

Politics has to be about care

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Democracy is under threat around the world from the politics of hate peddled by the far-right. In political terms, the opposite of hate is care, and the problem is that care's gone missing in the mainstream political narrative.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUGqM5aG8lQ?si=G9saLwHLIfmm2hr5>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=y2599-1762806-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

And this is the transcript:

Why don't politicians care? That is a fundamental question when we are considering why it looks as if so many of the world's democracies are in trouble.

And they are in trouble. South Korea has had a coup run by the president, but nonetheless intended to overthrow parliamentary democracy, which he said was supposedly opposing the will of the state.

It was opposing his will. He decided that his will and that of the state were one and the same. He got it wrong, and within hours he had been told that the military coup was over, and I suspect he's going to spend some time in prison as a consequence. But

we're seeing the same sorts of crisis developing in governments all around the world.

France no longer has a government. Its three-month-old government collapsed after a vote of no confidence this week.

Germany is facing elections where the far right are expected to do very well, and quite what the outcome will be is certainly unknown.

In the UK, we face a government that is frankly clueless as to what it is going to do, and any number of reboots, relaunches, or anything else that Keir Starmer wants to deny he's doing, but is nonetheless trying, will not save him from the fate that his government has already destined for itself by not caring.

And I think that this point is really important. Governments around the world are managerial in their tone. Michel Barnier, as French Prime Minister, was the archetype of the person who reached the top of politics and became the French Prime Minister because he was a manager, a technocrat, a person who could wheel and deal in the corridors of power, but had very little idea of what happened beyond them.

He could negotiate Brexit for the EU with the UK, and hold all the whip cards and do a great job. But when it came to managing a government, he didn't know what to do.

And he didn't know what to do for the same reason that Keir Starmer doesn't know what to do, and the Chancellor of Germany didn't know what to do, and onwards, because they haven't been listening and they didn't care because their primary concern was keeping finance happy.

And finance is not all about people. Finance is about keeping bankers happy and bankers have always had totally different interests from the people of a country.

If a government cared, it would, for example, take note of what the SNP, the Scottish National Party, has done in its budget in this last week in Scotland.

It said that it would end the two-child benefit cap in Scotland.

It said that it would provide more breakfast clubs for children in Scottish schools, to make sure that no child went to school hungry.

It's increased social security benefits.

It has protected the NHS and provided it with a bigger budget.

It is making sure that Scottish civil servants have enough to live on and don't have to go to food banks to make up their salaries.

It has reduced the tax bills for people on lower income but not for people on higher

income to indicate its concern for inequality.

It's investing more in social housing and in climate change.

It is, in other words, showing that it cares.

Those are issues that are high on almost every person's agenda. And if you don't think they're important, it's done something else as well, which was guarantee that pensioners in Scotland will not suffer the withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance or its Scottish equivalent, which is slightly differently named, which is going to be suffered in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, because people care about pensioners.

And this is key. When John Swinney, a man of remarkably little charisma, became leader of the SNP for the second time in the last year he said that his priority was relieving poverty. In particular, he was concerned about relieving child poverty. The agenda that he set out was to was one of caring. And caring is fundamentally different to the agenda which is threatening most of the governments that I've mentioned who are at risk of failing.

And they all face far-right agendas. And those are agendas of indifference and even hate.

The hate that we see and hear when politicians talk about the 'other.' groups in society.

I did, for example, listen to Richard Tice, the Deputy Leader of Reform in the UK Parliament, this last week, when he talked about the UK being a Christian state. Now that's nonsense. Because the UK is not a Christian state. Most people in the UK do not subscribe to a religion. Those who say that they are Christian very rarely go to church. There is no evidence to support his claim that we are a Christian state anymore. But he used the language deliberately. He was using it to say we are not a Muslim state, or we are not any other state, or we're not some other culture, which in fact we are, because we are not Christian.

But he was using it to divide and that's the language of division which leads to the language of hatred.

The language of care is the opposite of that.

The opposite of hate is not love in political terms, because that makes no sense at all. The language of care is the language of inclusion, of responsibility, of making sure that everyone can be on the journey that we all are enjoying, we hope, through life. And which many are excluded from by simply having insufficient resources to partake of the life that they should enjoy. So, care is about bringing people into opportunity. The language of hate is about denying people opportunity.

The language of hate is working. The language of hate is what has brought down, at

least in part, the French government. It was a left -right coalition that brought it down. But the far right are the people who hope to get power as a consequence.

It is the far right who are hoping to get power in Germany in a way that they haven't enjoyed since 1945.

It is the far right, represented by the Conservatives and Reform in the UK, and I see very little difference between the two now, that are hoping to win from Keir Starmer's failure as a manager to deliver anything that looks like care in this country.

We need politicians who care if democracy is to survive, if our society is to survive, if the divisions that divide where we are and create the stresses in our society are to be cured.

Do we care? I do. It's pretty much everything that this channel is about. But I'm not convinced that most of our politicians care in the slightest, because they don't even know what to care about. And that is truly worrying. Our politics has to be about care, or democracy itself is at threat, as are all the people it serves.