

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Great Britain & Northern Ireland (Europe) > **Britain: Don't waste all your anger on Boris Johnson – save some for his (...)**

Britain: Don't waste all your anger on Boris Johnson – save some for his enablers

Sunday 10 July 2022, by [CHAKRABORTTY Aditya](#) (Date first published: 7 July 2022).

The prime minister and his wrecking crew already smashed our democracy - now they are just turning the ire on themselves.

In 2019 the now-departed chancellor, Rishi Sunak, played a vital role in boosting Boris Johnson's chances of becoming Tory leader. He [co-wrote](#) a statement declaring: "Boris Johnson is one of life's optimists and can help us recapture a sense of excitement and hope about what we Conservatives can do for Britain." On Tuesday night, he [changed his mind](#). It had apparently taken him three years to discover what everyone already knew - indeed, what Johnson had blatantly advertised all along, dangling from a zipwire, standing beside the Vote Leave bus, filing fibbing copy to the Telegraph.

What's more, Sunak was meant to have spent this week hailing "[the biggest personal tax cut in over a decade](#)", a giveaway precision-targeted at those tabloids that once purred approval at the government but now only hiss and spit. It was the start of yet another relaunch: the Treasury and the Tory press office lined up all their ducks, and Sunak and Johnson were gearing up for an event next week. Instead the prime minister looks like toast and almost every other story is lost in the noise - even the ones about Britons getting a bit more cash.

Ah well, that's another £6bn tipped down the drain.

Here is what the end of the Tory show looks like: costly policies that splash about public money with the sole aim of currying favour for a leadership contest. Your taxes spent to prop up their poll ratings.

Whoever takes up residence in No 10 after Johnson, there is talk of slashing VAT, or U-turning on corporation tax rises - more billions sprayed around with the wantonness of a Formula One driver wielding a magnum of champagne. Never, you note, a policy that might direct help where it is most needed: to keep benefits in line with food prices, or invest in schoolkids, or even to build [those 40 hospitals](#). They don't figure on the laundry list of any newspaper baron or member of the tiny Tory electorate.

Those ministers and bag-carriers who have resigned this week in the name of "integrity" and "decency" display only their lack of either quality. They are, as Keir Starmer jibed in parliament, "the sinking ship fleeing the rat". Today, parents are worrying about what they will feed their kids, workers are wondering if they can afford to drive to the office, and pensioners are already in dread of a winter of record-high fuel bills. Meanwhile, the Tory MPs handed a landslide have spent the past few weeks and months not governing but plotting the right time to depose their leader, and whom they fancy as a replacement. A vast tableau of national immiseration serves only as the backdrop to their squalid careerism.

Though on one big thing Johnson was quite correct: a man in late middle age cannot change his

nature, and he never offered to do so. All that has changed is his value to the politicians, funders and journalists who put him there. His electoral currency was once pure gold. Now it is the most debased metal in Westminster.

That is why his departure will be most greatly celebrated by his own side. But the prime minister who handed out plum jobs to a man accused of sexual harassment (as deputy chief whip, Chris Pincher's total salary would have been some £115,000), who attended lockdown parties then lied and lied about it, and who tried to defend a chum who broke the lobbying rules, is by no means the cause of the rot in Westminster. Johnson is instead the most obvious and serious symptom of a deep crisis in our democracy.

Consider who might replace him. Sunak and [Sajid Javid](#) have together spent 32 years working in high finance. Liz Truss is Nigel Farage without the pint glass. Matt Hancock is Matt Hancock. That is today's Tory party: a vacant-eyed coalition of bankers, bounders and Brexiteers. They have no ideas, save the most parodic form of Thatcherism. Hand huge home loans to people on housing benefit who can barely afford to eat. Allow mortgages to be passed down from parent to child, like some 21st-century remake of debt serfdom. When all else fails, attack the BBC for not showing more flags.

Consider, too, the media enablers of Johnson. The BBC's *Have I Got News For You*, which turned a hard-right politician into a TV star. The newspapers that laughed off all his lies and petty corruption until it was clear their readers weren't going to stomach it any more. In its main editorial on Wednesday, the Times demanded Johnson step down: "No one in Britain or abroad can any longer trust a word this government says." In December 2019, the same paper [endorsed him as prime minister](#) to keep "close links with European partners and pave the way for a return to pragmatic, responsible government".

This wasn't naivety. The Times and most of Fleet Street signed up as cheerleaders for the most flawed political leader in living memory purely to stave off Jeremy Corbyn. Labour, the same editorial warned, would take the country down "a path of radical socialism that would lead to economic chaos" and "turn the clock back 40 years". It was the crudest attempt to portray German-style social democracy as tantamount to collectivised farms and Siberian salt mines. It was intended to nullify democratic choice. The result is the law-breaking regime now in charge of the country, who see nothing wrong in handing out PPE contracts to mates, outsourcing functions to expensive consultants, and running a Covid-loan scheme subject to incredible fraud - and with no serious ideas to stave off a looming recession.

Boris Johnson is the leader of this mess, and trailing behind him is an entire wrecking crew of shameless MPs, craven newspapers and sharp-eyed donors. They have destroyed much, grabbed what they could and built nothing. For all his own faults, the man in No 10 is also paying the price for years of rule by the [Right Honourable Member for Greensill](#) and [Lord Osborne of BlackRock](#). Together, they have taken fistfuls and left only small change.

I have written it before but it bears repeating: these people are bad at government because they believe government is bad. For them, levelling up is a pretty slogan. Their real goal looks like self advancement. And when they finally leave, their only punishment is higher fees on the after-dinner circuit, a ludicrous book advance and their pick of City directorships.

The UK does not need a new manager: it is crying out for an entirely different form of management that hands power and wealth to those who have been deprived of it for decades. It deserves radically devolved government and an economic system that values the everyday needs of its people while actively shrinking the finance sector. And it absolutely must get shot of this wrecking crew in their

pinstripe suits. The end of [Boris Johnson](#) calls for celebrations, to be followed by the real job of seeing off the rest of them.

Aditya Chakraborty

P.S.

- The Guardian. Thu 7 Jul 2022 06.00 BST. Last modified on Thu 7 Jul 2022 10.33 BST:
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/07/anger-boris-johnson-prime-minister-democracy>
- Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist.
- Aditya Chakraborty's articles in The Guardian :
<https://www.theguardian.com/profile/adityachakraborty>
- Support the Guardian
Available for everyone, funded by readers

[Contribute](#)

[Subscribe](#)