

# Democracy Sold?

by [Nikos Akritas](#) (February 2024)



Man Reading Newspaper, Hugo Scheiber, c. 1918

If I were to tell you there was a corporation openly treating women as less than a man's equal operating in your country right now, what would you do? First of all you wouldn't believe me, because if such discrimination were so blatant, the social mores and legal system of the country would put a swift end to it. There would be an outcry and public shaming of that corporation through the press, and nobody on the political spectrum, right or left, would seek to defend it.

Punitive action would follow, financial and penal. The woke and the sensible would be united in their condemnation.

What if I told you that same corporation practised racial discrimination? That black people were not treated the same as their lighter skinned counterparts and suffered long hours of work, for very low pay, without an adequate break or that the conditions under which any break were taken made it obsolete (for example, having to walk so far to the nearest place to sit and eat or take a toilet break that just the walk there and back took up all of that break time—never mind the time taken to eat or answer the call of nature)?

What if I told you that in that corporation, brown people only fared a tiny bit better and those from the Far East not much better than that? Would you report that corporation and take pride in the fact you helped bring it to justice and were instrumental in seeking punishment for such a nefarious entity?

What if I told you that same corporation refused to recognise homosexuality, or any other form of sexual identity other than straight male or female, as anything other than unnatural, would refuse to hire homosexuals and would do anything in its power to cause them suffering? Would you be horrified such things were happening in your country? Would you be disgusted with anybody, and especially any politician, who served as an apologist for such flagrant bigotry?

What, exactly, would you feel towards those who saw nothing wrong with such prejudice and did everything in their power not only to keep discriminating against their 'racially inferior' and female employees (there would be no gay ones) but to condemn and seek punishment for those who spoke up in their defence?

Luckily, we do not have such corporations operating within our borders. Only it isn't luck; it is the outcome of our social

and political institutions, which have driven acceptance of such practices, and largely such views, out.

But what if I told you there was a foreign corporation, operating along such lines, seeking to purchase a business in your country. Should they be allowed to do so? Would they be allowed to do so? What if I told you that corporation was also marked by scandal involving suspected kidnapping? That the abductee, attempting to flee to the West, had been taken back 'home' under duress, never to be heard from again.

What if I told you that corporation covered up sexual abuse, rape and denied knowledge of such violent acts? What if I told you those at the top of its food chain could commit violent acts, blame their victims, have them thrown into prison, beaten and eventually ejected from the country, with impunity? Would such a corporation, from its base abroad, be considered fit to own a business in your country? A prominent business at that.

What if that business, being bought by such a corporation, was a high profile one that influenced not just a large number of people's opinions but the political system of your country? Would this be okay? Would you allow it to happen? You would think there were systems in place to avoid such a thing happening. For, if it did happen, what of the information produced (or censored) by that business that influenced so many people's opinions? What of its impact on our politics? What of its impact on our democracy? Never?

Think again.

The UAE is a country where misogyny is officially upheld; where racial discrimination exists not in law but in common practice (blacks at the bottom, then brown and 'yellow' peoples, then white, with Arabs at the top). It is also a country where homosexuality and any trans identity is outlawed with severe repercussions for those who identify as such. It

is a country where a princess has been kidnapped, silenced and not seen again. It is a country where a raped woman is automatically seen as the guilty party.

This is not a democracy. There is no diversity of political opinion.

Yet, the rulers of the UAE own huge stakes in various businesses and services across the UK. This is already fact. Now they are attempting to buy a reputable institution that has been operating for over a century and a half; that is at the heart of keeping the public informed about national and international affairs; is at the heart of the country's political well-being. *The Telegraph*, a publication known for its rigorous analysis and defense of freedom of speech, is in danger of being owned by an entity with values completely at odds with ours. To allow such a sale to proceed would hurt the whole spectrum of political parties and views in the UK. For without diversity of opinion, democracy is a sham.

Assurances that such a reputable paper will keep its editorial independence is disingenuous and only the naïve, or those such as David Cameron seeking to feather their own nests through the fall out of such a deal, would fall for it. One only need be familiar with the type of news reporting from *RT* and *Al Jazeera*, or indeed the *BBC*, to understand the power of disseminating information is as much what is omitted as what is reported. The propagandistic power of such control is as old as the pharaohs, never mind Chomsky's rantings.

Allowing states hostile to Western values, such as China and Russia, to gain control of assets crucial to our democratic institutions (freedom of the press) is obviously impermissible. Why, then, would we allow any other state, whose values are so opposed to ours, to have such influence?

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