**Ten ways to make the trees vote for the axe**

***Joel Vos*** *explains how propaganda gave the Tories their landslide victory in the 2019 General Election, and how this could be prevented in future elections. [long read]*

*16 January 2020.*

If there is one thing the 2019 General Election result has taught us, it is that trees can be made to vote for the axe. Because the trees thought that the axe was like them, made of wood. That is, it seems unlikely that the average Tory voter is similar to Boris Johnson, and that they will flourish under the Conservative reign.

This article describes ten ways Tory propaganda has manipulated voters to vote against their interests, and how this could be turned the other way around in future elections. How could the trees be prevented from voting for the axe?

Almost half the working class with an annual income lower than £20,000 voted for Boris Johnson’s party: 48% of them voted Tory versus 33% Labour (Ashcroft Polls, 14/12/2019).

Ironically, the working class has already been disproportionally suffering from nine years of Tory government, with employment growth 1% than the rest of the EU, and an increase of 600,000 people on zero-hour contracts (Barclay, 10/12/2019).

In the same period, poverty has almost doubled to 14.3 million living in poverty in the UK, of whom 8.3 million are working adults and 4.6 million children (FullFact, 27/09/2019). Even the United Nations has reprimanded the UK for systematic poverty (Alston, 22/05/2019).

People in the North of England who voted for Brexit Boris are among the most likely of all to suffer from the loss of EU funding and unemployment after Brexit (*The Independent*, 24/06/2016).

Despite this track record, the Conservative Party won the December election due to more working class people than ever voting blue, and Labour losing around a quarter in their old heartlands (Datapraxis, 12/2019).

In the Queen’s Speech, less than a week after the poll, the Conservatives broke multiple manifesto promises, including the promise to raise the living wage, protection of worker’s rights, and not selling the NHS or lowering food and safety standards to suit the USA (*The Independent*, 21/12/2019).

This seems to confirm what Johnson’s key advisor Cummings said: ‘Tory MPs largely do not care about these poor people. They don’t care about the NHS. And the public has kind of cottoned on to that.’ (*The Guardian*, 30/07/2019).

Despite this badly kept secret that some Tory leaders dislike ordinary people, many of these people voted for them. The Tories won by convincing ordinary people to vote against their own interests. How did they manage this? This article will explore the role of propaganda in the election campaign, and how Labour has failed in its own propaganda.

**Politics by propaganda**

Of course, propaganda is not new. Manipulation of the electorate has been present in all ages. The Roman emperors infamously offered ‘bread and circuses’ to appease the people. However, governmental manipulation techniques went to a much more subtle, unconscious, and refined level with the invention of modern psychology.

In the start of the 20th century, Edward Bernays (1928/2005) applied techniques derived from his uncle Sigmund ‘Sigi’ Freud’s research to help American presidents win, and to get young men to fight in two world wars. Bernays used the term ‘propaganda’ for these techniques. Adolf Hitler summarised the essence of propaganda as follows (1925/2007, 155):

*The art of propaganda consists precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal to their feelings, in finding the appropriate psychological form that will arrest the attention and appeal to the hearts of the national masses.*

Thus, propaganda does not work via rational debates, but via subtle unconscious mechanisms that appeal to our emotions.

A clear example of propaganda is how Cambridge Analytica nudged undecided voters into voting for Brexit via targeted emotional posts on social media (Wylie, 2019; Kirk, 2017). Similar methods seem to have been used during the 2019 general election campaign by the Tories.

The following is a summary of the ten most important propaganda techniques the Tories used to turn the voters’ frustrations and anger about nine years of failing Conservative governments against the EU and Corbyn.

***1. Smear your opponent long enough with dirt, until anything sticks***

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, is the most smeared politician in history, according to independent research (Cammaerts et al, 2019). The Tories spent approximately £1,500,000 on negative adverts about Corbyn. The clearest example was the accusation that Corbyn is an anti-Semite, even though his voting record shows that he is possibly one of the most anti-racist MPs (*The Guardian*, 20/2/2019; BBC, 21/2/2019; *Jewish News*, 28/11/2018).

There may have been some issues with individual anti-Semite Labour members, but this does not mean that Corbyn is anti-Semitic himself, or that anti-Semitism is a structural problem within Labour, or that this problem is bigger than among the Tories.

These smears were not only spread by fellow politicians in debates, but also by the media. Over 75% of media coverage on Corbyn has proven to be factually inaccurate (Cammaerts et al, 2019). Disproportionate bias was not only found in traditional anti-Labour media such as *The Sun*, but also in the BBC (*The Independent*, 16/12/2019).

The effect of the smear campaign was that a majority of the population disliked Corbyn, even though they were unable to explain why: ‘I just don’t like him’ (Ashcroft Polls, 17/12/2019). Psychologists call this ‘conditioning’ – like Pavlov’s dog – whereby people have started to associate Corbyn unconsciously with negative feelings. Consequently, people saw Corbyn as a bigger villain than the convicted paedophile Epstein (*London Economic*, 2/1/2020), and the most important reason people did not vote for Labour was because they did not ‘trust’ Corbyn (Ashcroft Polls, 14/12/2019).

Is it true that Labour has had an unprecedented defeat and that this is Corbyn’s fault? No. The fact is that, looking at elections in the 21st century, Corbyn led Labour to its best election result in 2017 and third best in 2019 – doing better than Blair in 2005, Brown in 2010, and Miliband in 2015. In 2005, fewer Labour votes brought Labour into government (*Urban Ramblings*, 22/12/2019).

Polls also indicate that a majority of the British population support Corbyn’s ideas for the economy (*The Independent*, 22/11/2019; YouGov, 12/11/2019). Thus, we cannot conclude from this election defeat that Corbynism should be ditched in favour of regenerated Blairism or Tory Light. Though it might be argued that a different face and a different debating style might help, the elections of the last decade suggest that Labour should retain the left-progressive policies popularised by Corbyn and Momentum.

***2. Become the ‘bro’ of ordinary citizens***

The extremist right-wing leader Tommy Robinson (Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) appealed to his followers to join the Conservative Party, as he had done, ‘because Johnson is like one of us’. Johnson uses simple language, makes mistakes, makes jokes, etc – just like, as it were, an ordinary citizen.

During his last campaign day, Johnson helped a milkman deliver his milk. Similar ‘ordinary bloke’ images have been seen the leader of the Brexit Party, Nigel Farage, let himself be photographed in pubs with a beer and a cigarette. Men of the people?

The reality is that both Boris and Nigel have grown up with golden spoons in their mouths. Their family inheritance, education, and membership of elite groups such as the Bullingdon Club seem to have predestined their careers. There could hardly be a bigger difference between these politicians and most of their voters.

For example, Johnson could not have distanced himself more from the working class than by saying: ‘Working class men are drunk, criminal, aimless, and feckless.’ (*The Independent*, 9/12/2019).

Jeremy Corbyn seems to be factually much closer to working-class people than Boris Johnson. However, Johnson and his team continually attacked Corbyn for being a radical politician and anti-Semite – for living a radical life that ordinary people should not identify with.

Thus, it seems, the media campaign helped Johnson to look like a cool ‘bro’ with whom you may want to have a pint of beer with in the pub – whereas Corbyn was painted as an ‘non-chill’ radical activist.

***3. First frighten people, then tell them that you will rescue them***

Adolf Hitler (1925/2007) wrote that one of the most effective ways to win support is to make people afraid of a common enemy, preferably via a large shock – even if this is not a real threat – and then tell them that you will rescue them. For example, Hitler told people that the Jews were a threat, and subsequently he offered a ‘Final Solution’.

This idea of shocking people to push through a radical political agenda has been applied and promoted by many modern economists and politicians, from the Walter Lippman Colloquium, which gave birth to neoliberalism, to Friedrich von Hayek, Ronald Reagan, and Margaret Thatcher (Vos, 2020; Klein, 2007).

In a similar spirit, the Tory campaign seemed to first sketch a negative future – due to the EU, immigrants, benefit claimants, Corbyn, etc. Subsequently, it told people that Boris had the ‘Final Solution’ to all evils: getting rid of the EU and the immigrants.

The biological mechanism of fear works in such a way that it does not trigger rational scrutiny or an examination of how real the threat and the possible solutions are. Instead, fear triggers an emotional fight, flight, or freeze response.

This means that a politician can warn citizens about any potential threat – even using lies and false-flag operations – and people may respond emotionally instead of by analysing the problem rationally and in-depth. Research also shows that when people feel threatened, they are more likely to support a hard response, to be nationalistic and aggressive (Vos, 2018).

For example, when New Yorkers were shown pictures of 9/11, they became more nationalistic and supportive of military interventions (Greenberg, Koole, and Pyszczynski, 2004). Similarly, showing a picture of long queues of immigrants at the doors of the UK can encourage support for anti-immigrant policies (*The Independent*, 16/6/2016).

Thus, politicians can make up almost any threat and people will support their conservative policies. What better can happen in a frightening situation than a Superman coming to the rescue – albeit of the blond, clownesque, millionaire Johnson variety? Thus, the Tory campaign used the threat-mechanism to win votes. It portrayed the EU and immigrants as threats, and thereby secured votes.

Let me explain this with an example. British mental health is in crisis (Vos, Roberts, and Davies, 2019). Brexit seems to be the ultimate trigger of anxiety at this moment. About 40% of the British population experience symptoms of anxiety due to Brexit, and one third has difficulties sleeping due to Brexit (Brexpat Hear Our Voice, 07/2018; Populus, 12/2018; Pulse, 07/2019; Gordon, 6/2019; Powdthavee, Plagnol, Frijters, and Clark, 12/2018; KPMG, 8/2017; YouGov, 1/2018, 04/2019; Britain Thinks, 4/2019; Vandoros et al, 2018; Guma and Jones, 2018; Lulle, Morosany, and King, Sept 2017; McGhee, Moreh, and Vlachantoni, 2017).

Since the referendum in 2016 there has been a political and emotional rollercoaster ‘to get Brexit done’. A September 2019 Tory Party focus group found that voters were fed up with the uncertainty and wanted ‘Brexit to be done’ – leading to Johnson’s winning slogan ‘get Brexit done’, reminiscent of the slogan ‘take back control’ during the 2016 Brexit campaign (*Financial Times*, 23/12/2019).

It is understandable that people desire an end to the uncertainty and anxiety – better a bad quick divorce from the EU than living much longer in limbo? Therefore, Johnson’s catchphrase ‘get Brexit done’ was perfect: he offered an end to all anxieties by the end of January 2020. He also gave out the message that he had done everything possible to get it done – including risking prison – and thus he created the impression that he is the only one who can be trusted to solve Brexit (*Financial Times*, 23/12/2019).

Anxiety makes people less critical about possible solutions, and thus it seems that Johnson’s solution was not always scrutinised. In reality, he cannot guarantee an end to uncertainty and anxiety disappear, for he have to spend many years negotiating 759 trade deals, which could take up to a decade to sort (*Financial Times*, 30/5/2017).

Thus, Johnson seems to offer a simple, quick ‘McBrexit’, achieved via the drive-through election, but, as with most fast food, likely to prove only briefly satisfying; and it may quickly bring on a hunger for democracy and the EU.

**4. *Write on your name badge that you are the expert, even when you are not***

You cannot trust Labour with the economy, because they do not know what they are doing. Instead, we are the experts on the economy, and therefore you should trust us. This was a core message from the Tory campaign.

In the campaign, economists spoke out for the Tories, and MPs spoke about their successful companies, giving the message ‘we are the party for business’. There is no evidence that Tory governments are better for the economy than Labour. In contrast, the national debt has almost doubled under the Tories during the last nine years, and unemployment is worse than in other European country (Barclay, 10/12/2019).

The austerity measures have deepened the economic recession, and have hit the poorest in society the hardest, according to the United Nations (Alston, 22/05/2019). There is no evidence that lowering taxes for the rich will increase the growth of the national economy (Herzog, 2016; Dabla-Norris et al, 2015; Sowell, 2013).

In contrast, research shows that many Labour policies would have stimulated the economy, including Universal Basic Income and nationalisation of key industries (Vos, 2020; Chohan, 2017; Van Parijs, 2016). The Labour programme has been assessed by independent economists who concluded that, if implemented, average household income would have increased (*The Independent*, 26/11/2019; *London Economic*, 8/10/2019).

Though the Tories claim they are the economists’ party, they did not have their manifesto assessed by independent economists, possibly because research indicates that Brexit and the Tory Manifesto will hit the economy hard (*The Independent*, 9/12/2019).

**5. *Create hardships for ordinary people, which will engender support for more hardships***

When you are brought up in a hard way and/or with socio-economic hardships, it is likelier that later in your life you will support hard political policies (Milburn and Conrad, 2016). This is especially true if you have been punished frequently as a child, abused, neglected, or reared by authoritarian parents. You will learn to see the world as hostile, one in which individuals need to fight for their survival, and consequently you will expect others to fight as well.

For example, the more often you have been spanked in your childhood, the more likely it is that you will vote Conservative and favour hard immigration policies (Hetherington and Weiler, 2009). Many other life experiences can further strengthen this hard worldview.

For example, an authoritarian worldview can be further stimulated by the survival-of-the-fittest struggle to get on in the economy and at work. Having to deal with abusive bosses, unfair dismissal, fighting to find an appropriate job, etc can all make people more hardnosed (Babiak et al, 2007).

This is known as the denial and displacement of anger: it means that instead of being angry at your parents or the government or the employers, you turn your anger against other people. *I had a hard time, and therefore others must have a hard time as well!*

Whereas you were a victim of aggression in the past, now you become an aggressor yourself. This creates a vicious cycle of poverty and hard governmental policies: hard policies create hard lives, which create more voters supporting hard policies.

It does not seem a surprise that the biographies of most Tory ministers, including Johnson, suggest an authoritarian upbringing or a childhood where the focus was on success and money, not on unconditional love. Most Tory leaders have also attended private boarding schools, which are infamous for their authoritarian atmosphere – ‘The Boarding School Syndrome’ – which teaches children a macho mentality and survival of the fittest (Kynaston and Green 2019; Schaveren, 2015).

During their studies and career, their elitist machismo seem to have been acted out and further stimulated in groups such as the Bullingdon Club and private-member clubs in London’s Pall Mall (Jones, 2014). Thus, the psychologically hard life of Tory politicians may have led to hard policies.

Analysis of the voting behaviour of ordinary people also seems to confirm the hypothesis that people who voted Tory are likelier to have had a hard upbringing, either by hard parenting or hard socio-economic circumstances.

For example, people who grew up during the difficult years around WWII are more likely to vote Tory, as well as people who live in areas with high unemployment and economic uncertainty – such as the traditional former mining areas (Datapraxis, 12/2019; Ashcroft Polls, 14/12/2019).

Johnson has specifically targeted these areas and told the electorate there that he understands their suffering. He offered specific favours if he came to power, such as building train-lines and creating new employment opportunities.

**6. *Allow the left to win small battles, but let them lose the larger war***

The last years have produced some of the largest demonstrations Britain has ever seen, far larger than in the 1960s, which have gone into the history books as a rebellious era (Engler and Engler, 2016). Anti-austerity and anti-Brexit marches have been complemented by direct-action campaigns like the global climate strikes and Extinction Rebellion blockades.

It is admirable that people are so passionate about politics that they dedicate time, energy, and sometimes even freedom to fight for what they believe. For the Left, being able to hold a demonstration and making its voice heard is a kind of victory in itself.

However, holding a successful demonstration or blocking London’s bridges does not immediately lead to a structural change in politics. Even winning a specific demand does not change the system as a whole. The oil tanker may change its course only one or two degrees.

An example can explain this. Extinction Rebellion grew out of discussions on the Left as to how structural political change can be achieved. A group of activists had been involved in multiple campaigns, but they saw that they could not get large-scale public support, as most issues seemed too divisive and party-political. Therefore, they decided to focus on climate, as this is a topic that affects everyone, left and right.

The idea was that through campaigns like Extinction Rebellion ordinary people who were not politically involved could become politicised. Following initial XR activities, people might later become active in campaigns on other issues, as climate change is linked with issues such as capitalism, socio-economic inequality, etc.

The reality, however, is that, although XR has made a significant contribution in raising the profile of climate change in public awareness, the wider effects may be not very great – so far at least.

All political parties – except the Tories – have put fighting climate change in their programmes. But the main focus of XR was not on fighting the Tories – though a handful of individuals demonstrated or went on hunger strike outside Conservative HQ. The Labour, Green, and Lib-Dem election campaigns might have been stronger if XR had explicitly targeted the Tories.

The problem seems endemic with political activism in general: individuals become focused on their own campaigns and have little time and energy left for the larger perspective and the wider issues.

**7. *Tories target the individual, Labour the collective***

Door knocking, trade union leaders, and Momentum. These were key instruments in the labour campaign. Yes, there was a general presence on Facebook, but the number of targeted social media posts by the Tories heavily outnumbered Labour’s online efforts (*The Times*, 12/12/2019; WeAreSocial, 5/12/2019). This begs the question: to what extent is traditional Labour campaigning effective?

The difference between the Labour and Tory campaigns reminds us of the difference between collectivism and individualism. Traditionally, Labour has focused on community, unions, campaigning by personal conversations, etc.

In an era when trade unions were big and neighbourhoods were small, this collectivist type of campaigning seems to have worked. However, over the last decades, the UK has become more individualistic. Whereas the opinion of family, friends, the union, and the immediate neighbourhood may have mattered to individuals in the 1950s, nowadays people do not know their neighbours in the big cities, and union membership is at a historic low.

In contrast, Tory marketing focussed on the individual, notably with targeted social media campaigns. Whereas Labour used collectivistic arguments – choose for the many, not the few – Tories focused their arguments on individual improvements, such as tax reduction. Could it be that Labour needs to change its marketing strategy in our individualistic era?

**8. *Confuse people so long with fake news, that they do not longer want the truth***

Many commentators have analysed the use of lies and fake news in the Tory election campaign. An estimated 7% of the social media advertising of Labour was biased, compared with 88% of Tory adverts (FullFact, 17/12/2019). The media did not portray Corbyn honestly. False websites were built, including a fake Labour manifesto page (*The Guardian*, 21/11/2019), a fake page for a Labour MP (*The Independent*, 3/11/2019), and a fake page for registering to vote (*The Mirror*, 24/11/2019).

Some of Johnson’s lies were obvious. For example, in the first election debate, Corbyn waved confidential documents showing that the Conservatives have been negotiating with US officials to privatise parts of the NHS. In response to this, Johnson said that it was a ridiculous accusation. Even when Corbyn made all the documents available during the campaign, Johnson continued denying that he wants to sell off the NHS, accusing Labour of paranoia.

However, Johnson refused to put into law that he would not privatise the NHS (which is actually already in large part privatised; see El Gingihy, 2019; Vos, Roberts, and Davies, 2019). And during his first week in power, the new Minister of Health said that parts of the NHS might indeed be privatised (e.g. SKWAWKBOX, 19/12/2019). Thus, it seems, that accusing your opponent of paranoia is effective, even when they are right.

The most shocking lesson from the general election is not that Tories used fake news – as politicians have often lied in the past – but that much of the general population is no longer interested in what is true and what is false.

Fact checkers like FactCheckUK have emerged as neutral judges of the claims of politicians. The Tories ridiculed the phenomenon of fact checking, however, when they changed their Twitter profile into a ‘Fact Checker’ profile during the first leadership debate (*The Guardian*, 20/22/2019).

Many people seem to know that Tories are lying, and that the media are lying: for example, over 80% of the regular readers of *The Sun* do not believe that their newspaper tells the truth (Populus poll, 12/12/2012). Truth does not seem to matter anymore, and the Tories flourish under its absence. Citizens give arguments such as ‘everyone lies’, ‘Corbyn lies too’, and ‘all politicians are bad’.

There is a wide scepticism about truth and the value of truth in society, and it is precisely this low value place on truth that has benefitted the Tories (or, in more formal terms, neoliberalism benefits from postmodernism and relativism; see Jameson, 1991). In an era of post-truth politics, rational arguments have become ineffective.

Whereas Corbyn provided the audience with strong facts during debates, Johnson appealed to the people’s emotions with the repetition of his sole message ‘get Brexit done’. Consequently, when voters were asked why they voted for Johnson, many emotional arguments were used, whereas when voters were asked why they voted for Corbyn, more rational arguments were used (Alston, 22/05/2019). Labour lost, because they treated the audience as if we still live in an era in which truth matters.

The Tory campaign was remarkable for focusing on the political centre and trying to appeal to undecided voters. For example, Johnson promised many perks for the ordinary voter, and tried to become everybody’s ‘bro’. For many decades, political campaigns have focussed on the undecided centre, as it is inefficient to spend time and money on preaching to the converted. Politicians aim to offer attractive polities to centrist voters.

Cambridge Analytica specifically targeted undecided voters during the Brexit campaign, which seems to have swung it for Leave (Wylie, 2019; Kirk, 2017). However, the centre needs only to vote for you. You have no need to keep your promises.

Within one day of the Brexit Referendum, Farage and Johnson admitted that there would not be £350 million given to the NHS after Brexit. Within a week of the 2019 General Election, Johnson had already gone back on several promises. Tony Blair seems to have done the same in his time (Vos, 2020).

In the recent campaign, Labour tried to offer a rational manifesto that they could stick to and realise – in stark contrast to Johnson, whose campaign included promises he violated within a week of getting elected. This is a difficult battle to win.

**9. *Never be accountable***

Over the last decades, democracy has corroded in many Western countries; governments have accumulated power, whereas parliaments of the people’s representatives have lost it (Rosanvallon, 2018). Presidents, prime ministers, and minsters gain more power without sufficient accountability.

Boris Johnson exemplifies the trend. He suspended Parliament for a historically long duration, but he lost in court and Parliament returned soon after (*The Guardian*, 24/9/2019). In response to his failure in court, Johnson’s new government is reviewing the legislature’s powers, giving rise to fears that it will propose bills to allow the government to choose high court judges, for example, as in the United States (*The Guardian*, 21/12/2019).

Johnson has also written of reducing Parliament’s role in approving negotiations with the EU, giving his government the freedom to decide the future relationship with the EU and other trade partners (*The Guardian*, 19/12/2019).

At a more personal level, Johnson has rejected accountability by refusing several Prime Minister’s Questions and interviews by critical journalists (INews, 7/1/2020; *The Guardian*, 11/12/2019, 5/12/2019). The lack of accountability means that Johnson could hypothetically get away with any policies.

Democracy is dead – long live democracy?

***10. Offer vision***

The Labour Manifesto was possibly one of the most progressive for generations. Labour announced nationalisation of key aspects of the modern economy, such as public transport, electricity, and broadband. Labour announced their support for a Universal Basic Income, and free higher education. These examples are about improving the material situation of the people.

Although material conditions may be crucial to the quality of life of the general population, many voters seemed to long for a vision.

In contrast with Corbyn’s long list of material improvements, Johnson and his campaign were mainly focused on providing a vision – mainly on Brexit. In all the debates, Corbyn listed his material promises, but he had difficulties in getting his general vision on politics across.

Corbyn has been accused in particular of not offering any vision in relation to Brexit, as he refused to say whether he would personally campaign to Remain or Leave during a second referendum. Instead, Johnson gave a clear vision: get Brexit done, and after that we can get on with solving other problems.

It seems that the voters were longing for a larger vision in relation to the big issues: Brexit, climate, inequality, and creeping fascism. Unfortunately, Corbyn did not communicate his progressive vision as clear as Johnson did his.

**Some conclusions**

In summary, all ten points come back to the same point: the Tories won because they were able to use propaganda better than Labour. Other commentators do not seem to focus on this propaganda failure. Instead, they focus on Corbyn’s unclear vision on Brexit, or the impact of tactical voting. But tactical voting appears to have affected the outcome in only a handful of seats. It would not have given pro-EU parties a majority.

My analysis implies that Labour has lost because of a propaganda failure. Of course, propaganda is a dirty word – particularly on the Left – as it is deemed unethical or even associated with mass manipulation. But the Tories won thanks to propaganda. So what would a Left answer to Conservative propaganda look like?

The use of propaganda should be considered central to campaigns. Labour should communicate that fake news is *not* normal, and that truth *is* important for politics.

A counter-propaganda programme is needed, to show the problems with propaganda. This includes policies to forbid lies in political adverts, which is already supported by 87% of the general population (The Coalition for Reform in Political Advertising/YouGov, 17/12/2019).

Proposals should be made to give people a more critical education, for example by providing more time in schools for developing critical thinking skills and learning about politics (Vos, Roberts, and Davies, 2019).

Labour could offer answers to each of the ten points above:

***1. Use the smearing by others to your advantage (‘dilemma campaigning’)***

A popular strategy that political activists use is ‘dilemma action’. This means that you put your opponent in a dilemma, where each option is associated with failure.

For example, Extinction Rebellion confronted the authorities with the following dilemma: either accepting civil disobedience such as blocking roads – an activist victory – or carrying out mass arrests – leading to mass media attention and much public sympathy.

Similar dilemma action needs to be used during general election campaigns. For example, Labour could have put the smearing of Corbyn, and the untrustworthiness of Tory fake news more generally, at the heart of their own campaign.

***2. Become the ‘bro’ of ordinary citizens***

Labour could focus their campaign on the needs of ordinary citizens, and on underlining that they have their interests at heart and that they are alike. This means that similarities should be underlined, including the struggles and hobbies of ordinary citizens. In contrast, Corbyn was portrayed by media as distant from the average voter, due to his radical ‘communism’.

***3. Be realistic, reduce anxiety, and unmask false prophets***

It is important to show empathy for the fears and daily life struggles of voters. At the same time, Labour should clearly say where anxiety is unwarranted – for example, when directed against immigrants and the EU – and should unmask false prophets.

**4. *Unmask false experts and get support from experts***

An important feature of any campaign should be support from experts for the manifesto, such as economists, biologists, etc. False experts elevated by the opponent should be clearly unmasked, for example by showing their financial interests.

**5. *Show the real cause of people’s hardships in life***

Possibly the most important focus of the campaign should be to show the real cause of people’s hardships: the neoliberal politics of the Tories and New Labour. The real suffering of people should be shown in campaigns – including adverts showing poor and dying people, who suffer due to Tory policies.

Whenever Tories attribute hardships to other people – such as migrants from the EU – this denial and displacement strategy should immediately be unmasked: ‘you are now avoiding the real cause of poverty and suffering in our country!’

**6. *Unify left campaigns and focus on winning the collective war and not merely the individual battle***

Many campaigns on the Left seem focused on their own goals, which spreads the energy, time, and interests of people. It seems to be of the utmost importance that different left political campaign groups unite and focus on how we can together win the war and not merely our own individual battles. For example, Extinction Rebellion should link up with anti-capitalist and anti-fascist movements. Most political issues are intersectional.

**7. *Modernise and individualise marketing***

Labour should revise their marketing, and focus on individuals in modern society, and not merely use traditional Labour strategies of campaigning.

**8. *Use emotions, and show the importance of truth***

On the one hand, emotions should be used in the campaign – not to manipulate people, but to further strengthen the main arguments. The importance of truth should be underlined, and the lies and fake news of opponents should be used in dilemma campaigning to show how dishonest opponents are.

**9. *Create a culture of accountability, and demand your opponent to be accountable***

A future manifesto should include proposals to increase accountability and increase the representation of the people. This should include proposals for proportional representation and forbidding fake news during the election campaigns.

***10. Offer a vision, not only material solutions***

It is important to give an overall vision, and not merely a list of promises. A vision includes ideas about where we are, how we got into this mess, and how we could get out of it.

This article has argued that propaganda is a core reason why Labour lost the general election in 2019, and that Labour could have a stronger campaign in the future. This could help to make Britain a more democratic, fair, and equal country.

It is time to change. It is time for mutiny!

***Dr Joel Vos*** *PhD CPsychol is psychologist, philosopher, lecturer, and researcher at the Metanoia Institute and the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling. He has published on mental health, economics, and Brexit. His latest books are:* The economics of meaning in life *(Vos, 2020),* Mental health in crisis *(Vos, Roberts, and Davies, 2019), and* Meaning in life: an evidence-based handbook for practitioners *(Vos, 2017). Joel organises London Critical University, MentalHealth4All, and Punk4MentalHealth.*

**References**

Alston, P 22/05/2019. *Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

*Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/39/Add.1>

Ashcroft Polls, 14/12/2019 *How Britain voted and why*. <https://lordashcroftpolls.com/>

Babiak, P, Neumann, C S, and Hare, R D (2010). *Corporate psychopathy: Talking the walk.* Behavioral sciences and the law, 28(2), 174-193.

Bernays, E L (1928/2005). *Propaganda*. Ig publishing.

Cammaerts, B (2019). *Journalistic Representations of Jeremy Corbyn in the British Press*

*From "Watchdog" to "Attackdog".* London School of Economics.

Chohan, U W (2017). *Universal basic income: A Review.* Report.

Dabla-Norris, M E, Kochhar, M K, Suphaphiphat, M N, Ricka, M F, and Tsounta, E (2015). *Causes and consequences of income inequality: A global perspective.* International Monetary Fund.

Datapraxis, 12/2019. *Tory Landslide, Progressives Split. A Datapraxis analysis of the Election Result.* <https://www.dataprax.is/tory-landslide-progressives-split>

El-Gingihy, Y (2018). *How to Dismantle the NHS in 10 Easy Steps: The Blueprint that the Government Does Not Want You to See.* London: John Hunt Publishing.

Engler, M and Engler, P (2016). *This is an uprising: How nonviolent revolt is shaping the twenty-first century*. Bold Type Books.

Greenberg, J, Koole, S L, and Pyszczynski, T A (eds.). (2004). *Handbook of experimental existential psychology*. New York: Guilford Press.

Herzog, L (2016). The Normative Stakes of Economic Growth; Or, Why Adam Smith Does Not Rely on “Trickle Down”. *The Journal of Politics*, 78(1), 50-62.

Hetherington, M J, and Weiler, J D (2009). *Authoritarianism and polarization in American politics.* Cambridge University Press.

Hitler, A (1925/2014). *My struggle* [Mein Kampf.]. otbebookpublishing.

Jameson, F (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism.* Duke University Press.

Jones, G A (2014). Where's the capital? A geographical essay. *The British journal of sociology*, 65(4), 721-735.

Klein, N (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. London: Macmillan.

Kynaston, D, and Green, F (2019). *Engines of Privilege: Britain's private school problem*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Milburn, M A and Conrad, S D (2016). *Raised to rage: The politics of anger and the roots of authoritarianism.* MIT Press.

Rosanvallon, P (2018). Good *Government: Democracy Beyond Elections.* Harvard University Press.

Schaverien, J (2015). *Boarding School Syndrome: The psychological trauma of the 'privileged' child.* Routledge.

Sowell, T (2013). *Trickle Down Theory" and" Tax Cuts for the Rich (No. 635).* Hoover Press.

Van Parijs, P and Vanderborght, Y (2017). *Basic income: A radical proposal for a free society and a sane economy.* Harvard University Press.

Vos, J (2020). *The economics of meaning in life.* (forthcoming)

Vos, J, Roberts, R, and Davies, J (2019). *Mental Health in Crisis.* London: SAGE.

Wylie, C (2019). *Mindf\*ck: Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America.* Profile: London.