

My lament for the Conservative Party

For years, I urged minorities to join the Tories. But now there's Suella Braverman, I say – get out!

I have been a politics junkie since 1960. Accordingly, I remember the Labour ~~Party~~ introducing the Race Relations Act 1965, while ~~Conservative MPs~~ regularly made and defended racist remarks, the worst being Enoch Powell's ~~so-called~~ “Rivers” of Blood” speech in 1968. My future wife's Pakistani origin family in Romford experienced racist attacks for the first time after that speech.

Despite this, in 1983, as a new convert to free-market capitalism, I joined the Conservative ~~Party~~ because I considered that Margaret Thatcher was transforming Britain for the better. I still do.

Due to other commitments, I was personally politically inactive until I was introduced to the late Lord Sheikh, founder of the Conservative Muslim Forum (“~~CMF~~”), in 2006. I became its ~~Deputy Chairman~~ deputy chair, then ~~Chairman~~ chair from 2014, and a regular attender at the ~~Party Conference~~, party conference and a writer on ~~Conservative Home~~, the ConservativeHome website, where Tory events and policies are debated at length.

In the 2005 Conservative leadership election, I chose David Cameron over David Davis because I considered him more socially liberal and inclusive. ~~Mr~~ Cameron fulfilled my expectations in many ways, for example by living with a Muslim family in Birmingham for two days in 2007.

The CMF's main role is to encourage Muslims to support the Conservative ~~Party~~. In the 2005 general election, only about 10% of British Muslims voted Conservative. The efforts of ~~Mr~~ Cameron, the CMF, and others, raised this to 15% in 2010, and 25% in 2015. Sadly, since then the trend has reversed, with fewer Muslims voting Conservative in 2017 and fewer still in 2019.

What went wrong? In my view, the ~~Conservative Party~~ began putting winning at all costs before its principles.

The rot started with the Zac Goldsmith London ~~Mayoral~~ mayoral campaign of 2016. Many Muslims, including me, saw ~~Mr~~ Goldsmith despicably trying to paint his Labour opponent Sadiq Khan as a closet extremist.

It got worse under ~~PM~~ Theresa ~~May~~ May's premiership. Boris Johnson's notorious ~~Sunday~~ Telegraph article comparing Muslim women who wore a niqab or ~~burka~~ burqa to letterboxes or bank robbers led to no sanctions.

When ~~Mrs~~ May resigned in 2019 after terrible local ~~election~~ and European ~~Parliament~~ parliament elections, many stood for the ~~Leadership~~ leadership. While I

had policy differences with most of the candidates, apart from one person, none would have caused me to leave the Partyparty.

The sole exception was Mr-Johnson. I considered him morally unfit to be PMprime minister, because in my opinion he did not care about the difference between truth and falsehood, or care about anyone but himself. After I shared these views on BBC Radio 4's "Today" programme in June 2019, under pressure from the Party Chairmanparty chairman the GMFMuslim forum expelled me.

After three years Mr-Johnson's leadership imploded, while Liz Truss self-destructed in 49 days. The Partyparty turned to Rishi Sunak, who should be celebrated as our second ethnic minority PMprime minister – the first being Benjamin Disraeli.

While he seems to be a decent chap, I see Mr-Sunak as the prisoner of the Party'sparty's right wing, led by Suella Braverman. Why else is she Home Secretaryhome secretary, despite having been sacked from the role by Liz-Truss for leaking Cabinet documents?committing a security breach.

Sadly, Mr-Sunak seems to believe that the Partyparty can only win the next general election with naked populism, paintinga point of view that paints Labour as representing "the so-called elite", being "the much-reviled enemies of the people", "as anti-Brexit", "pro unlimited migration", "woke" on gender, and "unpatriotic". These bear traps are easily avoided – why else does Sir Keir Starmer always seem to have a Union Jack behind him for every speech!.

Most disgusting is Mrs-Braverman's anti-refugee rhetoric, with talk of an "invasion". It reminds me of British rhetoric in the 1930's1930s against Jewish refugees. We rightly celebrate the Kindertransport (Children's Transport),¹ but the reason the trains only carried children is that Britain would not give refuge to their parents.

When I thought she could not sink any lower, Mrs-Braverman singled out British-Pakistani men as predominating in "grooming gangs", despite the Home Office's own report stating that no evidence existed showing that British-Pakistanis were over-represented. I was delighted to see Baroness Warsi flaycastigate her in the Guardian.

If you are a decent person in the Conservative Partyparty, should you leave the party, as I ultimately did, or stay, as Baroness Warsi has done? I recognise that Baroness Warsi's criticisms of Mrs-Braverman have more impact because she is still a Conservative. However,I still have many of the beliefs that made a Conservative and made me willing to persuade others to become Conservatives. But I could never askrecommend anyone to vote for today's Conservative Party, which is whyparty. I have been a Liberal Democrat since October 2019. I think the Conservative party of Johnson and now of Braverman and of those who indulge them left me

A healthy democracy needs respectable and electable political parties on all parts of the political spectrum. I believe the Conservative Partyparty can only be healed by massive defeat and a purging of the extreme right, just as Labour needed the defeat of 1983 before Neil Kinnock expelled the extreme left and Tony Blair made it electable again.

The Braverman path is damaging and will continue to damage the party. Members must decide if they want to be part of that. But we must all raise a voice before it does further damage to our country.

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