

Most people in the UK strongly support mask wearing, bu...

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I know all the limitations with opinion polls, but they have some uses. This from YouGov is fascinating:

<https://twitter.com/YouGov/status/1412074455141163012?s=20>

Let's allow margin for error, and suggest that what this means is that the vast majority of people do not agree with the government's policy on masks.

I have three thoughts. The first is on why they are doing this if their own polling suggests that this is the case (and you can be sure that they have done that polling). I suggest that what Johnson is deliberately doing is pitting those who eschew masks against those who wish to perpetuate their use in a reckless culture war. As Tim Snyder, Yale professor of history and an expert on fascism would suggest, like Goebbels he understands that his power stems from division and chaos, which is precisely what he is seeking to promote.

Second, how long is it in that case before we see intimidation against those wearing masks becoming commonplace? I do expect it, and soon.

Third, what happens in that case when this policy backfires? It will for a number of reasons. The most obvious is because cases will spiral out of control (as the government itself predicts) requiring that mask-wearing become compulsory again. The second is that so many will feel threatened by unmasking that they will not go out and there will be an effective lockdown again, with all the economic consequences that follow without any support for business being available. I see that as quite likely. I also see that as a quite likely as a rational response by many to what is proposed. And I also think that if there is stress arising from this relaxation, as is likely, including around those businesses that will, entirely reasonably and quite rationally continue to ask for their customers to wear masks (as I am sincerely hoping will actually happen on public transport, for example) then new measures to enforce the right to impose that request will have to be taken.

The reality is that people like mask-wearing because they know it improves their safety and the safety of others. They would appear to be in the majority. That may not appear to be the case when out, but the mask wearers are not out as much, of course. But I cannot see the stress that the government is deliberately creating on this issue being sustainable. Brexit and the 'woke' wars are deeply damaging, but don't directly hurt enough people to create a backlash. This issue does; it impacts everyone. And if, with its deliberate 'freedom day' rhetoric the government incites stress in society as a consequence - which is the intention of that language - then I cannot see how the resulting pressures can be contained.

I imagine a right-wing minority will be angry and very vocal in pursuit of their right to not wear a mask. I cannot see them taking readily to the inevitable reimposition of mask-wearing. And I can see that anger spilling over into ugliness, and all because the government will have deliberately created that risk. Where does that lead to?

Ask why it is that the government is now rushing through law to make peaceful protest much harder, right now?

And wonder too why it is that they want to control law-abiding citizens by limiting time-honoured rights?

And then appreciate whose side they are on. This government is on the side of the minority who wish, through their recklessness and indifference, to impose their will on others. And it is doing all it can now to make sure that can happen. I fear that this is going to get very scary, and soon. But I will still wear a mask.