

Denial, lies and fascism: the Tory election campaign

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I have tried to be broad minded in this election. I have gone as far as to suggest that despite their appalling economic policies people should vote LibDem if that stopped a Tory being elected. By implication that suggests I am being party political. I would deny it. I would say the same to prevent a Brexit Party candidate being elected. This is not about party politics. It is about something much more profound than that.

Yesterday was, by seemingly near universal consent, a bad day for the Tories. It was pretty grim for the Brexit Party as well. Johnson was so intent on ignoring the image of a child with suspected pneumonia sleeping on coats on a hospital floor that he took a television journalist's phone and pocketed it in an attempt to continue his pre-scripted mantra. Then Tories then claimed that an aide had been assaulted when video evidence showed nothing of the sort had happened. The Brexit Party were, meanwhile, shown to have profound and open racists working in their campaigns.

This matters. However bad Tory policy might be, and on Brexit, green issues, social security, and much else it is absolutely dire, this capacity of the Tories to straightforwardly lie to deny the truth matters more.

Please do not get me wrong. I have been engaged with politics for too long, and have known too many politicians to think that any of them are beyond putting a gloss on an issue. Of course they do. But then, as a matter of fact, we all do. There is not a single human who has ever lived who has not seen things their way, and from their perspective, resulting in their own unique version of events. This is to be who we are. I forgive politicians their uniqueness in doing this, however irritating it can be.

But this is not the issue I am referring to. Having an opinion you wish to promote is one thing. Straightforward lying about what is actually happening is another altogether. And it is very apparent that deceit is at the heart of all Johnson does.

He was in denial about the child on the floor in a hospital. You don't need to have had a child who has needed hospital treatment for pneumonia (and it so happens that I have)

to have sympathy for the parents seeking to highlight this extraordinary situation that simply should not have happened, and would not have done but for NHS underfunding. But Johnson not only lacked empathy, he flatly denied having seen the image, when it was inconceivable that this was true, as his manner made clear. Worse, he refused to comment on it and sought instead to continue his inconsequential bluster of pre-programmed lies. Compassion was beyond him.

The subsequent claims by Matt Hancock's team that an advisor had been assaulted were straightforward lies. There is no other possible description.

What Channel 4 revealed about the Brexit Party was the real extent of ugly racism in UK politics. All parties have suffered it. This, though, was at the core of the campaign and very close to a leader. No doubt he will deny knowledge of it. I would find that implausible.

So what we have is not error. Nor is it the mistake that we can all make. What we are seeing, most especially from the Tories, is the deliberate debasement of our political discourse. The boundary between spin, which we can all recognise, and the straightforward lie has departed in their case. Ethical principles have clearly ceased to be of consequence for them. Power at any cost has become their purpose. And that is the point when a politician, a political party and in this case a whole wing of politics (because I see little to now differentiate the Tory and Brexit parties when they are, so obviously, working together) becomes dangerous. And this is what they are.

When I oppose what these parties do it is not just because I disagree with their policies, although I do. Much more importantly I oppose what they are. I can't say what they stand for, because they don't stand for abuse, thuggery, lies and deception. Instead those are things that you do. And this is what they are about.

Of course, it could be said that this is what populism has always been. But there are forms of populism that do not go this far. Instead this is about something much more pernicious. This is fascism. This is about the abuse of people, the truth and ethics in blatant pursuit of power in the interests of those seeking to acquire it alone. That in the process the media, trust and the integrity of the political processes built upon honest representation are trashed is inconsequential. Nothing matters but power. That is what fascism is about. And we can now see that this is what the Conservative Party and its allies are about.

My opposition to the Tories in this election is not specific. It is systemic. It is about challenging the evil of fascism that now hangs large over us.

Thursday is a day that might go down in history books. The Conservatives have long been open to fascist influences. Thursday might be the day when they take power.

And we have to remember that fascists are not good at giving up power when they

have it. The Tories have already proposed sweeping constitutional reforms to retrench any hold they secure. My fear is that democracy really is at threat now. We face an existential crisis. And if the Tories secure power it's going to take real courage to survive the onslaught that will follow.