

What'sApp to Sunak

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Abstract

This article features a leaked WhatsApp message to the British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. It was written by Mark E Avelli, a political consultant who sets out what has happened recently in the UK and how he suggests Sunak should act if he wants to remain unsuccessful. That sounds counter-intuitive but not when framed by the revolutionary political theory embraced by the consultant: success is rooted in understanding that victory is not to be acquired by saying and doing the right thing, but the opposite. Only when we understand that nobody actually wants political power and the responsibility that inevitably comes with it, do the actions of politicians make any kind of sense. Or for those keen on a short consulting takeaway to use in teaching political leadership: 'fail fast and keep failing'. The focus here is obviously on the UK, but for readers in other countries that are led or used to be led by similar leaders, this article provides an explanation for why we keep electing people who appear to have no idea what they're doing.

Keywords

leadership, Sunak, Johnson, Trump, failure, Machiavelli, Hegel

Dear Prime Minister,

Thanks for your WhatsApp message yesterday requesting an overview of our services (by the way the message deleted itself after 1 minute but luckily I took a screen shot because I know you've had trouble getting access to your WhatsApp messages or even remembering where your phone is recently). As you may know, we at Avelli Consulting offer political consultancy to political leaders across the world and count amongst our clients, Jair Bolsonaro, Giorgia Meloni, Narendra Modi, Viktor Orbán, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump. An impressive list, I'm sure you will agree, and to that end I thought you might want to set out our services as you lead the UK into a General Election. I think you're going to need all the help you can get because there is still a possibility that you might win and nobody wants that, do they?

In what follows I set out the problem as we see it and how to ensure a successful outcome. So far, we have achieved major successes for Bolsonaro and Trump and are currently doing a lot of work with

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Putin. That trio might trigger some alarm bells for you but trust me, we know what we're doing, and once you understand the revolutionary theory of politics we work with, everything will become crystal clear, and you can look forward to the future with equanimity because we guarantee this will work (full refund if not entirely satisfied and neither Bolsonaro nor Trump have asked for their fee to be returned).

First, I consider the problems facing you, then reveal our aforementioned company's revolutionary theory of politics, then explain what you need to do. Our fee is US \$1 million but when you see what we offer I'm pretty sure you will be happy to pay that, especially given how much the recent British Conservative governments have wasted, lost or misplaced. For example, the period of government austerity between 2010 and 2019, was introduced by the then Prime Minister Cameron and Chancellor Osborne, and was sold to the country, as the only way to rebuild the economy in the face of the 2008 financial crisis – an 'expansionary austerity' as it was called. But the real effect was an 'exploitative austerity' according to [Calvert et al. \(2023\)](#) because while the economy did not grow, the removal of £540 billion from the public sector not only denuded those reliant upon it, but left many people poorer, undermined economic recovery, and contributed to the pro-Brexit vote. Indeed, austerity seems to have led to a version of the 'private affluence and public squalor' first noted by John [Galbraith \(1958\)](#). I know Norman [Thelwell \(2023\)](#) has suggested your government has replaced that with the *The Effluent Society*, given how much untreated sewage water now flows into British rivers and the sea, but he's just a cartoonist so that doesn't count (in the same way that the doctors currently on strike in England are just junior doctors or apprentices, so they don't need paying properly). Yes, we recognize that the consequence of underpaying the doctors is that the UK has the highest number of home-grown doctors working abroad for 10 years, but that's good for Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the US who obviously need more medical care than the UK does because the Brits are stoics (and frankly used to queuing) and because it's part of the Global Britain plan of Boris Johnson.¹

Since Boris Johnson took over from Theresa May in January 2020 you collectively have managed to waste another £100 billion (£25 billion a year on average). Perhaps we should focus on that because you were either Prime Minister or Chancellor of the Exchequer almost throughout that entire period. According to [Smith \(2023\)](#) that includes the following:

1. £240 million on the, as yet, unused scheme to send unwanted immigrants to Rwanda.
2. £1.7 million painting the Prime Ministerial planes.
3. £½ billion on unused post-Brexit customs posts.
4. £2 billion on the cancelled section of the glorious High Speed train system, HS2.
5. £3 billion hiring temporary workers to do civil service jobs, and
6. £15 billion on unused or unusable PPE from the Covid times.

Oh dear... what are we to do? Whatever you seem to try either makes things worse or doesn't improve anything for long. Indeed, this seems to be a party problem: when you do 'save money' and shrink the state, the economy gets starved of investment, and when you 'invest money' you seem to waste a lot. Worse, it now appears that despite you claiming that Johnson's political adviser Dominic Cummings would never have a job in Downing St again in July 2022,² and I quote you here: 'Dominic Cummings... will have absolutely nothing to do with any government that I'm privileged to lead', I gather you have been communicating with him to help with your next election campaign.³

This looks odd at first because the data suggests that the popularity of the Tory government began its steep descent at the point where Cummings broke Covid rules and drove 275 miles from London to Durham despite the rules explicitly banning such journeys. In fact, that descent has been constant since then – with the exception of the point where the Covid vaccine roll out began in January 2020 which we both know was not a consequence of Brexit freedoms as you still keep claiming because

the UK was still within the EU regulations at that point. But, as our company motto states: ‘Never let the facts get in the way!’ Anyway, all that goodwill was then overturned when all the Covid parties in Downing St were held from May until December that year. Of course, Liz Truss’s short premiership saw the sharpest decline in popularity and then that fall levelled off when you took over the polling, but it never recovered properly and remains around 25 per cent at the time of writing (February 2024). If you shift to the political right then you will lose even more votes to the Labour Party but if you shift to the political left then the Reform Party (the old UKIP) will surely eat even further into your support.⁴ What to do?

Here’s what to do: read our revolutionary political theory and we guarantee you a satisfactory outcome. So, let’s start with the conventional political theory – the one that has got you into such deep water already and led to me having to respond to your WhatsApp message and save your backside. OK, so since [Machiavelli \(1532/1984\)](#) it has been assumed that political leaders always seek to obtain and retain power, doing whatever is necessary – including a lot of dodgy deals for school chums and mates’ mates. This is egregiously erroneous. [Zizek \(2009\)](#) might call this ‘ontologically incomplete’, by which he seems to mean that what we take as reality is limited by its contradictory nature, but I have northern roots and call it what it is: wrong. It has to be wrong because all the data runs in the opposite direction. You are not alone in confusing the surface of political impression for the reality that underpins it. Take Cummings again, on the surface he appears as an astute if rather unpleasant strategist who managed to secure both Brexit and the leadership of the Tory party for Boris Johnson. As a consequence, he inveigled himself into Downing St and became the ‘go to’ adviser – which is why, I assume, you’ve been talking to him. But what has happened since then to his three ‘successes’? Brexit has screwed the country and the majority now want to reverse it ([Cambridge Econometrics, 2024](#); [Henley and Goodier, 2023](#)); Johnson got unceremoniously turfed out of office by his own supporters, and you temporarily lost your own job.

The big mistake is to follow Machiavelli and to assume that political leaders seek to acquire and retain power. The reality is the opposite: they seek to avoid power or cede it if, by accident, they acquire it. Cummings’ failure was to follow Machiavellian orthodoxy and seek and retain political power for the Vote leave Campaign, Boris Johnson, and himself, but all three issues fell apart. Why? Good question, and since you ask, I will tell you why, because working beneath the surface of political jostling to seek and retain power is a much stronger force to do the opposite: to avoid power and thus any kind of responsibility. I know these things are different yet connected but the responsibility problem is much greater than the power opportunity. In effect, if the cost of power is responsibility then most politicians prefer to be in opposition – despite all indications to the contrary. So they all say they want power but look at the cock-ups they make when in power? It should be self-evident that these can only be explained when we accept that consciously or otherwise (and in many cases it’s difficult to tell the difference) political leaders don’t want power *because* it brings responsibility and they’ve got better things to do than make the world a better place. So, rather than following Niccolo Machiavelli’s dictum, you need to follow the opposite - Oloccin Illevaihcem, only that’s too much of a mouthful to say so we call it the Oloccin Strategy: don’t seek or acquire power and if you’re political opponent is even more incompetent than you are and by accident you get elected, then engage in as many rash and illogical actions as possible to ensure your supporters will remove you. This, when written in such a way, is self-evidently a better explanation for political leadership because to do otherwise is to assume that political incompetence is a capricious accident, not the very bedrock of the system.

This is where Hegelian dialectics comes in ([1832/2015](#)): progress occurs when the original idea (the thesis) is contradicted by its opposite (the antithesis) and the positive elements of both are united in the third category (the synthesis). Behind the backs of political leaders is a force that does two things: one, it makes politicians say and do things that are utterly ridiculous to ensure they never get

voted in because only idiots would vote for such stupid policies; two, it ensures that if, by chance, your opponents say and do things that are even stupider than the things you say and do, then the logic of your utterances will ensure the policies you enact are themselves so self-contradictory, so insane, and so bizarre, that the voters will reject them. This is the stuff Hegel would have articulated if he knew what he was talking about and didn't get lost in his own theorising (especially in German where the words can be longer than English sentences, so no-one knows what the hell they mean). To remind you: politics is not about getting power and taking responsibility but avoiding both. After all, why would you want to earn what Boris Johnson called 'chickenfeed' (though to be honest he was talking about the £250,000 salary for writing a newspaper column not the Prime Minister's £158,000 salary (Mulholland, 2009)), and be held to account for it so that everyone bar a few unstable sycophants hate you, when you could earn a decent-enough salary, be on tv a lot, earn a lot more on outside jobs, and never be held responsible for anything? It's obvious isn't it, now I've explained it to you, and, more importantly, it makes sense of what's been happening for ever, well at least for the last few years.

Cummings himself probably realised this after he sorted the Brexit vote and then got Johnson into power – he even admitted that Johnson was totally incompetent, but then realised that it was his fault – so what did he do? He broke Covid rules and drove to Durham, and then drove around the countryside to make sure his eyesight was good enough to drive back. Come on, any fool knows this is a load of baloney – he wanted out, and the best way to achieve that was to commit stupid misdemeanours and make sure he got caught, so Johnson would sack him, eventually. Johnson did the same, his run for leadership of the Tory Party – and the replacement PM for Theresa May – ended badly when he accidentally won, but look at his record in office: 'oven-ready Brexit deal', 'no trade border down the Irish sea', 'got all the big (Covid) decisions right' etc., – all these are blatant lies, not designed to be believed but constructed so people would be outraged, remove him from office, and allow him to avoid responsibility while getting paid large amounts of money elsewhere.

Johnson even wrote two different newspaper columns depending on whether he was going to support Brexit or the Remain campaign (Elgot, 2016), and obviously thought that since almost every economist in the country had said Brexit would be a colossal act of national self-harm (as indeed it has been), the best course of action would be to support the failing side and avoid any hint of responsibility. But then enough people believed his fabricated evidence and he accidentally won the Brexit vote - and then was responsible for it and had to do something about executing it. Check his face on the day the referendum was announced.⁵ That isn't the face of a man that glories in victory but one that says, 'oh shit, now how can I get out of responsibility for this mess?' Of course, at this point Cameron was still the Prime Minister but this was also a golden opportunity for Cameron to do a runner, and he took it on day one and resigned. It's obvious what then happened, Michael Gove – Johnson's alleged friend and fellow conspirator – came on TV and said Johnson couldn't lead the country (that's what friends are for – getting you out of the messes you end up in), and that led to Theresa May's election as head of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister. Well, it was obvious for years before that, that Johnson wasn't capable of running anything, and furthermore Johnson never paid any attention to any of his detractors in his political career, ever. But all of a sudden he looked downcast, cried a bit, complained to the head teacher about Gove the Bully, and then went on TV and said he wouldn't run for office. That left Johnson to do what he likes doing best – whinging from the back benches with no responsibility but be free to earn lots of external money. Of course, the difficulty is managing to remain on the margins of success without actually achieving it, so he had to run again for the leadership once Theresa May had failed to get the legislation through Parliament, and then tripped himself up again by accidentally beating Jeremy Hunt. That left him with a self-evident problem: how to get out of office and pronto? That's when Covid came to the

rescue, and did he respond by doing everything we might expect from a leader looking to stay in power? Of course not:

- He shook hands with covid patients despite being warned not to (Mason, 2020).
- He went to parties in Downing St when he knew that was against his own rules (Owen, 2020).
- He protected Cummings when Cummings was trying desperately to get out (Walker et al., 2020).
- He refused to publish a report about dealings between the Tories and Russia (Peat, 2021).
- He had unrecorded and unescorted meetings with an ex-KGB man (Sabbagh, 2022).
- He bought gold wallpaper for his flat in Downing St when just about everyone else was in financial trouble (Sommerlad, J. (2021).

These are not the actions of a fool, they can't be because there are too many of them – and he went to Eton and Oxford – and must therefore be amongst the brightest of the brightest that those two institutions generate: the veritable clotted cream of the double thick cream; the Crème fraiche of Blighty. No, those actions were obviously intended to generate public outrage and get him sacked. Now I'm not claiming that Johnson was consciously doing all this on purpose – that would require a degree of intelligence beyond him – but rather that, just as Hegel had suggested, history was working behind his back, not to create an ever-more rational world. No, what I'm suggesting is that that history works to help leaders avoid responsibility by encouraging them to say stupid things and thus make sure they are never elected or, if they are, make sure they are quickly ousted by saying and doing even more stupid things.

Think about Liz Truss again, who followed on from Johnson briefly; in fact, it was the shortest reign as a British Prime Minister on record at 49 days. She obviously got in by accident then realised she needed to do something drastic to get out again, so she almost sank the economy, raised the debt level and interest rates – and then was forced out of office – but with a lifetime salary (it's called the Public Duty Cost Allowance) of £115,000 pa.⁶ Now that, dear Rishi, is how to do it.

And it's not restricted to Brits. Think how Trump inadvertently beat Hillary Clinton and then had to try to ensure he failed at the next election by talking rubbish during his period of office about bleach as the solution to Covid, by threatening to pull out of NATO so Putin can invade Ukraine unmolested, by failing to build the wall or make Mexico pay for it, and he didn't make America great again (McGraw and Stein, 2021). Obviously, he can't just thank people for removing him in 2020 when he was voted out, so he made a great play about the election frauds that didn't occur and argued that having 74 million votes automatically meant he had more than Biden's 81 million votes (Sullivan and Agiesta, 2020). I mean, even a 5 year old child could see that maths was dodgy – but that's the point – he doesn't want to get power back, he just wants to revel in the publicity, the life protection, and the apparent injury to his pride. How else can you explain the litany of charges against him and his persistent mistakes in his recent speeches (Coppins, 2024)? He's got to be doing all that on purpose, hasn't he?

OK, now let's turn to you to help you understand why you got where you are and how you can save yourself. First, you can't rely on Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party, to save you. He is obviously more conscious than you are of history working behind his back because he doesn't say anything in front (except you've no idea what you're doing, but that isn't helpful to you). You need to stop him say silly things like: he wouldn't abandon the Rwanda policy, or he wouldn't invest in the public services, or he would continue the rundown of the NHS by encouraging more privatization, or we can't afford to go green (Walker et al., 2024). Indeed, it looks like his popularity is only a consequence of your unpopularity – that is, because you are regarded as incompetent then voters

assume Starmer can't be as bad. After all, as Jon Cruddas (MP for Dagenham and former Labour Party policy chief) noted, Starmer is a decent man but doesn't seem to have a 'clear sense of purpose' (Quoted in Helm, 2023: 1). All of these things are likely to turn off his supporters, especially those of the left, and that will leave him where he really wants to be – leader of the permanent opposition.

You also need to dump Cummings again. Can you imagine what would happen if, by accident, you won the next election? The economy is flatlining after 14 years of your party's control, the NHS is shattered, productivity hasn't improved for a decade, and there's no money in the coffers. No, you've got to find a way of making sure Starmer wins and then, when he's failed too, you can have another go at avoiding power. It's not all bad news, though. Some of the things you've done recently are classic examples of the Oloccin Strategy:

First, you appointed Esther McVey as Minister for Common Sense. I know you probably don't know who she is anyway but what does this say about all the other UK ministers? I don't think I need to say anything else about this. Then you OK'd a spend of between £50million and £100 million on the coronation of King Charles III, when between April 2022 and March 2023 760,000 British citizens (or 'subjects' since we retain the monarchy) use food banks.⁷ Then you spent £1bn on the disruption caused by railway strikes – that's more than it would have cost to pay the strikers what they were asking for (Topham, 2023). Then you do the same for the junior doctors. Then you appear to relate honours to party donors, and pick fights with the nurses and medical staff, whom you celebrated during covid. All good Oloccin tactics so far, but the best is yet to come.

You recently went on TV and talked about your Five Pledges, or 'People's Priorities' as you described them – though I don't recall you asking the people what they wanted you to focus on – maybe I missed it....

1. Halving inflation – unfortunately done (though quite how much that was to do with you is debateable because that's really the job of the Bank of England) and anyway – halving inflation doesn't mean more money in your pocket, it means the amount draining out is slightly less. But this is a classic Oloccin tactic – it's so flawed that it might just work to keep you out of power.
2. Growing the Economy – err no, it's flatlining. Sure, there have been significant issues to cope with (Yates, 2023): the financial crisis of 2008 (which despite your claims was not caused so much as resolved by Prime Minister Brown), austerity in the early 2010s (a direct and unnecessary burden imposed by PM Cameron and Chancellor Osborne as a way of reducing the size of the state), Brexit (a direct result of Johnson and Farage, with your personal support), and Covid, in which you supported delaying the lockdowns and even made recovery more difficult with your Eat out to Help Out scheme. No amount of tax reduction is going to stimulate economic growth, partly because the infrastructure (including the NHS) has been so denuded over the last 14 years of Conservative governments, and partly because Brexit has made any economic recovery far more difficult than necessary. But at least we are free to suffer the consequences of that decision and that's also a guaranteed vote-loser, so well done on that one.
3. Reducing Debt, err no. As for tax cutting – the British tax-payer now has the greatest tax burden on record (Partington, 2023). Starting to look like a welcome failure, isn't it?
4. Eliminate the record NHS waiting list (7.75 million) with many waiting more than 65 weeks for operations and other procedures – little chance of fixing that with the number of strikes that are currently lined up.⁸ This is definitely one to savour but you mustn't, under any circumstances, start talking to the 'Junior Doctors' on strike just in case it solves the problem, and you must keep talking about these strikers as 'juniors' or 'apprentices' because there's nothing more likely to turn voters off than this kind of petty attack.

5. Stop the (refugee) Boats (from France). Why didn't you just say 'reduce the boats?' – that's achievable, and to be fair the numbers are decreasing – but decreasing isn't the same as stopping and I want to congratulate you on avoiding that trap, and even more for recently claiming that eliminating the backlog of refugees needing a decision actually related to the 'legacy' backlog, not the total backlog (Syal, 2024). That was genius, especially when it forced the UK Statistical Authority to check your own numbers and suggest you were misleading the public. Orwell would be proud of you. Moreover, why bother focusing on this when the impact of boat people is minimal compared to legal immigrants required to try and kick start the stuttering economy? Or worry about the 90 per cent of the 'high risk' private jet landings that are not checked at all (Barrett, 2024)?

Some have argued that all this is just 'vice-signalling' – dog whistles for the right-wing voters to keep them suitably angry and give them a focus for their own predicaments. That's both true and strategically brilliant because it will ensure your right-wing competition from the Reform Party will take votes from you and guarantee your failure. See, it's history working behind your back all the time!

Even what is arguably the most important issue facing the country -though it's not on your list of priorities (the climate crisis in case you missed it) - exposes you, the country, and world to social catastrophe. I mean, you haven't even appointed a new chair for the independent committee that advises ministers on emission targets, despite that position being vacant for 18 months. As Lord Stern said, 'It seems to be yet another signal that the government does not take climate change seriously enough.' (Quoted in McKie and Helm, 2023: 5) Given that you've already authorised the next round of North Sea oil and gas drilling, that isn't so much an oversight as a blindfold to avoid seeing the approaching danger. Absolutely stunning... I sometimes wonder whether you've been reading our company's publications all the time!

Anyway, must go now. Got both Trump and Putin on the line. If you want us to help you lose the next election, then please respond – by WhatsApp, obviously!

Worst of luck in the election!

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Notes

1. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/tax/junior-doctors-nhs-planning-work-abroad-cost-taxpayers/>.
2. https://twitter.com/rhondadabryant/status/1741432862895657201?s=43&t=wPNE6BAxpz_090PPj1esCQ.
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