

When all that is left of democracy is the facade

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There was quite a lot of hostile reaction to comments I made on this blog yesterday, albeit all from the usual pattern of new commentators who appear here on one-off bases to post such commentary and then disappear again. One might call the members of the 'usual suspects': those who make up the right-wing trolling community.

Whilst that was going on I was reflecting, in odd moments between work, on the state of politics in the UK. This comment from Lord Sumption, at [the conclusion of his Reith lectures](#) last year came to mind.

There is already plenty of gloomy speculation about how long democracy can last against an adverse economic background without my adding to it. Prophets are usually wrong, but one thing I will prophesy; we will not recognise the end of democracy when it comes, if it does. Advanced democracies are not overthrown, there are no tanks on the street, no sudden catastrophes, no brash dictators or braying mobs, instead, their institutions are imperceptibly drained of everything that once made them democratic. The labels will still be there, but they will no longer describe the contents, the facade will still stand, but there will be nothing behind it, the rhetoric of democracy will be unchanged, but it will be meaningless - and the fault will be ours.

I rather strongly suspect that Lord Sumption and I do not agree on a great many things. But on this I think he is right. We are fast approaching the point where all that is left of our democracy is the facade.

We may not be quite there, yet. I cling to hope. But it is only hope.

And this is what the battle really is all about now: it is a fight for democracy itself, and those who come here to troll, and most on the right-wing of politics (where I would also place Lord Sumption, making him an exception to my argument) clearly now only have a desire for the facade.

We are reduced to such a fight. I did not expect it in my lifetime. But that is what we have got. And unless we do fight Sumption is right: the fault is ours.