**[Beyond Boris](https://www.dawn.com/news/1699370/beyond-boris)**

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THE wide-ranging inadequacies of what is known as Western-style democracy may stre­tch back to its inception, but what has been particularly disturbing of late is a tendency to elect (or select) leaders whose spect­acular unfitness to rule is beyond reasonable doubt.

Donald Trump remains arguably the star­kest example of this trend, setting the standard whereby Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro was dubbed the tropical Trump and Britain’s Boris Johnson became, in the former US president’s semi-literate words, “Britain Trump”.

The beastliness of Johnson, whose comeuppance last week at the hands of the very same colleagues who had enabled his prime ministership was sudden but not unpredictable, differs in significant ways from that of Trump.

The British prime minister might relish his cultivated persona as a cross between Billy Bunter and Bertie Wooster, but he is neither a complete ignoramus nor an idiot savant. What was obvious long before he emerged as the Tory leader is that whatever intellect he possesses is dedicated primarily to serving his personal interests. Treating certifiable truths as an inconvenience comes naturally to him.

The coming change in UK offers little hope of a transformation.

He isn’t the first political leader to assume he is immune to the laws that apply to the hoi polloi. However, in terms of a brazen disregard of ethics he appeared to lack any sense of where to draw the line, until significant numbers of those who had facilitated his rise to power began to desert him.

His enablers were not restricted to the bulk of the Conservative Party but extended across much of the British media. Perhaps not all that surprisingly, they were also deeply embedded in the main opposition party.

Five years ago, when the leader elected by Labour members and supporters was being undermined by his parliamentary party, prime minister Theresa May mistakenly assumed that her relatively narrow parliamentary majority could vastly be enhanced through a snap election.

Instead, the Tories lost their majority as Labour posted its best result in decades, dri­ven to a considerable extent by youthful enth­usiasm for social democratic ideals that were supposed to have been rendered obsolete by the neoliberalism of the Thatcher-Major-Blair-Brown era. That threat could not be allowed to stand, and the beneficiaries of the status quo doubled down to diminish the risk.

Among the Tories, that eventually entailed a switch from May to ‘Brexit Boris’. On the Labour side, some MPs quit the party (and subsequently sank without trace, mostly retreating to the corporate world), while others maintained their hostility within the Labour caucus to anything resembling socialist ideals. And then there were those, like Keir Starmer, who pretended otherwise but backstabbed Jeremy Corbyn with varying degrees of subtlety, pushing him against his instincts to adopt an incoherent position on the key question of Brexit.

Meanwhile, backed by not just the Tories but the bulk of Labour, almost the entire media steadily upped the ante in its character assassination of Corbyn on the absurd grounds of anti-Semitism. The cumulative effect was substantial Tory gains in the 2019 election — the Conservative vote increased only marginally, but Labour’s share went down sharply.

Since Starmer replaced Corbyn, he has res­i­led from his manifesto pledges while devoting his energies to purging the Labour left — including Corbyn, alongside a number of Jewish activists who refused to blindly endo­rse the mounting excesses of the Israeli state. The very idea of a potential British prime minister who sincerely empathised with the dispossessed Pales­tin­ians was anathema not just to the Zionist elite in Israel but to its acolytes across the British political spectrum.

Even beyond the shared adoration for the Israeli variety of fascism, Star­mer has found little fault with Cons­er­vative policy at home or abroad. His devotion to the faux verities of the status quo seems even more unquestioning than Tony Blair’s embrace of key Thatcherite precepts. Which, in turn, makes it easier for the Tories to turn on their prime minister, knowing full well that even if the Conservative effort flounders, the alternative wouldn’t look all that different.

A popular uprising along the lines off what has lately been witnessed in Sri Lanka might have concentrated British minds and perhaps propelled an outcome different to what lies ahead, with Johnson in situ for another couple of months until his successor emerges on Sept 5.

No one right now has any idea who that might be — from Rishi Sunak and Sajid Javid to Nadhim Zahawi, Penny Mordaunt, Priti Patel or Liz Truss. It might even be none of the above. But it undoubtedly will be someone who effectively carries on what the Tories refer to as “the Thatcher revolution”, which doesn’t rule out Starmer.

For meaningful change, Britain will have to go far beyond dumping Boris Johnson. And, alas, neither the Conservative contenders nor the current Labour Party offer a serious alternative.

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