

## Johnson v the BBC

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The BBC has always been a part of my life. That, of course, will be the case for just about every person in the UK now alive. For many of us BBC radio and television has simply been part of our lived experience. As such it is the backdrop to who we are. In very many ways it will define into what generation, or even sub-generation, we fit. You can pretty much age decades of people on the basis of who were the Blue Peter presenters when they were young. If you are my age you could do the same for Radio 1 DJ's, who presented Top of the Pops and if you can recall recounting Monty Python stories when series were not available on catch-up.

It is, therefore, a shock to realise that the Conservatives really are intent on destroying the BBC. That is most especially the case when the government itself recognises the importance of the institution. It noted in its Integrated Review published in July 2021 [that the UK is:](#)

*A soft power superpower: 3rd ranked soft power in the world; The BBC is the most trusted broadcaster worldwide, reaching 468m people every week, in 42 languages; The British Council operates in over 100 countries*

This rare competitive advantage is to apparently be sacrificed to save Boris Johnson. It is a bargain hardly worth thinking about.

Saying this, I am aware that not everyone is a fan of BBC News. That, most especially, includes the Conservatives, who seem to think it the national output for a woke elite. Those on the left who wish to criticise it might need to take note of that. I do. It might suggest that however bizarre the BBC's notion of balance might be, it is not the left alone who take offence.

But even without the news – and I do not use it a great deal for that – the price paid for the BBC is fair. All that is not fair is that this is a poll tax.

I agree that there is a need for the reform of BBC funding. Those on benefits should not be paying. Those over 70 should not be paying either, because it is simply too costly to differentiate those who can still afford to pay after that age, and anyway, they above all

others are dependent upon the BBC for much of their contact with the world, which makes the price well worth paying.

What will never be worthwhile is the wanton destruction of this national asset, including by its enforced commercialisation and the inclusion of adverts, whose existence is in direct contravention of the need to build a sustainable, non-consumer focused society.

We need a BBC for entertainment, education, the news and to provide the soft power it delivers. Nothing else can deliver that. It needs more taxpayer funding to meet the needs of society and to be fairly funded, not less. And what we must never do is let a bunch of arrogant neoliberals destroy it, which is what they are seeking to do, all to favour the Murdoch empire to buy support for their re-election.