Fury of the silent majority is driving a global Right-wing counter-revolution

Across the Western world, anger at a woke ruling elite is benefiting the Right – apart from in Britain

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These are not happy times. Across the West, the vast majority of voters are fed up with the status quo, furious at the political class and desperate for alternatives. They believe society to be broken, that the post-industrial economy and globalisation generally aren’t working for them, and are angry at the vast cultural, social and technological changes that they feel have been foisted upon them.

Almost wherever one looks, from New Zealand to the Netherlands, hundreds of millions no longer feel in control, valued or even consulted by the self-satisfied ruling class. In the UK, 70 per cent believe the country is moving in the wrong direction, a YouGov poll reveals. An NBC poll found 74 per cent of Americans saying their country is on the wrong track.

We have entered the lengthiest period of prolonged popular disenchantment since the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of democratic politics, a disturbing state of affairs that urgently requires addressing if countries aren’t to fall prey to demagogues. It has become rational to be pessimistic, especially when elections don’t change anything.

Life expectancy may have peaked; economic growth has been feeble for years, as have real wages; certain groups have seen their prospects plunge especially severely; home ownership is increasingly out of reach; the family is under extreme pressure, and women are having far fewer children than they tell pollsters they would like; loneliness is exploding as it becomes harder to form and stay in long-term relationships; secularisation has left an unfilled spiritual void across the West that is being met by dysfunctional ideologies and social movements; and crime is far too high.

In many countries, university over-expansion has created a toxic two-tier society, fuelling elite overproduction. Woke storm-troopers have seized control of culture, education and business across the English-speaking world, imposing nihilistic gender extremism and critical race theories. The governing classes have got it shockingly wrong on many other issues, from foreign policy to Covid to money-printing, and never atone for their mistakes.

In Europe, including Britain, there is a popular consensus that there has been and remains too much immigration. In France and several other countries, integration is widely understood to have failed. There is growing scepticism of the rush to net zero: while Western publics are very concerned about climate change, they aren’t prepared to see their
living standards decimated to deal with it. There is an increased suspicion of the surveillance society and of the war against cash, and a growing urban-suburban clash.

This sense of alienation is especially prevalent among the working and lower middle classes, as well as the young, but no element of society is immune from it, other than perhaps multi-millionaires. As ever in times of dislocation, a small minority has embraced outright conspiracy theories (such as on 9/11) or despicable prejudice (such as anti-Semitism), fanned by rabble-rousers with no real solutions.

But even for the sensible majority, the belief in progress that used to define the Western psyche has faded, with hope replaced by despair, bitterness and fear. The political phenomenon of our times is mass discontent, and yet this crisis continues to be largely ignored by an unempathetic ruling class. Its only answer is more of the same: higher taxes, more social-democratic tinkering, more power to unaccountable bureaucracies such as the EU or WHO, increased immigration, and even greater social engineering.

In the past, when the ruling elites were conservative, such estrangement might have led the public into the arms of the Left. Contemporary elites are centre-Left utopian technocrats, and today's counter-revolutionaries are on the Right. Almost everywhere, that is where the populist energy, the desire for change, lies.

In America, Oliver Anthony, a previously unknown musician who has shot to fame with Rich Men North of Richmond, symbolises this shift. He rails against low pay, welfarism, state-subsidised obesity, woke social control and rich Left-wing elites. His song, now number one on Apple ahead of Taylor Swift, encapsulates how Right-wing populism has become the anti-establishment movement globally. It is no wonder that the Republican party has been taken over: even if Donald Trump is destroyed, his second and third-placed rivals, Ron DeSantis and Vivek Ramaswamy, are revolutionaries.

The latter two are great, but not all of the Right-wingers riding the international populist wave are good news. Some would be a disaster; others fantastic. Some rising parties are anti-capitalist, a grave error. In other cases, public concerns about the volume of immigration are being hijacked by politicians with an atavistic hatred of the other. Germany is in deep trouble, thanks to Angela Merkel, but it is hugely troubling, including for historical reasons, that the AfD is getting 22 per cent of the vote. Marine Le Pen has moderated her policies, but I'm unclear how her statist economics would save France.

Yet the global Right-wing revolution is gaining ground regardless. In Italy, Giorgia Meloni is prime minister. In the Netherlands, the anti-net zero farmers' party has surged. Across the
Continent, including in Scandinavia, mainstream parties are adopting once unthinkable policies on immigration. In Spain, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, a rising star, is advocating Thatcherite populism. In New Zealand, the centre-Right is ahead in the polls and the libertarian ACT party has rocketed. In Argentina, one leading presidential contender is an anarcho-capitalist. In Paraguay, the Right-winger Santiago Peña has won the presidency. Benjamin Netanyahu regained power last December.

There are, of course, exceptions to the global shift to the Right: Brazil, where Lula's neo-communists are back, and, of course, Britain, thanks to Tory uselessness. Brexit was the first domino to fall, the start of what will prove to be many international counter-revolutions against the Blob. The Tory party had a golden opportunity to channel this insurgency into a mainstream yet drastic programme of renewal. Boris Johnson could have been in power for a decade, yet he, together with Rishi Sunak, blew it, embracing net zero and social democratic profligacy and failing to control immigration and the public sector.

Keir Starmer will win, and then seek to impose Left-wing solutions on to an increasingly Right-wing world.

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