

On human rights versus trade deals the UK's just got it...

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Yesterday [I noted the anti-democratic nature of tax havens](#). I should have added that the UK is, of course, an active tax haven as well as the protector of many more.

My argument on the issue is that tax havens permit global capital to move in an unregulated fashion [in what I have called the secrecy space](#). Tax is just one of the regulations abused. The states that permit this, the UK included, show a weak commitment to democracy. I would level the accusation against all UK governments that have known of the risk, although it is definitely one that has increased in recent years.

Today I note the UK has refused a full visa to Chinese artist Ai Weiwei saying he has been convicted of a criminal offence in China and lied by failing to mention the fact on his visa application.

There is just one problem with this claim by the UK. It is not true. As the FT notes, Ai Weiwei has not been convicted of any offence in China. He was held, but not convicted.

And as the FT also notes (and I cannot insert links for some reason this morning):

So what's this really all about? Is it really that the UK is so keen on giving capital freedom it will make up offences a person has not committed to prevent one of its critics access to this country, all for the benefit of a trade deal? If so this is neoliberalism gone mad. And the UK has revealed itself to have got the balance of its duties very wrong. Which might well be called typical tax haven behaviour.