

The current chaos cannot continue. The worry is we don't.

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Nobody expected a [shortage of bed linen](#) in hotels to be a consequence of Brexit. But along with shortages of food, cars, blood testing bottles and HGV drivers and an excess of pigs it apparently is.

But then so too is the denial that all this has anything to do with Brexit another consequence of Brexit. A brave face in the breakdown of politics and the economy seems to be the order of the day. I noted [one commentator in the FT this morning saying](#):

The US economy today is about as strong as it has been in generations, with the tightest labour markets and highest inflation rates seen in decades. That is even accounting for a recent moderation of growth driven by the spread of the Delta variant of Covid-19, reflected in Friday's disappointing August jobs data.

It seems that there is a collective denial going on. Evidence is being swept aside. A collective pretence is being presented that if we just hang on all will be well.

Even the government is doing it. Put up with a couple of years of chaos, it is saying, and all will be fine. Except, it has no basis for saying that, because it simply cannot know. And as for the US economy? Add in Covid, a crisis of international confidence, climate change and threats to the US constitution arriving via state abortion and election legislation and the last thing its prospects look like are rosy.

The reality is that in a remarkably short period of time considerable change has taken place. The route from social democracy to authoritarian populism has been steady, beginning in 1947 with the creation of the Mont Pelerin Society by Hayek and Milton Friedman, but with growing momentum since 1980.

During the 80s that movement might have been honest about its intent. Before and after then it is very hard to think that it has been: subterfuge as to its vision has been normal because it's very hard to say that your aim is the limitation of democracy to serve the interests of very few in society, and yet in Trump and Johnson (and others, elsewhere) that is very obviously what the ultimate aim has been. And it has

succeeded, by and large, in delivering just that.

The underlying threat to society at large may be even bigger than that created by inequality though. It does not take much to read a eugenicist approach into Dominic Cummings rants on the rights of the 0.01%. It is much easier to see that Rushi Sunak has a decided bias against those least well off, as had Trump. The aim is to oppress.

But, to achieve that goal something had to give, and that something, it now seems, was order. The order of trade. The order of international relations,. The order of the rule of law. The order of parliamentary sovereignty. The order within the media, and its right to question. The order that lets routine happen and markets function, and supply chains operate. And into that already chaotic scene Covid was thrown, by accident, but with revelatory consequences by showing how the new order of government was to work for the benefit of a few.

The result is not strong economies, or strong anything else. The consequence is weak government, shown to be without an agenda beyond destroying constraints on their own action, but without apparent knowledge of what action they desire because that, they claim (conveniently) is for markets to decide, even though those in the markets clearly do not wish for that choice.

So where are we? In chaos, it would seem, with no route out. The dogma without substance that has gripped popular politics has no answer to any question except how to increase short term inequality.

The question is, how long can this situation last? What will the tipping point be? It's still not clear. But there will be one. Either democracy will collapse, and that is possible in the chaos that is developing, or there will have to be a backlash to save it. The mess we are in has nothing within it that suggests it meets any of the needs of society. So society has either to be suspended, or resume its role. What is not possible is that current chaos might continue, because at some people will have had enough. It's just a matter of when.