

This is an election where the future of British democra...

Published: January 20, 2026, 7:02 am

I know enough about paranoia to not use the term lightly. For a genuine sufferer it is a ghastly and disabling condition. And there's no sign that Theresa May is paranoid even if she does like to give the impression that everyone is out to get her.

She's not paranoid because that's true: opposition political parties are opposing her.

And the EU is determined that the UK should pay a high price for Brexit.

In both cases that their job. It is what they are required to do.

What is afflicting May is something much more significant. I guess it's best called mendacity. What she, quite inappropriately, believes is that these people are sabotaging her, and the UK, when all they have done is disagree with her.

She is suffering a delusion that her interests and those of the UK are the same.

Worse, she has extended that to the idea, propagated (I am sure without coincidence) in the Mail, that to oppose her is to sabotage Britain. It is as if to be something other than a Tory is to now be treacherous.

A week or two ago I was willing to believe that this was not the real line and more just an uncomfortable passing suggestion. But it is now obvious that is not the case. The contempt for everyone who does not share her view is what now defines May. And it's deeply dangerous.

She's already come for immigrants, of course: that happened when she was in the Home Office.

Now she's coming for the EU and it's people.

And she is headed for parliament, where in her opinion her version of Brexit must be passed unopposed, whatever the cost to parliamentary democracy.

The march on the universities was, of course, already begun under Cameron, but we can be sure it will continue apace.

And we can also be sure that a large Tory majority will be used to decimate employee and trade union rights whilst free speech, already at risk, will take another kicking.

For all practical purposes May is intent on using Brexit to build what will, as far as she can make it, be a one party state. And most of the media are complicit in the act.

A weak and unco-ordinated left helps her, of course. I won't pretend otherwise. But I don't think that's the big issue. That big issue is her willingness to use the powers of the state to deny choice. That's not just deeply illiberal, it directly confronts human rights and belief in democracy.

I thought May was talking nonsense when she said this was the most important election in our lifetime. Now I think she is right. This is an election where the future of British democracy will be decided, and it's not looking good.