

## Let's not deny it; we're facing fascism

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What do you call a situation where a President, elected on a populist platform that was based on lies, where many of those who advised him have already ended up in prison, whose primary aim is to bolster the corporate sector, and who consciously feeds division within the society he governs as well as beyond it, seeks to turn his own military forces onto those who seek to express alternative opinion within that state? The onset of fascism appears to be the most appropriate response. And that, I suggest is what is happening in the USA.

It was always presumed that fascism would arrive through the ballot box. It was often said it would be carrying a Bible, although the person carrying it would be utterly indifferent as to its content. And that has happened. But it makes it no less shocking, nonetheless.

Daily, what was once unthinkable now happens. And in the process tolerance changes. The tolerance of the divisions within society might be exposed but tolerance of the Presidential excess to defend the status quo is normalised, worn down by shock that any of this is happening.

All of which matters. The USA is a country I would never have wanted to live in. Amongst many other issues, its grossly unfair penal system has for decades made clear that black lives do not matter, because far too many black men are incarcerated, often for life and for the most trivial of reasons. The discrimination implicit in that system is repugnant and indicative of all the other issues that are rightly surfacing now. The truth is, the American dream is not my dream, not least because it was built on that injustice: gross gains for a few in the way the US has idolised has meant oppression for vast numbers. And yet, like it or not, the US is too big to ignore. So what it does has consequences.

One consequence is that other countries ape its practices. And I am not just talking about Brazil. So too has Johnson done that here. He has shown contempt for parliament and democracy: we saw it, yet again, yesterday. He breached election law in the 2016 Brexit campaign. He has shamelessly picked on minorities in society - making life for

migrants as hard as possible. And he repeatedly lies, without any apparent conscience. Now his behaviour with regard to Covid-19 reveals not just incompetence (which seems to go with this form of fascism, almost without saying) but indifference to the fate of many in the UK, who will needlessly die early as a result of the inappropriate ending of lockdown, which is bound to increase the risk of a second wave of coronavirus.

Is this, then, also fascism? In that democracy is being abused, parliamentary oversight of law is being suspended by much current legislation, executive power without accountability is being extended, and the use of that power is clearly intended to benefit some at cost to others, I would say so, without a doubt. The issues may not be as stark as they are in the USA as yet, but don't be fooled: Johnson, Cummings and Give simply see the USA as good cover right now. In their book the riots must be a gift because they got Cummings off the front page.

The fact is that where Trump goes others follow. I strongly suspect Johnson has every intention of copying most of what Trump does. The threat is very, very real. Covid 19 provides convenient excuse, but the plan was always there.

We are rightly shocked by the USA. But please remember to be shocked about what is happening in the UK too. The government issued a report on the excess deaths of members of the BAME community from Covid-19 yesterday without offering explanation or a plan on how to address the issue. The indifference of the USA may be slightly more carefully framed in the UK, but only slightly. That report did not answer necessary questions, in which context it more than failed: it did instead reveal a deeply worrying lack of willing.

This country can be, is and will remain oppressive to many unless action is taken. The risk of fascism is very real. No one needs to be paranoid to appreciate that. Its presence is far too apparent to think anything else.

And yes, I am worried. I fear that there is an intention post-Brexit to make abuse considerably more systemic because that is, ultimately, what the vote was all about. And it would require me to deny all that I am to not be worried about that. I fear we've not seen the half of this as yet. And as in the US, things are only going to get uglier.