

Brexit: From Post-truth to Post-democracy

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Post-truth is a philosophical and political concept that refers to “the disappearance of shared objective standards for truth” and the “circuitous slippage between facts or alt-facts, knowledge, opinion, belief, and truth. **Post-democracy** is a society that continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in which they increasingly become a formal shell and where the energy and drive of the nation pass from the democratic arena into small circles of a politico-economic elite.

You can search both terms and a plethora of results are returned. This article won't look at the philosophical ideas of these very damaging concepts. The fact is, one has been around for a while and the other is now in an advanced state of operation.

It is ironic, is it not, that many members of the current British government insist that the EU is somehow 'undemocratic' just as it demonstrates how undemocratic it is itself. Today, elected MPs, broadcasters and political commentators all talk of little else apart from Britain's ongoing democratic crisis - a manufactured crisis that left the door wide open for the new era of post-democracy to take root.

From post-truth...

There was a time when if a politician got caught with his pants down - he resigned and fell away from public life in disgrace - and it wasn't so long ago that the cash-for-questions scandal was very influential in the fall of the John Major government in 1997. Just a decade ago, the Prime Minister would have been forced to stand down for a scandal involving a pole-dancing 'entrepreneur' receiving taxpayers cash and when his colleagues involved in the Brexit donors-for-access affair got caught on film, it would have rocked a sleaze ridden government to its core. Not today.

Nearly a decade ago, David Cameron's election manifesto turned out to be not much more than a parchment of lies. From promises of building hundreds of thousands of starter homes, launching free childcare, a social care cap, making government the most transparent ever to no top-down reorganisations of the NHS - all were just soundbites designed to deceive. With Theresa May she stoked up the so-called 'health-tourism' fantasy ([that the Royal College of Physicians said barely existed](#)) and then when in power pushed the slogan 'Brexit means Brexit' while [secretly funding](#) corporations out of taxpayers money who were threatening to leave if she achieved it - just to stay in No10.

But Boris Johnson makes his former colleagues at the helm of Britain look like amateurs. His illustrious and distinguished career has derived solely from his own campaigns of disinformation and propaganda. From fantastical made-up stories like bendy bananas to misinformation campaigns of £350 million a week on a bus to the propaganda of 'taking

back control.' Project Fear, do-or-die and 'dead-in-a-ditch' – are all fatuous and meaningless slogans made up to keep the electoral numbers up.

The post-truth world of today centres around politics and populists. Politicians glibly talk of law and order whilst presiding over racial violence and nationalism that threatens the very fabric of society. It's a means to their own ends – as is an unelected Prime Minister who aimed to shut down parliamentary democracy, claiming it was acting in the national interest. There is an alarming political trajectory that should worry all normal thinking adults in Britain.

Examples of the government consistently duping the public would be distorting [unemployment](#) numbers, [homelessness](#) and the [endless Brexit lies](#).

One recent very public example of the new era comes from within No 10 Downing Street. Dominic Cummings, not only threatened to end the career of elected MPs if they didn't toe the Brexit line – but achieved exactly that when they didn't. Cummings (who many skulking the corridors of Westminster think is running the entire BJ strategy) also reportedly told a meeting of special advisers that the mission of this government is to take Britain out of the EU on 31 October **“by any means necessary.”** That in itself has undertones of something more sinister given the language is derived from a definition that then puts the strategy – [“open all to all available tactics for the desired ends, including violence.”](#) We already know he ultimately wants the destruction of institutions such as Britain's civil service, the EU and the UN. Cummings genuinely thinks and often promotes the view that real chaos is the only route to real change. And given the state architecture of mass surveillance and laws designed to protect the government from over-reach is now in the hands of an anti-establishment anarchist like Cummings – who knows what might happen. The home of chaos comes from a lack of truth.

To post-democracy...

Throughout the furore of Brexit, many have forgotten that the government is pushing hard to change the [Espionage Act](#) that would jail journalists and whistleblowers as foreign state spies. The government has, through its own efforts, now received recommendations for a “future-proofed” new Espionage Act that would do exactly that. Today, the original expenses scandal could not be published, and even the Cambridge Analytica/Facebook Brexit scandal would see the majority of editors refusing to go to print. The example of the Snowden files and GCHQ destroying hard-drives at the Guardian is yet more evidence.

Journalists are already [fighting a war against the state](#) over the protection of their sources and using ever more sophisticated tools to remain out of the reach of GCHQ and agencies of the police. Those tools – especially encryption enabled – are being attacked by the state via legislation demanding ‘backdoor’ access – just another hallmark of a post-democratic society.

[Legal professional privilege](#) has all but been reduced to nothing in Britain as a direct result of very serious overreach by the state. Privilege doesn't exist to protect lawyers or clients – it exists to make the justice system work. Spying on legal privilege negotiations to illegally defend the state from paying compensation to, say [victims of torture at the hands of the state](#) is no demonstration of a functioning democracy.

And as is now well known, the government has introduced the [most intrusive civil society](#)

[surveillance powers](#) in any democratic society in the world. It is, to all intents and purposes now a techno-Stasi state. As this [article](#) goes to great pains to point out:

“The government can now mine data for any purpose it deems necessary. It can now harvest and manipulate it to shut down oppositional voices, hack journalists information and their sources, silence and imprison whistleblowers, stop peaceful protests and demonstrations - anything at all.”

The ‘chilling effect’ of surveillance on the right to freedom of assembly and now, even the deep monitoring of entire political movements at the grassroots level, the misuse and force of mass arrests adds considerable weight to that chilling. To be photographed, have data captured, being present or arrested at a protest can mean the end of careers for a myriad of government workers, such as teachers, nurses or working at your local council offices. **“UK police have treated legitimate campaigning activities in a similar way to their response to organised criminal networks: by building profiles on the size, structures, leadership, individuals and alliances of campaign groups”** - so [says](#) Britain’s privacy watchdog.

The result is that an illegal form of ‘blacklisting’ is alive and kicking. Outlawed by the Employment Relations Act 1999 (**Blacklists**) Regulations 2010 - the government and its agencies have been caught red-handed - again. The government is using the complex architecture of the law to suppress the truth that thousands have been denied employment as a result of state agencies or their proxies. In just one example - from the [2018 State of Surveillance](#) report by BigBrotherWatch - *“a judge-led undercover Policing inquiry followed revelations about the ‘Special Demonstration Squad’ has been little more than a disaster with no evidence heard in its first three years and participants boycotting the process because of a lack of trust. It is not expected to report until 2023.”* The point is, technology has replaced the SDS when it was supposedly shut down. And as the report goes on to say - **“Meanwhile, the monitoring of workers, unionists and especially whistleblowers continues.”**

Turning frontline workers into border guards is nothing more than turning the general public into state informants. The governments’ commitment to ensuring Britain has a ‘hostile environment’ for undocumented migrants may well be supported by the general public if that was the only reason it was being used, but it is not. From the [same report](#) - *“These public servants are transformed - often unwillingly and unknowingly - into spies, made to serve their part in a system of targeted surveillance designed to monitor undocumented migrants’ every interaction with essential frontline services. Even seriously ill people and children are seen as fair game by the Government in its determination to aid deportations at any human cost. And, in order for undocumented migrants to be denied access to goods and services, we all end up having to show photo ID to do things as mundane as registering with a GP or renting a flat.”*

Electoral suppression through voter ID is another good example of our post-democratic world. The headline from Britain’s [Democratic Audit](#) only this week says its all - **“Requiring voter ID in British elections suggests the government is adopting US ‘voter suppression’ tactics.”**

Promising the fastest-growing protest movement in the world - **Extinction Rebellion** - that

the government will declare a climate crisis, swiftly act to combat it and then allow Britain's capital to become a ring-fenced police state where democratic rights and freedoms are met with mass arrest is not democracy. Forcing people to [show ID as they walk to work](#) as they did on Wednesday (16th Oct) is not democracy. Will members of XR be met with the right-wing goons of capitalism in open street fights – the typical tactic of the security services and their many known false flags? We'll see what happens.

Ignoring international law is another tendency of non-democratic or authoritarian states and Britain is now actively promoting itself as one. The [Chagos Islands](#) is but one shining example. Selling weapons to countries that flaunt international laws and the continued solitary confinement of Julian Assange are other examples. [Extrajudicial assassinations and forcing statelessness](#) of British citizens, like it not, is the trademark of state lawlessness and democracy dissolving.

Does jailing journalists and whistleblowers, closing down legal privilege, blacklisting, forming an army of state informants, enforcing electoral suppression and designing mass civil society surveillance sound like democracy to you?

Terror laws brought in by the Cameron government, [laws designed to catch terrorists](#) and organised crime networks to [track down people](#) who dodge the BBC licence fee, [hundreds of councils](#) have been authorised (in one year 9,607 times) to hunt down non-payment of council tax and seven public authorities, including the BBC, refused under the Freedom of Information Act to disclose why or how often they had used these powers. The BBC now refuses 48% of such requests.

All of these examples add to a trajectory where post-truths and lack of transparency lead directly to post-democracy. Just so you know – **“the lack of concern of the wishes or opinions of others and the strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom”** – is just one of many definitions of a state with authoritarian tendencies.

Hybrid regime

The government of David Cameron (enthusiastically assisted by Home Secretary Theresa May) consistently introduced legislation aimed directly at dismantling our rights and civil liberties in the name of national security. In the hands of this current government, the aim will be to deconstruct human rights laws and civil society protections. This is amply evidenced by Boris Johnson's Brexit deal. Its very design is about Britain adopting the [Singapore Scenario](#). Even if it gets a green-light, because more promises are made, they will be reneged upon because this government no longer believes that the rule of law is as important as the unassailable power it is building for itself for the future. And like all non-democratic states; treaties, contracts and agreements at domestic and international levels mean little. Here is a revelation, the proof of post-democracy, and if it is true, and there's no reason to believe it is not given the nature of the source, Brexit does not mean Brexit – it means something else.

Former UK ambassador Craig Murray presents us with insider information on the current Brexit deal:

“There is currently considerable alarm in the FCO that Legal Advisers have been asked about the circumstances constituting force majeure which would justify the UK in breaking a EU Withdrawal Agreement in the future. The EU did not fall for Johnson’s idea that a form of Northern Irish “backstop” would only come into effect with the future sanction of Stormont, as this effectively gives a hardline unionist veto, and Barnier was not born yesterday. The situation that Johnson and Raab appear now to contemplate is agreeing a “backstop” now to get Brexit done, but then not implementing the agreed backstop when the time comes due to “force majeure”.

There are two major problems with this line of thinking. The first is that it will give unionists an incentive to foment disorder in order to justify breaking the backstop agreement – indeed there is a concern that might be the tacit understanding Johnson is reaching with the DUP. Remember the British state conspired with the same people to murder the lawyer Pat Finucane and destroyed the evidence as [recently as 2002](#).

The second problem is one of bad faith negotiation, and this is what is troubling the diplomats of the FCO. To negotiate an agreement with the secret intention of breaking it in future is a grossly immoral proceeding, and undermines the whole principle of good international relations. I should like to be able to say that I am sure this cannot be the intention. But when I look at Johnson, Raab and Cummings, I am really not so sure at all. It is possible that Johnson will succeed in the apparently insurmountable challenge of securing a deal all parties can agree, by the simple strategy of promising some parties he has no intention of honouring it.”

You might want to sit and think about the implications of what Murray has said there for a few minutes. In brief – Brexit means Brexit for some but for everyone else, it means something entirely different.

This is the British government of today. A government built on a foundation of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda. From the acceleration of post-truth in 2010 to post-democracy in a decade. Quite soon you won’t just lose your civil liberty, you’ll lose much more as [extreme capitalism and corporatism strangle](#) the life out of what we understand to be democracy.

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