

Britain has succumbed to the the tyranny of the minority



Allister Heath writes in the *Telegraph*, republished in the [*National Post*](#):

LONDON – Britain’s deranged war on cars, our looming ban on gas boilers, the debanking scandal, the failure to prosecute crime, the attempted cancellation of women, the sabotage of the Brexit agenda, the scale of migration: welcome to anti-democratic Britain, where the beleaguered majority is increasingly subject to the whims of an entitled, activist elite that often seems to despise the people over which it exercises so much power.

All the policies listed above share a devastating commonality: they are deeply unpopular, and would be crushed in a referendum after a fair campaign, were the politicians

courageous enough to grant the public a say (in the case of Brexit, they did, of course, and continue to this day to resist implementing the revolutionary change implied by the vote).

In a truly majoritarian society, one where the *demos* actually exercised *kratos*, no form of crime would be tolerated, and certainly not burglaries or muggings. Nobody would dare to indoctrinate school children with extreme trans ideology, and the green agenda would be centred around urgent technological innovation rather than seeking to prevent working people from flying to holidays in the sun.

Yet we live in a very different political reality, one in which public opinion is flagrantly disregarded whenever it doesn't align with the views of the ruling class. Westminster has become cartelized: the large parties are committed to an unrealistic dash to net zero, refuse to discuss the gargantuan cost involved and omit to mention that Britain's carbon emissions are about three per cent of China's. On the great subjects of our time – family policy, the size of the state, the NHS and even planning rules – there is little difference between Tory, Labour and Lib Dem MPs, disenfranchising millions.

The intellectual conformity is stultifying, and has been reinforced by the emergence of an all-powerful Blob, the nexus of mandarins, policy advisers, quangocrats and other government agents, a class of “public servants” who don't really like the public and are increasingly convinced that they have a constitutional duty to constrain and contain elected politicians. They are experts at delay, prevarication and lawfare, and are cheered on by the left-wing activists who have taken over the legal profession, our cultural institutions, academia, charities and even many big companies.

Thus even in the rare instances when the Tories attempt to think the unthinkable and respond to public opinion, as with

the Channel crossings, the system does its best to block any change, empowered by quasi-constitutional legislation such as the Equality Act, the Climate Change Act and our membership of the ECHR.

The upshot is an extraordinary disempowerment of the electorate: is it any wonder that some voters fear we risk becoming a democracy in name only? Take the absurd war on cars: a tiny minority of activists, council planners, devolved administrations and ministers are seeking to discourage the mode of transport that the vast majority of the population relies on. Or consider immigration, which is a lot higher than the public would like: all potential solutions to reduce numbers while preserving the economy are lambasted as gimmicks, meaningless or self-evidently stupid. The Tories have promised to cut numbers in every single one of their manifestos since at least the 1990s, and yet aren't even pretending to try any longer. How does this not disastrously undermine trust in politicians?

Until recently, all parts of British society bought into the democratic ethos developed after the great voting reforms of the 19th and 20th century, or at least paid lip service to it. It was deemed snobbish to dismiss the views of ordinary voters out of hand, and borderline insane to seek to reverse the expansion of the consumer society.

That consensus, already left fragile by the Blairite legal revolution and his massive increase in the number of university graduates, was finally shattered after the 2016 Brexit referendum. Most of our institutions are now controlled by a pseudo-meritocratic elite convinced that only it can prevent the masses from reverting to ignorance, racism and prejudice.

Our new ruling class is paternalistic, messianic even: in a post-religious age, it has taken on the role of priest and saviour of the common people. It still occasionally feels the

need to legitimize unpopular ideas by pretending that they garner majority support, hence all the polls “proving” that people support net zero. Yet when asked to pay the price in terms of actual cash or drastically reduced convenience, the public immediately rebels.

There was a time when we worried, rightly, that the tyranny of the majority was the main threat to freedom and prosperity; today, it is the tyranny of the minority that poses the greatest danger. Our new task is to prevent the majority from being oppressed: how do we stop the capture of every institution by the radical left? How do we make Parliament more representative, and reduce the power of the Blob? One answer would be to use a lot more referenda, as the Swiss do; another would be radical reform of the civil service, turning ministers into CEOs with proper control over mandarins.

I’m well aware that the majority can have bad or evil ideas, or vote for maniacs. We need to retain – and in some cases, further develop – protections against majoritarian abuses, even if some of the current ones are no longer fit for purpose or have been hijacked. Elites have helped drive much good social change in recent decades, including by fighting racism and prejudice against all sorts of minorities.

But the pendulum has swung too far away from majoritarian rule, and too much power handed to social engineers. Today, the problem doesn’t lie with the public, which is largely tolerant and liberal-conservative, but with the elites, who have become authoritarian and anti-democratic, captured by wokery and a dislike of material aspiration.

What we call populism, in the current British context, is really the majority trying to reassert itself. Voters are developing a new form of class consciousness; “motorists” are becoming a political force. The Ulez fiasco is acting as a gateway, normalizing opposition to other excesses.

The message to politicians is clear: start listening to the voters again, or else Britain will soon face a popular uprising orders of magnitude greater – and more unpredictable – than Brexit.