence had been mainstreamed in UK politics as the SNP became the third largest party at Westminster. This was not the defeat the conservative and liberal unionists had planned!

And it was Scottish Labour that suffered most, reduced from 41 seats to 1 - Edinburgh South or 'Red Morningside'. This seat was mainly held because of Tory and Lib-Dem tactical voting. British Labour's deeply entrenched Unionism, which placed Scottish Labour in a branch office position, had further undermined the party in Scotland. The Union was no longer providing support for Social Democratic reform in Scotland but undermining the legacy of 1945. Despite the SNP holding to economic and social policies closer to Labour's than the Tories', the hapless British Labour leader, Ed Miliband, said during the 2015 Westminster general election campaign, that he would rather have a Tory government at Westminster than rely on SNP MPs' support - and he got his wish!

Two things had marked the night of the 'No' 'victory' on September 2014. David Cameron metamorphosed from a 'four equal nations', liberal unionist into a reactionary English Nationalist. He announced his support, much to Gordon Brown's chagrin (but what did he expect!) for 'English votes for English laws'. Cameron was already preparing himself for a new battle with the reactionary unionist, Tory Right and UKIP. Only here, he would have to use 'Project Fear', not to counter 'Project Hope', but to counter 'Project Hate', in the EU membership referendum demanded by the Tory Right and UKIP.

Since the main opposition to Scotland's existing UK constitutional status came from largely constitutional nationalist forces (with a republican and Scottish internationalist component in RIC), it had been vital that 'Better Together' maintained a liberal unionist public facade during IndyRef1. The reactionary unionists, who wanted to roll back existing political devolution, were kept very much at arms' length. Their votes could be guaranteed anyhow. 'Better Together' carefully shunned the Orange Order's 20,000 strong march in Edinburgh, the weekend before the referendum. But the other event, which occurred on the night after the 'No' referendum 'victory', was a Loyalist and British Neo-fascist rampage in the 'Yes' campaign's in George Square, Glasgow's 'Tahrir Square'. This public space is at the centre of this largely working class city, which along with Dundee and West Dumbarton, had just voted to secede from the Union.

Frightened by the challenge to Labour's previously entrenched power, which these referendum results represented in their one-time strongholds, the liberal unionist kid gloves were cast aside. Within a few months, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, Glasgow's Labour city council was arranging to host an OrangeFest in George Square. Labour has always had Orange supporting members and councillors. But they had been confined to a few localities where Loyalism had some hold. Perhaps the most notorious was Sam Campbell, one-time leader of Midlothian local council. But Labour tried to keep such embarrassments concealed at the wider city and national level.

Now though, reactionary unionism was to be mainstreamed in the Union's defence. Already, behind the scenes, the Tories, led by the party's face of social liberalism, the open lesbian and publicity-seeking Ruth Davidson, who has an Irish partner, was wooing reactionary unionists. Davidson posted a picture of herself alongside North East trawler owner, William Buchan - an Orange bigot, Islamophobe and misogynist.<sup>9</sup> Such an opportunist unionist alliance between social liberalism and social reaction cannot remain stable for long. Later events were to show in which of these two political directions, the Scottish Tories would go.

Furthermore, beyond any Labour or Tory overtures, the Orange Order has been trying to extend its own base of support in Scotland. In June 2018 DUP leader, Arlene Foster, was invited to speak at the Orange Order march in Cowdenbeath in Fife.<sup>10</sup> Traditionally Fife has been more resistant to the sectarianism found in other parts of the Central Belt coalfields, which had penetrated local Labour Parties and trade unions, especially the NUM. Ruth Davidson attended the 2016 Gay Pride event in Belfast.<sup>11</sup> She did not go back in 2017, after May had made a deal with the DUP. Davidson now supports the DUP in its intransigent opposition to May's deal. When it comes to defending a Union in crisis, then resort to reaction becomes the port of call.

There was now Labour/Tory competition to corner the Loyalist Orange vote. When the 2017 local council election results were announced, the SNP had the largest number of councillors, and took Glasgow, the main prize of the night. In the British unionist camp, the Conservatives surged forward, mainly at the expense of Labour. But Labour could console itself that in the battle for Loyalist support, the Orange Order claimed they now had 6 Scottish councillors - 5 Labour and 1 Tory!<sup>12</sup>

And in having moved even further Right, after the Brexit vote, Scottish Unionists of all stripes have abandoned 'Better Together' and adopted 'Bitter Together', by chasing Loyalist support. Lord Duncan, Tory Under-Secretary at the Scottish and Northern Irish offices, Hugh Gaffney, Labour MSP, and Alistair Carmichael, Scottish Liberal MP met up with top Orange Order officials from different parts of the UK, ahead of the vote on May's Brexit withdrawal proposals.<sup>13</sup> But just to show that Scottish Labour could still outbid the Tories to get Loyalist support, North Lanarkshire local council voted to donate £500 to a local Orange Order lodge for a 'civic lunch'!<sup>14</sup>

But in the broader unionist stakes, the Scottish Tories had already overtaken Scottish Labour in the 2016 Holyrood elections, to become the principal Unionist party in Scotland. This was unthinkable before

Scottish Labour's near fatal self-harming exercise in IndyRef1. This pattern was to be repeated in the 2017 Westminster general election. The SNP lost some of the seats they had gained in 2015 but were still easily the majority Scottish party. Losing seats to the Unionists in the 2016 Holyrood election, the SNP now had to rule through arrangements with the Scottish Greens. But whether at Westminster or Holyrood, wherever the SNP wasn't the first-placed party in a constituency, it was the second-placed party. The Tories were now the second Scottish party at Holyrood and at Westminster, whereas Labour had slipped back in many constituencies from first to third place. But Labour continued its struggle to be the leading Unionist party, attacking the SNP vehemently and often incoherently. They largely left the Scottish Tories alone.

However, a new opportunity appeared to arise when Labour's succession of Centre or Right British leaders was replaced by Left Social Democrat, Jeremy Corbyn. Perhaps the wider British cavalry could now rescue the besieged Scottish-British Unionist fort. Corbyn was elected as British Labour leader in 2015, and this was further confirmed in 2016. His position was made more secure by his better than expected showing in the 2017 Westminster general election. Although he was lucky because electoral expectations for Labour had been very low. The party's performance was still pretty limited given the impact of the devastation the Tories had reeked upon working class communities under George Osborne's Austerity drive.

On a few occasions, Corbyn and McDonnell have indicated that, in contrast to Ed Miliband, they could contemplate a post-electoral deal with the SNP, in order to take office at Westminster. However, this is not based on any recognition of Scotland's right to self-determination, but on purely opportunist electoral calculations. But even more worryingly, in December 2018, Corbyn's ally, John McDonnell also made overtures to the DUP!<sup>15</sup> But any Labour/SNP deal needs the active support of Labour's branch office in Scotland. Under Scottish Labour's Right leaders, Johann Lamont (2011-14) and even more SNP-hating successor, Jim Murphy (2014-15), making such a deal had been incomprehensible.

In 2017, new Scottish Labour leader, Richard Leonard took office, hoping to ride on the back of Corbyn's limited success. However, Leonard shares a key feature of his politics with the earlier Scottish Labour Right. Despite the fact that Leonard's Social Democratic economic policies are closer to the SNP's, than to either those of the Labour Right or the Tories, he has placed SNP bashing at the centre of his strategy to win back the Unionist voters lost to the Tories. There is likely to be only one message sent up to British head office - no deals with the SNP. This mirrors Ruth Davidson's pre-recorded loop message to British Tory head office - 'No second referendum'.

During Leonard's election campaign for Scottish Labour leader, he said that he was no Corbynista. He did have a background in the Bennite Left of the 1980s and in the neo-Bennite Scottish Campaign for Socialism. However, any politics stemming from these organisations were overshadowed by his background as an official of the then mainstream Labour-supporting GMB, under its Right-wing general secretary, Paul Kenny (knighted on his retirement). This was the time when the GMB was helping Labour-controlled Glasgow city council to evade full equal pay compensation for its female employees. The GMB took a leading part in campaigning against Scottish independence, unlike the cannier leader of UNITE, Len McCluskey, who found that a majority of his members supported Scottish independence and so, in order to hold on to his members subscriptions, he took no position.

Nevertheless, the leaders of the GMB and UNITE are still motivated by the same thing. Since the rise of Thatcher, trade union general secretaries have been excluded from No. 10. Today, more highly paid and privileged than before, they are no more 'all in this together' with their members under New Labour than the Tory Austerity drive, than they were under Thatcher's anti-trade union members' offensive. Senior union officials have concentrated their efforts upon defending or extending their privileges. McCluskey is a master of this, with UNITE's 'imperial' absorption of other unions. But this is done, not so much to build One Big Fighting Union, but to build one big pay

cheque! But feeling undervalued by Tory and New Labour governments, McCluskey and other union general secretaries are hoping for a return to no. 10. Although Prosecco and canapes would now be more appropriate than the beer and sandwiches of the 1970s.

McCluskey has been foremost in seeing the opportunities represented by the emergence of Corbyn. But McCluskey's support for Corbyn is far from unconditional. A key condition is continued Labour support for Trident, despite it being grossly expensive, its deployment dependent on involvement in a US-led war, and it being the ultimate weapon of mass destruction, which could kill millions. Official GMB and UNITE support for Trident on the grounds that it provides jobs shows that their leaders have little commitment to any alternative society. It makes you wonder where they would have stood as union leaders over the abolition of chattel slavery, which required so many British shipping and provision workers to maintain! Virtually anybody on the Labour Left has come through CND. Clearly in bowing to this pressure, Corbyn and McDonnell are uncomfortable in publicly ditching their own earlier support for this Left talismanic issue.

Within the Scottish Labour Party, Leonard's principal base of support lies in the trade union bureaucracy. This was highlighted by the fact that union members were the only Labour constituency where he won the majority vote for the Scottish Labour leadership. Like Corbyn, Leonard did not win the vote of the majority of Labour MPs (and in Leonard's case, the MSPs). This was no surprise given the nature of these politicians - overwhelmingly Right wing or Centre vacillators - and this is even more the case in Scotland. But Leonard losing the Scottish constituency membership vote provided a stark contrast with Corbyn.

Corbyn had motivated a major influx of mainly young people into the Labour Party in England and South Wales. However, the equivalent to those people in Scotland, who in England went on to join the Corbyn fan club, Momentum, had already mainly joined the SNP. Scottish Labour's Right wing leadership candidate, the Asian-

Scottish businessman and MSP, Anas Sarwar, seemed to be more successful in recruiting new constituency members.

The election of Leonard to lead the Scottish Labour Party in 2017 has returned it to a hard Unionist, anti-SNP position. This was inherited from Lamont and Murphy, following the ambiguously SNP-accommodating stance of the short-lived Scottish Labour leader, Kezia Dugdale (2015-17). The Campaign for Socialism, which has now converted itself into Scotland's equivalent of Momentum, remains a Left British Unionist organisation. However, beyond some individuals from the Communist Party of {the no longer so Great} Britain, they are finding it hard to win over wider allies for their Left defence of the Union.

After joining the Tories in 'Better Together', the Labour Right does not have the same problems. Following the 2017 local council elections, Scottish Labour councillors have been prepared to strike deals with the Tories in Aberdeen, North Lanarkshire, and West Lothian. This was to keep the SNP out of office. A shared British Unionism with the Scottish Tories has been a stronger pull. Both the Centre Scottish Labour leader, Dugdale and the 'Left' Scottish Labour leader, Leonard found it hard to deal with this drift to the Unionist Right in the Scottish Labour Party. They have remained silent over local Labour overtures to the Orange Order.

When it came to the 2016 Brexit referendum, the SNP's own pretty lacklustre Europhile, 'Project Fear' Remain campaign, still outshone the other Europhile campaign run by the Lib-Dems. Meanwhile the official Eurosceptic 'Britain Stronger in Europe' Remain campaign was run by the Scottish Labour Right and Tories. The EU-phobic UKIP was nowhere to be seen. David Coburn, its laughing-stock MEP, only holds office as the result of a BBC campaign giving him completely unwarranted attention. There are no UKIP MSPs, MPs or councillors in Scotland. Coburn found his strongest support amongst some Free Presbyterians in the Hebrides and Orange Order members in the western Central Belt. However, even in these areas, the

Brexiteers could not win a single constituency vote in the 2016 EU referendum.

Every single Scottish constituency voted to Remain, along with Northern Ireland, and the Welsh-speaking areas of Wales. These are areas, which have benefitted from EU regional and social funding. This had helped to lift them from their pre-EEC/EU peripheral British provincial or regional status. Many people began to see themselves as hybrid Scottish, Irish or Welsh Europeans, rather than as Scottish, Welsh, or more chillingly, 'Ulster'-British.

The SNP is currently at an impasse brought about by the rightwards shift in British politics following the Brexit vote. Nicola Sturgeon accused Theresa May on January 23rd of "running scared"<sup>16</sup> over IndyRef2. But May does not have to debate with Sturgeon, any more than she has to take into consideration the voice of Holyrood, or any advice from David Mundell and the Scottish Tories (OK this not likely to happen!). What May has, is a very good appreciation of all those reactionary powers, gifted to British reaction by the Crown-in-Westminster. So, although the politically nifty Nicola can run rings round Maybot, she is completely unable to deliver a decisive blow, when May holds the spiked club of the UK's Crown Powers.

In confidence, Sturgeon and her close SNP inside advisors, know there is no immediate road to a Westminster-recognised IndyRef2. This is one of the reasons Sturgeon is falling back on Salmond's old strategy of wooing Scottish business. They are quite prepared to go along the SNP leadership's slow path of winning increased powers, mainly to benefit themselves, because that doesn't rock too many boats.

This is one of the main purposes behind the SNP's Growth Commission, chaired by former SNP MP, Andrew Wilson. He is a lobbyist for Charlotte Street Partners. They advised Scottish further education college managements how they could undermine and break a deal they made with the college lecturers union, the EIS. But when it comes to a choice between (often Unionist voting) senior managers

or their (often independence supporting) workforce (such as the hospital porters employed by Tayside Health Board, forced to strike in 2015 to get wage parity), the SNP government takes the side of the managers. Such thinking explains why there was no one on the Commission representing the actual producers - not even a token trade union official. (So, maybe there are still a few things the old Social Democratic, Labour Party could teach to the new Social Democratic SNP!) The Commission report's proposals are chained to the thinking of managers in a Neo-liberal corporate world, which is now in crisis. There is no prospect of significant Social Democratic trickle-down reforms coming from this quarter, especially after the report's suggested several years' dependence upon sterling (and hence subordination to the City and its Edinburgh outlier) in their 'independent' Scotland.

However, support for Scottish independence has reached such a level of support, it is likely to be a permanent feature of UK politics for the foreseeable future, whatever setbacks are in store. There is no longer much of a Unionist popular culture. The Orange Order, Rangers FC, the author, Alan Massie or the musician, James MacMillan on the Right, and the liberal J.K. Rowling in the Centre, are not likely to hold the Unionist line in Scottish popular culture.

There is now a continuing Scottish cultural renaissance that took root in the 1980s, after the failure of the 1979 Scottish Devolution campaign. This includes the authors Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and Irving Welsh, the poets Liz Lochhead and Jackie Kay, and the musicians Runrig, the Proclaimers and the late Martin Bennet. This cultural revival built on an earlier one, which included Hugh MacDiarmid, Sorley Maclean and Hamish Henderson. Support for the Union now depends on support for unionist parties that are in decline, on an increasingly distrusted British media, and a greater resort to the anti-democratic aspects of the UK state.

However, the British ruling class, with centuries of experience, has shown its ability to hold up further progress for prolonged periods. The UK's Crown Powers greatly assist them in this rearguard action.

Any SNP Scottish independence strategy, which accepts the continued domination of the UK state, the City and corporate power, will inevitably produce corrupted politicians. Rules may be set down for politician-business relations, but these are as likely to be effective as the Catholic hierarchy ruling that coitus interruptus is the best method of birth control.

Before Catalan Republicans had the confidence to press ahead with their independence referendum, they had to force Jordi Pujol, leader of conservative nationalist Democratic Convergence of Catalunya (CDC) and President of the Generalitat de Catlunya, to stand down. The CDC had controlled this body for 31 years of its 38 years existence. Pujol had been convicted of corruption. A business-led SNP would be the political equivalent of the CDC, and the Generalitat is the political equivalent of Holyrood.

## **10. Brexit leads to Maybynism and the onward march of Right Populism**

Corbyn has faced the obvious problem of leading a Labour Party divided over Brexit on both its Right and Left. Instead of trying to provide a clear lead one way or the other, he has prevaricated, in order to hold together the Labour Party as an electoral ‘broad church’. Labour, like most Social Democratic parties, sees winning parliamentary elections as the key to power. Even if the Left is prepared to organise pre-election public demonstrations, these are only seen as mechanisms to launch the party into office. After winning office though, popular and especially independent mobilisations are to be clamped down upon.

Trade union officials (Right and Left) take on this policing role. Under Harold Wilson’s and James Callaghan’s Labour governments (1974-79), this was true of Frank Chapple (EEPTU) and Thomas Jackson (UPW) on the Right and Hugh Scanlon (AEU) and Jack Jones (T&GWU) on the Left. Under any future Labour-led

government this would also be true of Tim Roache (GMBU) on the Right and Len McCluskey (UNITE) on the Left. Because of Corbyn's desire to hold together a 'broad church', Labour party Right Remainers and Right Leavers have taken strength from his fear of desertions. They have continually resorted to the Right-wing press and threatened resignation.

But there is also a common approach to the issue of immigration, which brings together Labour's Right Remainers and Left Brexiteers. In the immediate aftermath of the Brexit vote, Labour Right Chuku Umanna, a pro-EU supporter, said that, "If continuation of the free movement is the price of single market membership then clearly we couldn't remain in the single market."<sup>17</sup> And Left Labour Jeremy Corbyn a supporter of Brexit (in some form or other) responded with "Labour is not wedded to freedom of movement for EU citizens as a point of principle".<sup>18</sup>

The only form of Brexit compatible with maintaining free movement within its bounds is the Norwegian model. Umanna (along with another Labour Right-winger David Lammy) soon realised that encouraging the Brexit Right over hostility to migrants could well spill over to other ethnic targets, including non-white British subjects. Therefore, Umanna moved a pro-Single Market amendment to May's hard Brexit proposals on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Corbyn insisted on imposing a 3-line whip to oppose this. But in opposing Umanna, the Corbyn-led Labour Party lined up with the Tory Right and the DUP.

Corbyn had already helped May get her Article 50 bill through in January 2017, without any indication of what her Tory government planned next. Corbyn now helped May to get the overwhelming support she needed to break with any soft Brexit. Corbyn's 3-line whip assistance on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 proved to be a major step in enabling the Tories to redefine Brexit in much harder terms. And then, on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019, when May put forward the first reading of the Tories' latest draconian new Immigration Bill, Corbyn in a real sickening display, refused to call for a 3-line whip to oppose this.

With 78 Labour MPs absenting themselves. May got her bill through. Two Conservatives, Ken Clark and Anna Soubry proved to be more principled than Labours' Right and Left Brexiters and voted against the bill.

In 2009, during UNITE and the GMBs' campaign against the employment of non-British EU skilled migrant workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire, an old Fascist phrase, 'British jobs for British workers' was raised by Gordon Brown. It was then enthusiastically taken up by the unions involved. But a new phrase also emerged - 'social dumping'. The Right has always been quick to come up with put-down words to attack workers or others from different countries. But Labour politicians, trade union officials and industrial relations experts took up this particularly unpleasant phrase. 'Social dumping' suggests that migrant workers are some form of trash and that you wouldn't touch them. The phrase has emerged again in January 2018 from UNITE delegates to Bermondsey constituency Labour Party. They argued that, "the Single Market and associated freedom of movement leads to 'social dumping.'"<sup>19</sup> What this means is an abandonment of any attempt to recruit and organise many workers from and across the EU, or to protect them when under attack, as Labour tries to appease Brexit voters.

In the nineteenth century, far greater numbers of migrants arrived on Great Britain's shores, mainly unskilled Irish, but also skilled workers particularly from Germany. And in the face of this challenge, some British trade unions gave their backing to the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), set up in London in 1864. This was initially organised to prevent migrant workers being used against domestic workers. But 'British jobs for British workers' was not the approach they adopted. Instead the IWMA extended its organisation to cover workers in as many countries as possible. Today, trade unions have much greater resources. There are far more easily accessible international forms of communication. But those who just accept the employers and states' further division of the working class will be in no position to prevent a further slide to the Right. Nor will they be able to effectively defend British workers' jobs, pay and

conditions, particularly under conditions of economic crisis. An updated version of the he IWMA's model of organising workers internationally is what is really needed today.

Many on the Left have tried to disguise the role of union leaders and others from the 'British jobs for British workers' tradition. In the 2017 election for UNITE general secretary they backed 'Corbyn-supporting' McCluskey against the independent Grassroots Left candidate, Ian Allinson. McCluskey ran a red-baiting and dog-whistle anti-migrant campaign. He and his UNITE partner, Karie Murphy have been most strongly supported by former CPGB/CPB members, Andrew Murray and Seamus Milne, but also by others claiming to be on the Left.

These four people, the 4Ms, have tried to use their key position in Corbyn's leadership team to claim the internal Labour Party struggle is between a Remain-supporting Right and a Brexit-supporting Left. The reality is that Left Brexiteers like themselves, and the Right Brexiteers share anti-migrant worker prejudices. They are also united with many Right Remainders over this. Those in the Labour Party, who are most likely to support the threatened EU migrant workers, and indeed other migrants, are to be found amongst the new influx of Left Remainders who have joined the Labour Party. Corbyn and his Left Brexiteer allies in the Labour machine are constantly trying to marginalise these people.

Some fear the prospect of a National Government (formed by anti-Brexit Tories, Lib-Dems and the Labour Right), but as far as attacks on EU migrant workers go, there already is one, with Left Brexiteer support. What this shows is that Labour, even under Corybn, offers no constructive way out of the present crisis. It is trapped in a British chauvinist mind-set and will be unable to halt the further advance of Right populism, which they have already conceded so much to.

Labour's flirting with reaction goes further. Corbyn, along with all the Brexiteers, through to the hardest Right, invoke the 'democratic' legitimacy of the 2016 Brexit vote. Yet the franchise excluded EU

migrants, many of whom have lived in the UK for a long time. In the USA in the later 1860s, when the defeated Confederates began their assault on the revolutionary post-Civil War Reconstruction, they successfully pushed in the South for the ending of votes for freed slaves. These people called themselves Democrats. They upheld a white male franchise. Anybody trying to invoke the term 'democrat' to justify Brexit, with its ethnically defined (and 18+ age-limited) franchise represents the latest face of racist or national chauvinist 'democracy'

Corbyn has tried to give the impression that he is leading May down the political track, which he has chosen over Brexit. But in reality, Corbyn continues to pave the way for May, a hard Brexit and harsher migrant labour controls. Thus, even after the setback May received in the 2017 general election, Labour's continued ambiguity and weakness meant that she did not have to soften her stance on Brexit. She remained more concerned about the European Research Group whom she saw as the main pressure on her. She took the DUP on board to ensure her 'Brexit means Brexit' further Right trajectory was maintained.

But Corbyn has not only wavered and backtracked over immigration and migrant rights, he has continued to uphold the anti-democratic Crown Powers, including participation in the Privy Council and nominating people to the House of Lords. He has defended the Union and the denial of the democratic right of national self-determination.

Furthermore, we have been given an early indication of how any possible future Corbyn-led Labour government would deal with ruling class pressure. The Israeli state and its wider Zionist supporters have been running a campaign, under the rubric of challenging anti-semitism, to end any meaningful criticism of the Israeli state. Zionism upholds a Jewish supremacist state in Israel and supports the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians to achieve this. Any differences are about the best means to go about this. That definition is enough for any Socialist or genuine democrat to define Zionism. Zionism is supported by some Jews and opposed by others. And not

all Zionists are Jews. For example, they have strong support from the wider American and British Right, the Protestant fundamentalist Right and the Labour Right.

Over a period of time other political forces have given backing to Zionists. British imperialists from an early stage saw the potential of Zionism to act as a colonial force to promote their interests in the Middle East. The US has now taken over this role. But Zionism also received early backing in the British Labour movement, especially from those on the Right who had supported white worker, settler colonialism in places such as Australia and South Africa. They defended the colonists' superior position to the colonised 'natives'. It is such thinking, inherited by today's Labour Right, which makes them feel at home with the Zionists and joins them together in opposing any Palestinian resistance to continued ethnic cleansing.

The Right Zionist militias' part in the massacres and rapes at Deir Yassin, and the Left Zionist mortaring of Jaffa, both to promote ethnic cleansing in 1948; the Israeli state's permanent seizure of more Palestinian owned land in 1967, followed by further ethnic cleansing, and the creation of a Palestinian 'bantustan' in the West Bank and the world's largest concentration camp in Gaza; the Israeli army's complicity in the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in the Lebanon in 1982; and the extensive bombing of Gaza, including the use of white phosphorus incendiary shells over civilian areas from 2008-9, were all either ignored or downplayed by the Labour Right. Tony Blair, though, went further. He wanted to delay any ceasefire in Gaza in 2009, knowing full well that the Israeli state would use this time to impose more death and destruction on the Palestinians living there.

And one feature of Israeli occupation, which shares a lot with the thinking of the populist Right, is its love of massive walls. In Israel's case they have been built, in order to directly annex even more Palestinian land. Trump looks on in awe as the Israeli authorities shoot down dozens of unarmed Palestinian wall protestors. And he hasn't even got his Mexican wall built yet! Whilst May probably

wishes she had as much power to deal with boats bringing asylum seekers over the English Channel, as the Israeli government has shown it has when confiscating Palestinian fishing boats off the Gaza coast.

Over the years, an international, non-violent campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) has been developed to support the oppressed Palestinians. But BDS also acts as counter to the Israeli state and Zionists' own often violent campaign of BDS. For them 'B' represents the boycott of the UN decision to give recognition to the Palestinian nation; 'D' represents the Israeli state's continued violent divestment of Palestinian land; and 'S' represents the sanctions used against Israeli state critics. It is the Israeli state's own BDS that has led to the international BDS campaign in support of Palestinians as a response.

The BDS campaign is now the primary target of Israeli and Zionist pressure. And this is very useful for the Labour Right, in its media backed campaign to undermine Corbyn. But the Labour Left does not have the politics to counter this. Indeed, in Scotland, the Campaign for Socialism/Momentum that has taken responsibility for suspending Israeli state critics and pro-Palestinian supporters, to pre-empt any Right attacks within the Party, and the Israel/Zionist supporting sections of the media.

The Zionists' Jewish supremacist laws and state institutions have long buttressed the apartheid nature of Israel. But the new Nation-state Law of 2018 enshrines Jewish supremacy in the Israeli constitution. Israel's supporters amongst the Tories, Lib-Dems and Labour have largely ignored this. However, the British Far Right is cock-a-hoop. The EDL's Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) supports this Israeli state move, because he wants an ethnic supremacist definition for the British state. The EDL and other Neo-fascists and Right-wingers are being seen at pro-Israel demonstrations.<sup>20</sup> Some now share a real admiration for Israel. The Loyalists in Northern Ireland have long held this attitude towards

Israel. They see the Palestinians as the equivalent of the Irish Nationalists.

Some of todays' British Neo-fascists have substituted Islamophobia for the earlier British Fascists' anti-Semitism. Others though hold their pro-Zionism and their anti-Semitism in a symbiotic relationship. If Zionism encourages the removal of Jewish people from the UK to Israel, then that can't be bad for British Neo-fascists. There has been a long history of this relationship in the UK. In 1905, the Conservative and Unionist, Home Secretary, Arthur Balfour was responsible for the anti-Semitic Aliens Act, but in 1916 he produced the Balfour Declaration to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Today, Eastern European Right populists like Orban and Kaczinski hold a similar symbiotic relationship to Israel and anti-Semitism.

But you might have thought that the Labour Left, at least, could challenge Far Right support for an ethnic supremacist state. However, the Jewish Friends of Israel, which has Israeli state backing, and supports a Jewish supremacist state, is affiliated to the Labour Party. Now the Labour Party managed to avoid having a Labour Friends of the Jim Crow South, a Labour Friends of apartheid South Africa, or a Labour Friends of Orange 'Ulster' (although some of their Scottish party members may now see the local possibilities!).

Yet nobody in the Labour Party seems to question the affiliation of the Labour Friends of Israel, an ethnic supremacist state-supporting organisation. You can be pretty sure that the Labour Friends of Israel has no Palestinian members, with Israel being based upon their continued oppression, repression and expulsion. There is, though, a Labour Friends of Palestine (LFP). LFP has Moslem, Christian, and Jewish members and is campaigning against the oppression of Palestine. Corbyn and his allies seems very reticent to point this out. He just stood back when prominent and genuinely anti-racist, pro-Palestinian members were targeted (e.g. former and current MPs Ken Livingstone and Chris Williamson, black Jewish activist Jackie Walker and veteran anti-racist campaigner Marc Wadsworth), by a

racist and/or pro-war pro-Israeli Right in the party (e.g. Tom Watson. Tom Harris, Louise Ellman).

Now the considerable political weight, which Zionism currently holds in the US and UK, is not due to some inborn Jewish trait, as argued by some Right-wing anti-Semitic groups. Zionism's current strength is a reflection of the backing Israel gets from the US and UK states. In other political circumstances, this could change. It did in 1971 for those Right-wing Chinese Nationalists with their previously US-backed seat on the UN Security Council, and in 1921 for those Right Irish Unionists in the south of Ireland.

What Corbyn and the Labour Lefts' inability to counter Israeli state and domestic Zionist pressure reveals is that they would buckle down before the much more entrenched power of the City and the anti-democratic Crown Powers of the UK state, if Labour ever took office and tried to implement its quite mild Social Democratic manifesto. The British ruling class opposes Corbyn, not because his proposals amount to Socialism, but because, ever since the 2008 Crash, they are fearful of the effect on their shrinking profits of even mild Social Democratic reforms. In the USA, both Neo-Liberals and now Trump and the Right Populists dismiss the very limited existing Medicare as 'Socialist'. This despite it falling far short of what has long existed in northern and western Europe. Such public health provision was accepted and even extended by Conservatives during the long post-war boom.

In the transition from the old Social Democratic view of society under Labour in the 1960 and '70s, to the full acceptance of Neo-liberalism under New Labour (with its social liberal add-on) in the 1990s, a series of political adjustments were made, e.g. 'Dented Shield' Labour in the 1980s. Because of the depth of the current multi-faceted global crisis, the pressure to follow the Right is taking place much more quickly. It took 18 years for fully fledged Neo-liberal Blatcherism to develop. *Marxism Today* emerged as a journal advocating a particular British accommodation to the 'New Times' and helped to pave the way for New Labour. Today, their one-time

opponents, the 'Tankies', finally hope the day has come for their own very 'British road to Socialism' via National Populism. But the prospects for a reheated, nationally based, AES/Common Programme approach are even less propitious than they were in the early 1980s, when the pressures of US-led corporate globalisation were not yet as strong.

It has taken hardly 18 months for Maybynism to emerge. It is likely to be transitional phenomenon, since neither May nor Corbyn are real Populist figureheads. But with Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson in the wings, full-blown Right populism is beginning to look more likely. May and Corbyn represent possible stepping stones on the way.

## **11. Conclusion**

The first thing needed in order to challenge growing Right Populist domination is to see how deeply it has already penetrated British society, including the Left, following the Brexit vote. Whatever Labour Left Brexiters and non-Labour Lexiters believe, the rise of Right Populism, centred in the UK around Brexit, is not the revolt of a would-be militant working class. Atomised and alienated workers have acted as cannon-fodder for one wing of a divided British ruling class – the Right Populists. In the face of the impact of the 2008 Crash these Right Populists offer the British ruling class a reinforced UK state and an even harsher disciplinary regime to crush any opposition. And just as the Social Democrats were removed for their inability to deal with the economic crisis of the late 1970s, today the Neo-liberals are failing in the face of their inability to deal with the post-2008 Crash. British Right Populists are also now part of a global phenomenon, highlighted by the close link between many Brexiters in the UK and Trump's 'America First' backers.

So just as Old Labour's continued attacks on workers in the late 1970s paved the way for something worse - Neo-liberalism, so New Labour's social Neo-liberal attacks, paved the way for Right Populism. And both ruling class 'solutions' to crisis have been

supported by sections of the working class, the Neo-liberal Tories in 1979 and 1983 after the Falklands War, and the Right Populist UKIP in the 2015 Euro-election. And Right Populist politics is part of a wider global phenomenon. Trump's election victory has given Right Populism a global coherence. This has provided considerable backing and inspiration for Right Populists in the UK and elsewhere.

However, Socialists should not be pursuing an alternative Left Populist path. Populism is always national state focussed, and the limitations of this were highlighted in Greece under Syriza. When first elected in 2015, Syriza was considerably to the Left of Corbyn's Labour Party. But its nationally based, neo-Keynesian challenge was seen off by the internationally based Troika. Populism leaves most of the key elements of its national state constitution largely untouched, whether in Greece or the UK.

Socialists in these islands need to adopt an immediate programme (guide to action) based on popular sovereignty and a social republican break-up of the UK state and the City of London's financial empire and its 'Britain Second' partnership with the US Right populist 'America First' empire. And we need to be part of a new 'internationalism from below alliance to achieve this.

**18.3.19**

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