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The rule of law

Sir, Melanie Phillips (“Raab can’t make up the law as he goes along”, Oct 19) describes the makings of a coup d’état by a government which seems not to know that the rule of law is the fundamental principle of the British constitution, on which the structure of our liberal democracy depends. Ignoring legal obligations and undermining the authority of the courts are classic first steps on the road to autocracy. It is the job of the law officers and parliament to act as the first line of defence against such a thing. When King James I tried it in the seventeenth century, Edward Coke and Francis Bacon, among other valiant MPs and law officers and judges, set him right. When his son Charles tried it, it took a civil war and the trial and execution of the king to deal with the threat. Passively to ignore the threat is to connive in it.

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