

Over-powerful party leaders have undermined politics

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The weekend was not only full of surprises from the Conservatives. The arrest of Nicola Sturgeon added further twists.

I am not commenting on issues under inquiry, of course. Nor am I discussing the odd timing of the arrest. And I am certainly not speculating on any issue of right or wrong: there is a judicial process to do that.

I do, however, think it possible to note one thing, and that is that the structure of the political party in the UK (and in this sense, the SNP is entirely consistent with the pattern of UK political parties) is failing us very badly.

The idea that in the UK political system, we should suffer politics run by an individual who has managed to take power within a political party without that power then being capable of successful challenge either within or without that party is deeply worrying. It leaves us with a series of quasi-monarchs to choose from when making an electoral choice.

The Tories have been supremely good at this. We got Johnson as a result and total turmoil in the attempt to be rid of him.

Keir Starmer is very obviously dedicated to this model of political power.

So too was Nicola Sturgeon, who, with a tiny coterie of others, controlled the SNP and ignored all other opinion within it, making themselves unaccountable in the process.

I have no idea how this might relate to any investigation into the SNP's affairs: that is not my concern. I am saying that this model is undoubtedly not working to our benefit. We need accountable politics within political parties as well as within our parliaments. We are not getting it.

No wonder people are alienated from politics. Those who reach its pinnacle appear determined to make sure that alienation happens by applying the idea to almost everyone in their own party, let alone those beyond it.

I hope that the day of this form of politics might be done.