



Rule by one! ... How have we come to this?

Before Brexit was 'resolved' it was interesting to hear prominent politicians spout platitudes about sound governance: *'The referendum cannot be revisited ... The people have voted ... We are the British, guardians of democracy!'* They could have added *'Rulers over Land and Sea'* and it would have seemed in keeping ... which of course they were, once upon a time!

But this has now become a fairy story that resides some distance in the past. Now, the British have made such a cock-up of Brexit that people the world over are saying: *'Is this the Britain we learn about in history books? Is this the nation that once ruled the world? Are these the people who gave us the Westminster System?'* If Billy Connolly was to do one of his famed layer-upon-layer skits on the topic, he would have a field day, and we would all fall about in the aisles with uncontrollable mirth; which in stark reality is what many are doing whilst looking on from outside, to the Britain of today: observing as the self-inflicted mess unfolds ... gradually, and painfully!

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The word *democracy* pre-dates even the British Empire; it comes from the Greek language and means 'rule by the (simple) people'. In an expanded form, democracy means a system where the general populace has political power and can rule directly or through elected representatives. Which is all fine and good, until we note that the word *representatives* is plural, not singular, but when we look at the world around us today it seems to be manipulated and controlled - in quite a number of instances - by just one *representative*, who resides at the top of the democratic pile.

As *Donald Trump* slowly (and embarrassingly) recedes from view it becomes pertinent to ask how he has been able to hold America to ransom for the past four years: to excrete nonsense of building walls, the *China* virus and Making America Great ... again! In similar vein we need to ask how it happens that *Boris Johnson* is endorsed to drive Britain on towards either a no-deal or an exceedingly poor deal Brexit, when most people (and business houses) of sound mind, realise that on top of a bungled response to Covid-19, this has all the hallmarks of economic disaster.

As the once-removed Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson well knows, capitalist corporations work in some ways like democracies, with shareholders representing electorates and boards as cabinets. But *T Rex* came to grief because his new corporation was run by a headless chicken, supported by a range of ostriches with their heads in the sand; a far cry from the relatively orderly affair he commanded at Exxon.

The notion of democracy appears fundamentally flawed when misguided egomaniacs can take it upon themselves to control the destiny of millions, in a self-focused manner. To this point in the 21st Century, and within so-called democratic circles, we have been fortunate that the persons elected to rule at the top of the UK and US pyramids have exercised their duties with a reasonable degree of self-control, a perceived decorum that the office demands, and adherence to generally accepted rules. OK, there have been a few stand-out exceptions such as Reagan in Central America, Blair in Iraq, and Nixon with Watergate, but in general they would mostly pass with a B+ rating.

Now, we swing around to 2020, with Johnson pushing the British electorate to economic disaster, accompanied by a potential return to *The Troubles* on the isle of Ireland, while at the same time, the retreating Mr Trump does all in his power to incite violence amongst core supporters and make life as difficult as possible for the incoming administration. Johnson (aided by staunch aids such as *Nigel Farage*) has been allowed to tear up a partnership developed with the EU over 70 years, while Trump has managed to dismantle many of America's hitherto robust global ties and cast future long-term relationships - even with close allies - into serious doubt.

We in the democratic world are apt to denigrate and deride *Rule-by-One* when it is not couched in the enabling, fine cloak of democracy. If, for example, it's Russia, or Turkey, or Zimbabwe, then a singular self-possessed person (usually a man) constitutes autocratic rule: in other words, a dictatorship. But strangely, when that singular, self-possessed rule falls within the sphere of the so-called democratic norm, then: hey-ho, that's OK; we elected him, so he's free to do what the hell he likes: break up long fought-for agreements, promote division and incite violence. Then, all is fair game for our leaders and once he is in situ, we seem powerless to confront him or his actions, until our world has descended into chaos and it is all far too late to turn back the clock.

In these early 21st Century times there is a legitimate question to ask: are democracies and autocracies really all that different? In Britain and the USA we pride ourselves on the fact that democracy is all about upholding things that are right, while respecting the will of the people. But take a closer look: Trump's ideology centres on *The Art of The Deal* and projects indiscriminating nationalism, division and self-interest; similarly, Johnson - if we peel back the emperor's clothing - is doing much of the same, with regard to Europe. Does this not look like, and smell of, autocratic rule?

Why should one man and his fawning entourage be allowed to hold sway over the American Congress, when the future of our planet is at stake? Why should another man be left to plough forward on a singular track that enables the possibility of a disastrous scenario for the British nation? These are world-changing questions that bring rule by democracy into critical focus.

In summary

We have only ourselves to blame, for electing leaders who put their own needs, their own greed, their own limited perceptions of life, above the will of those who gave them their office, However, the system which allows them to do what they like with impunity, once they become the person in charge, is also in part, to blame. The crux of the problem is that we – both Britain and America - are working with systems that were developed centuries ago; systems which are now critically outmoded: redundant and un-suited to deal with current requirements.

It is perhaps quite fortunate that in relatively recent times leaders have been elected who, in-the-main, have treated their high office and the organ it operated within, with some degree of respect; but now those attitudes we once took for granted are being counteracted and discarded by unscrupulous minds ... and we seem to have very little in the form of protective mechanisms to confront and redress this new scourge.

In this second decade of the 21st Century, the comparative equilibrium of the past has been challenged by leaders who seem hell bent on disruption and turmoil, to favour themselves and their inner circles, rather than the wider population. This coupled with a new communications era of the *Facebook selfie* and *Twitter-me virus*, makes the structure of the framework we have relied on for so long no longer fit for purpose, but urgently in need of re-think and repair, in order to meet the challenge and redress the situation of disarray that now consumes the affairs of once great nations.

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