

Does the coup at the BBC matter?

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Is [there a coup going on at the BBC](#), as many of its staff suggested in a meeting yesterday? Of course there is. Not only is that apparent in plain sight, as senior staff are toppled for what are, in truth, relatively minor errors, but the fact that they have been brought down by the BBC Board is clear. Deborah Turness, in particular, seems to have suggested that with her defiant comments.

Nor should we be surprised. The far-right agenda does, as Tim Snyder suggested in his book *On Tyranny*, require that truth be delegitimised. This always starts with attacks on independent truth-making institutions such as the press, academia, and civil society, as we have seen Trump do. And then, when facts have been made contingent, experts suspect, and history negotiable, the institutions that once served as referents lose authority, which is the fascist aim.

As [Hannah Arendt](#) put it in a 1973 interview:

The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that people are not informed; how can you have an opinion if you are not informed? If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer. This is because lies, by their very nature, have to be changed, and a lying government has constantly to rewrite its own history. On the receiving end you get not only one lie—a lie which you could go on for the rest of your days—but you get a great number of lies, depending on how the political wind blows. And a people that no longer can believe anything cannot make up its mind. It is deprived not only of its capacity to act but also of its capacity to think and to judge. And with such a people you can then do what you please.

Of course, those pursuing what appear to be closely coordinated far-right agendas, funded by the ultra-wealthy, are staging a coup against the BBC as a consequence, precisely because, for all its faults, it is one of the most trusted media organisations anywhere. Taking down the BBC is their ultimate prize, and that is why Trump is going for it. One little mistake, and they are seeking to discredit it in its entirety, to replace it

with their falsehoods. If the BBC's staff did not think there was a coup underway, they should not be working there: it is their job to spot such things, and we should believe them.

And why is it happening? That should be obvious. It is so that the economic and political power structure of the wealthy can benefit. When truth is unstable, accountability fades. Financial interests, corporate media interests, oligarchs and party machines can act in the shadows, manipulating narratives while avoiding challenge. A media environment deprived of factual anchors becomes fertile ground for rent-seeking, propaganda and exclusionary politics. We should, in that case, be worried.

First, this process corrodes democracy. If public debate lacks shared facts, then it becomes a contest of shouting rather than reasoned argument, and power wins by force or by spectacle rather than persuasion.

Second, it deepens inequality. Those with the resources to shape narratives, whether they be big tech, media empires, or wealthy interest groups, gain the advantage, whilst ordinary citizens become passive and deliberately ill-equipped to challenge the dominant story.

Third, this then undermines state capacity and accountability. When facts are disputed, then budgets, taxation, public services, and regulation become contestable. The logic starts with the claim that we cannot trust the data, and then we cannot trust the press. It is just a stepping stone to the claim that we cannot trust the state. Private capture of the interests of the state follows, as it already is in the USA, and public institutions are rapidly hollowed out, as is clearly the aim at the BBC.

Fourth, this, of course, fuels extremism and exclusion. A disoriented public becomes susceptible to simplistic stories of victimhood, enemy creation, nostalgia, and strongman solutions. These are being played out everywhere.

The fight at the BBC is, then, existential. For all its faults, the BBC is on the front line of the fight for the truth. That means that it, its journalists and the idea of public service broadcasting within transparent institutions must be reasserted now, despite any reservations we have.

Second, we must reform the media economy. We must confront disinformation. Regulation, public funding and new models of non-profit journalism are part of the answer.

Third, we must democratise truth-making. Citizens must be equipped not only to receive information but to question, investigate and test it. Media literacy must be elevated from a niche educational topic to having the status of a core civic competency. Media studies used to be thought of as a joke: it isn't. It is vital to democracy.

Fourth, tie the truth to economic justice. The faithful commitment to factual reality is not separate from debates about who pays tax, who controls markets, and who shapes the public sphere. If truth collapses, then how we understand public revenue, state capacity, and redistribution collapses too. A politics of economic justice must reclaim the terrain of fact and reason.

Finally, we need to mobilise political agency. This is not a technocratic exercise. The fight for truth is a political struggle: against oligarchic media owners, corporate capture, and authoritarian impulses. Our politicians must act, and if they do not, we should. We have a right to know.

We live in a time when the assumption that there is truth, that facts matter, and that the media can tell something approximate to the real world is under sustained assault. The fascist agenda does not always manifest as marching boots; as often it works by eroding the factual world and the shared civic space. Arendt's warning remains urgent: once the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world is being destroyed, politics becomes unmoored.

The challenge for us is clear. The need is to restore and defend the ground of factual truth in our media environment. We must tie truth to economic and social justice, rebuilding state capacity, media independence and civic literacy. We must ensure that democracy is not an idle ritual but a lived reality grounded in reason, accountability and shared reality. In doing so, we reclaim the conviction that truth matters, that people matter and that the state and society can work for all.

Those who care about economic justice, media justice, and democratic reform must recognise that truth is not a luxury. It is the essential foundation of the politics we say we want and the politics we desperately need.

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