

# Funding the Future

Article URL

Published: January 12, 2026, 5:02 pm

---

Philip Stephens [notes in the FT this morning](#) that:

*The anxious chatter in Europe is about an axis of authoritarianism. Poland is becoming the new Hungary. The analogy is inexact. Viktor Orbán, the autocratic prime minister of Hungary, is an embarrassing irritant. [Poland is a serious player](#) in the geopolitics of the continent.*

His article is subtitled:

*Democracy, as often happens with authoritarians, is being redefined as the will of the majority*

Stephens is right: what is happening in Poland is worrying. But let's not ignore the threat to democracy is very real in the UK too, and from a government that definitely does not have majority support. As [the Guardian notes in an editorial today](#):

*It is normal for a party in power to want to stay there. But there are also protocols that underpin British democracy and an uncodified ethos of fair play that sustains the legitimacy of any electoral system. Taken in isolation, any of the steps this government has taken to avoid scrutiny and queer the institutional pitch against the opposition would be disreputable. Taken as a package, they are downright dangerous.*

I agree with that. The threats to democracy, freedom, the right to strike, and to free speech are very high now. And that should be of concern to people right across the political divide.