

The foundations of the Courageous State

Published: January 16, 2026, 9:29 pm

I've just referred to the very obvious need for policies that embrace the idea of [the Courageous State](#) as a solution to the economic and political malaise we now face. Courageous States are driven by principles. Of course they'll also be pragmatic sometimes — politics always is, and has to be an exercise in pragmatism. But principles matter in a Courageous State. This will be a fundamental change that will differentiate them from the neoliberal states they will replace.

Those principles are reflected in the following beliefs:

- * People come first;
- * People must have the opportunity to achieve their potential;
- * Poverty is unacceptable;
- * Sustainability is essential;
- * Balance is best for human well-being;
- * Government has to work well;
- * Real business deserves strong support.

These are joined by concerns about issues that undermine well-being which the Courageous State will have to tackle:

- * Financial speculation is always secondary to real business, the community and society at large and can harm the prospect of society achieving its potential;
- * The payment of interest is the cause of considerable stress within the economy;
- * Advertising seriously distorts behaviour in the economy and reduces the chance of people achieving their potential by encouraging over-consumption. It is notable that this has now been identified as a cause of last summer's riots.

Concerns not dissimilar to these have, admittedly, been at the forefront of thinking before now: the Beveridge Report settled the five priorities on which in very many ways the post-war consensus was built, saying they were:

- * Want;
- * Idleness;
- * Ignorance;
- * Squalor;
- * Disease.

As a result, growth, full employment, education, housing and health became the focus of social policy post-1945, and rightly so. They would also be priorities for the Courageous State. They were, however, the goals from an era when poverty was so widespread that what now seems pejorative language could be used to describe the objectives the state set when seeking to improve the conditions of a great many people. Of course they remain relevant: absolute and relative poverty remain pressing issues in the UK, and yet the Courageous State needs to aim for more than their relief. The Courageous State has to set itself the goal of ensuring people's potential can be achieved. That can only happen if the following are available:

- * Rewarding work;
- * Safe banking;
- * A sustainable environment;
- * Affordable homes;
- * Security in old age;
- * Nurturing environments;
- * Communities where we belong;
- * Healthcare;
- * A work—life balance;
- * Opportunity for meaningful leisure.

These are the objectives, but objectives require practical policies if they are to be fulfilled. The result is that the Courageous State needs to have policies to:

- * Constrain the world of feral finance that has so dominated the economies of the world in the last thirty years;
- * Rebuild the role of the state in supporting real business activity;
- * Encouraged a balanced, sustainable economy;

- * Support the broader goals of family, community and society and the achievement of purpose through identity;
- * Cooperate internationally to support the rights of Courageous States.

These are the issues that would drive policy in the Courageous State. And they are, of course, [all explored in my book of the same name.](#)