

Boris Johnson - the failure...

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Johnson the failure
Thanks to TCW and the author .

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Who'll grab the steering wheel from out-of-control Johnson?

By **Daniel Miller** - November 15, 2020

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WHEN the history of the West's collapse into collective madness and convergent opportunism is finally written, one of the most psychologically disturbing chapters will consider the career of Boris Johnson. How did the political culture of a great nation degrade to the extent that it promoted such a man to a leader? And how long will this broken personality continue to explode his psychodrama on a national

scale?

Britain's disastrous reaction to an unremarkable disease has been shaped by the pathologies of the Prime Minister at every point. On the eve of Johnson's election to the leadership of the most distinguished parliamentary party in the world he was living in a bedsit in south London with his pregnant mistress following the immolation of his 25-year marriage, [his battered Previa GX collecting parking tickets in the street](#). Today, he is the animating spirit of a government combining incompetence, corruption and mendacity in equal measure.

Panicking and hiding when the situation called for judgment and composure, Johnson's leadership over the last 11 months echoes the general pattern of his life. The atmosphere of pseudoreality in which Britain now is frozen descends from him, as he squirms to evade accountability for the catastrophe he's engineered, piling destruction on destruction, fiction on fiction, lie on lie.

Why has Johnson repeatedly allowed deliberately misleading charts based on manipulated data to terrify the British public into complying with a lockdown policy that evidently could not otherwise be justified?

It is impossible to think the Government does not know what we know: that the virus has an average age of mortality of

82, higher than the UK life expectancy, and an infection fatality rate of less than 0.2 per cent. Why have the British economy been ruined and the British people terrorised for this ultimately trivial disease?

In fabricating a legal pretext for enacting an illegal lockdown, Johnson breached constitutional precedents stretching back centuries to arrogate blunt coercive powers on a gigantic scale. These precedents cannot be easily repaired, but what is crucial for the moment is to prevent any further damage being done. As things stand, Britain is on the road to a totalitarian society.

Johnson's litany of failures is now almost too long to recall in its entirety. Taken in isolation, each one should have led to his departure from high office. Taken together, they conceal each other, just like the scale of the catastrophe of Johnson's private life destroys the sense of perspective necessary for judgement.

'The countless times when he lets people down subliminally readjust our expectations,' Rory Stewart notes in his review of Tom Bower's new biography, 'so that on the rare occasions when Johnson does what is required . . . it appears a sign of heroic diligence.'

All this is, in some sense, by design. Too many bad decisions have been made, too many lies repeated, and too much unnecessary suffering encouraged to be

explained by incompetence alone. Johnson is not stupid, but something much darker, brooding behind a beguiling veneer of sociopathic charm growing thinner by the day. To an extent probably not even fully realised by himself, the devastation he has enacted is intentional, and his hunger for destruction will keep expanding until he is removed from office.

Johnson is not only an adulterer but a serial adulterer; not only a liar, but a compulsive liar. The sensation of self-loathing and confusion which accompanies emotional betrayal is more significant than any purely moral judgment that one could make about it.

Adultery isn't a psychologically comfortable activity, or a situation which yields mental clarity. What a serial adulterer is pursuing isn't pleasure, but disgust: to betray, and be forgiven, to punish and escape from punishment, and punish others, and escape, and then repeat.

What manifested in his private life as callous treatment of his mistresses, wives and children has metastasised into a contempt for the electorate he despises for electing him and imposing a responsibility he is desperate to escape, yet also, for the familiar misery it offers, to entrench.

Johnson's defining power of dishonesty, exceptional even for a politician, is more than simply incidental. It underpins his

that simply incidental. It underpins the faculty of judgment and perception and defines his whole approach to life. Finally, there is nothing except lies, or even consciousness of any other possibility.

Johnson lies because he cannot admit he was wrong, but he lies to himself most of all. The outcome is a fundamentally confused and incoherent personality unable to distinguish its own conscience from the chaos of the external world. Ultimately, nobody is home.

Johnson's disastrous management of the disaster he is theoretically attempting to avert expresses his confusion and absence of detached perspective. He does not know what he is doing. What he today continues to conceive as an external virus is in reality a composite of the virus, his own desires, and the consequences of his failures. The disease has not been beaten because its epicentre is Johnson's broken mind, which has transmitted from him to infect the rest of the Government, and from the Government to the country.

When Johnson speaks of 'getting the virus under control' what he means is regaining control of his mind, and his life, which escaped from his control at some point between the collapse of his marriage and his election to high office: a position Johnson wanted for the title, not the job. When Johnson introduces idiotic mantras, or proposes to divide the country into tiers, what is happening is

infantile regression.

Indolent at the beginning of the crisis, when he missed five emergency COBRA meetings, before washing his hands of his responsibility by alienating his authority to a cabal of power-hungry bureaucrats more focused on credentialism than science, Johnson's first instinct to do nothing was only coincidentally correct. What he really wanted, in the depths of the dawning realisation of the moral wreckage of his life, was whatever seemed easiest. When that changed, so did his policy.

This same pattern has continued to repeat itself as the crisis has dragged on: the decision not to make a real decision. Under pressure from a hysterical media and a necromantic opposition, which has been channelling the power of fear of death, and the idea that Government should somehow end death for at least a decade, herd immunity mutated into herd conformity, as nihilistic neoliberal politicians across the world plunged as one into the phantasmagoria of lockdown and discovered that they enjoyed the taste of humiliating and incarcerating their populations.

Ironically all this would have been avoided if Johnson had trusted his own laziness, the most sympathetic aspect of his nature, and remained content as a columnist, but that is also Johnson's tragedy.

At some point, for some reason, perhaps to appear a certain way to someone's gaze, he bewitched himself into believing he was serious, so now we have the clownish horror of Bertie Wooster playing Churchill.

In early April, Johnson himself was admitted to hospital in the pivotal episode of the British story so far. In striking contrast to Donald Trump, who was reinvigorated by his recovery (as Ferdinand Ossendowski remarks, nature destroys the weak, but helps the strong) Johnson emerged on the other side of his ordeal reduced both intellectually and emotionally, his sub-P G Wodehouse patter reduced to strained clichés.

In late September, now resembling a man who has passed directly from adolescence into old age without passing first through adulthood, Johnson was insisting he was as fit 'as a butcher's dog' and five days later 'fitter than several butchers' dogs'.

What he wanted was for somebody to put him back on a leash. Unable to control or even understand his own desires, he now imposed on to the British public a mechanism to control them, insisting the people must obey a charter of cruel and pointless rules apparently drawn directly from the recesses of his unconscious, including criminalising children visiting their parents, and couples who don't live together having sex

Particularly prominent in Johnson's current psychological calculations is the fantasy that he must save Christmas, perhaps by first destroying it. How many family gatherings has Johnson previously destroyed?

Out of ideas, incapable of thinking clearly, and apparently beholden to his girlfriend, Johnson today is neck-deep in a sunk-cost fallacy, unable to retreat or to advance.

He needs to resolve the crisis to ward off the reckoning to come but at the same time he cannot resolve it without reckoning with his failure now. How long before his more conscientious colleagues recognise the gravity of this situation?

Great Britain, and not only Britain, is now in the middle of a political crisis comparable to the slow-motion catastrophe which led to the near-suicide of Europe in 1914: insane incompetence on a global scale. The situation cannot resolve itself without decisive action, and longer it is allowed to persist, the worse it will become.

Johnson, a fundamentally irresponsible and dishonest man who has lied and bluffed his way through life, today presides over a government of destruction, which has lied repeatedly to the British people, which has seized powers that no British government in history has taken, which has justified its

needless actions on the basis of modelling repeatedly proved false, and which is ruling by decree.

After one year of Johnson's leadership Britain is on the road to a police state, waiting anxiously for the ticking time bomb of economic devastation to explode. Nobody should want to find out what the country could look like after two.

An urgent intervention must be made. Individuals of character in the House of Commons and the House of Lords must grab the steering wheel of a British government weaving dangerously across the road, arrest the extension of unprecedented totalitarian powers and repeal the powers that this government has claimed before more damage is done. Johnson must resign or be removed.

He's failed his family, he's failed his country, and he's failed himself"

Roger
Wright-
Morris.

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