

It is apparent that populism won't give up witho...

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It hardly need be said that we live in extraordinary times. It is readily apparent that we do. But, that does not mean that we do not need to talk about them.

In both the UK and the USA there are, at present, governments dedicated to the destruction of democracy. Both are seeking to undermine the right to vote. Both are seeking to use executive powers to limit the rights of elected representatives to scrutinise their actions. Neither has much regard for international law and holds other countries in contempt. Both are using patterns of political preferment to appoint inappropriate and under-qualified people to critical public positions. In the UK, at least, patterns of public procurement are appearing to be corrupted because due process does not seem to be being followed. Divisions in society are being both created and exploited. And, thankfully, there is a massive disquiet about all these things.

There is no doubt in my mind that the governments of Trump and Johnson wish to follow the pathways laid by Poland, Hungary and others by dismantling the checks and balances inherent within the proper mechanisms of a state. That is what populism seeks to do. Both are populist leaders. It is indisputable that populism is a path away from democracy, at the very least. And it is apparent that despite the conditioning of a great many people that has been part of this process, aided and abetted by media that is either sympathetic to it, or is cowed into compliance, there is considerable reluctance to accept the actions of these governments.

There is no doubt that in the US the coming election is a test of democracy itself. There can also be no doubt that yesterday's Supreme Court Appointment undermines the chances of US Democracy surviving. Capture of the legal system is, of course, a key part of the populist programme, which has progressed far too rapidly under Trump. One does just have to hope that the forecast 10% lead for Biden will turn into reality, and make any rejection of the ballot impossible to construct, because such objection would seemingly appear to be inevitable in any other circumstance.

Here, we have no chance to vote as yet. But the mechanisms for protest have to be made ready. Plates on Tory MPs office doorsteps are powerful metaphors. Preparations

for elections for mayors, local councils and devolved governments next May must be made - and ways to encourage turnout thought about. These elections may provide a vital chance to express dissent, and to reinforce the demand for real change - including breaking the Union if need be.

But most of all, day in and day out there must be active expression of opposition. I would always urge that it be peaceful. It needs to respect Covid. But it also has to be heard.

Social media has fed populism, without a doubt. It is why I use it to oppose it. That makes sense. The amplification of opposition is an essential part of this process of refusing to accept what is happening.

Constructing alternative narratives is key. We live by the stories that we tell ourselves and each other.

A refusal to watch what we value be undermined seems to me to be absolutely essential right now.

And it can be done. There is no one without some sort of platform now. I suggest we use them, each in our own way. Without a fight for what we value the priorities of the populists will dominate our society, at cost to the most vulnerable at first, but with ever growing threats to others as time goes on.

If we want to live in world of our choosing we have to fight for it now. Because the populists are not going to give up, however much hardship they impose.