



British American Security  
Information Council

## The British Election: What Happened and What Does it Mean?

*Event summary by BASIC Program Director Anne Penketh*

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Britain's "Mick Jagger election," at which nobody got any satisfaction, was the topic of this joint BASIC event with the Center for Transatlantic Relations. The event took place at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, EU Center of Excellence in Washington, DC.



The event was held only hours after it became clear that there would be a hung parliament after the 6 May poll, with the Conservative Party having the largest number of seats although without an overall majority. According to the final results, the Conservatives have won 306 seats - or 307 including a previously Tory-held seat where the election was postponed after the death of a candidate - Labour has 258 and the Liberal Democrats 57.

It fell to Klaus Larres, adjunct professor of European studies at SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, to explain the fallout from the dramatic events overnight. As well as reprising the Mick Jagger aphorism, he added that "the electorate spoke but nobody knows what they said."



allowing the country to punch above its weight and be projected as a great power.

Speakers agreed that the Lib Dem call for the introduction of proportional representation was unlikely to be enacted. Dr. Spear said that when the voting pattern was analyzed, people “are moving away from throwing their votes away”, which had led to an increase in the vote of far-right parties such as the British National Party. “With PR, they would have got seats.”

The panel discussed the ramifications of the first past the post system producing a result that looked like one under the PR system. Questions also focused on whether Britain would move further way from Europe as a result of the Conservative vote. Dr. Spear said that after the scandal of MPs expenses last summer, “the next expenses scandal will be that of MEPs, which will fuel anti-Europe feeling in Britain.”

The panelists concluded by saying that a hung parliament would be unsustainable, and that new elections were likely to take place within a year.

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