

# Funding the Future

Article URL

Published: January 12, 2026, 6:14 pm

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Fascists and far-right politicians define an 'other' group in society and then blame them for all its problems. I explain why this tactic is so effective – and so dangerous.

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This is the transcript:

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Giving up on nuance is dangerous, but I believe it's happening.

We do not live in a black and white world, but politicians increasingly pretend that we do so.

This isn't just misleading. I think it is really dangerous.

When nuance disappears, manipulation thrives.

And the simple fact is that black and white thinking is always wrong.

People are never wholly good or wholly bad. They might be pretty rotten, but the person who's completely bad has never yet been created, and every group contains a

mix of motives and actions, and blanket judgments are always wrong. Complexity is not a flaw; it's a reality, but when nuance goes, all of this is forgotten, and the danger is of the politics of what I would call 'Othering'.

Fascists define a group as the 'other' as one of their core objectives. They claim that the group is wholly bad.

They blame it for all the problems that a society is facing, and they pass the whole burden of responsibility for anything that goes wrong onto that 'other' group, as they would describe it.

And this is designed for one purpose. It is to distract attention from what is actually going on in society so that an elite can secure political advantage for themselves. That's always been the way that fascists work, and it will always be the way that they work.

This is at the core of what they do, and we can see examples in the USA at present. Far-right think tanks and Trump allies have targeted migrants as the 'other' group in the US, whom they are blaming for everything that is going wrong.

As a consequence, they use race, religion, and immigration status as a reason to 'other' those whom they claim to be illegal migrants, but who, along the way, happen to also be part of ethnic minority groups within the States, whom they then pick on as well.

The aim is very clear. They want to benefit a narrow white male, evangelical Christian elite, and they do so by showing complete indifference to the human suffering of others, which is being deliberately imposed at enormous expense to the US budget and so to the US population as a whole.

We can also see examples in the UK now.

The whole of the illegal immigrant narrative has been created. And there is no such thing as an illegal immigrant into the UK, because until somebody actually arrives here and has their claim for asylum assessed, they can never be illegal. So, at the point of arrival, they can't be what so many politicians call people who are trying to get to the UK, which is illegal immigrants. And yet this narrative has been deliberately created by Reform and the Conservatives, but now Labour has joined in.

Without exception, they talk about illegal immigrants as if they are the 'other' group who have created every one of the ailments within our society, when that is utterly untrue.

But Keir Starmer's 'Island of Strangers' speech makes it clear that his party buys into this idea that it is division rather than the creation of community that is now the goal of politicians in this country.

So how did this exceptional shift happen? I think that the roots are in the 2008 financial crisis. The bailouts that followed that crisis were essential, let's be clear about it. If they hadn't happened then, and if they hadn't happened again in 2020 when we had the COVID crisis, our economies would've collapsed. So let's not blame the idea of a bailout as being a problem.

The problem was that the way in which these bailouts were managed ensured that the vast majority of the benefit eventually ended up with a wealthy elite in the UK, and in the USA, come to that.

Median earners, let alone those who were on low pay, saw almost nothing change with regard to their well-being, and in fact, public services worsened, and so an idea that turned into resentment began to develop.

Politicians could have blamed the bankers, but they didn't.

They blamed migrants instead, even though they deserve none of the blame for what has happened, because after all, they did not crash the economy. But the narrative has taken hold because of the lies of politicians, and the German philosopher, Hannah Arendt, had a lot to say about the lies that politicians say.

She suggested that politicians do not lie because they want to be believed. That is not the case at all. She says, the aim of political lies is to make people believe nothing. If truth and lies are indistinguishable, her argument goes, then judgment dies, and people without judgment are open to control, and that's why politicians lie.

They lie to create scapegoats.

They lie to create political paralysis, because distrust is directed against the scapegoat, but the consequence is division that destroys solidarity and collective action, and that in turn permits elite power to go unchallenged.

Lies are then not an accident. They're done by design, and they're designed to destroy our communities.

Nuance matters then.

Truth is not a simple matter of black or white, or right or wrong, or whatever way you wish to make the contrast. We actually always have more in common than divides us, and that is almost always true with every group that exists in society.

Judging fairly requires us to see complexity and to cut through to the roots of the matters which are the cause of the problems we face. But without nuance, we can't do that. And without nuance, democracy withers.

When we give up our judgment, we lose the ability to resist lies.

We accept manipulation without noticing, and politics is just then an exercise in distraction as we see that it now is with abuses of power multiplying as a consequence, almost entirely unchecked, as is most obviously going on at present in the USA, but just wait for it to happen here, because it is going to happen here and indeed it is.

The farce around things like Palestine Action, where it is very obviously absurd that people have been described as terrorists as a consequence of holding up a cardboard placard, is quite ridiculous, but is an example of that abuse of power.

What must be done then?

We must resist black and white narratives.

We must look for the complexity in every issue.

We must question who benefits from any division that a politician is seeking to create.

We must identify when they are seeking to create those divisions because that, of course, is essential.

We must always ask for evidence for the claims that politicians make.

We must demand accountability for the consequences of those claims, because if they are seeking to divide, then we have to turn the blame on the politician who is trying to destroy the unity in our society.

Political economy always demands judgment.

Judgment always demands that we accept nuance.

Nuance always demands that we reject simple, good and bad labels, and that we look for meaning.

If we want to maintain democracy, we must work to keep it. We must keep our minds open, because closed minds are the pathway to fascism, and the pathway to fascism is what we are on.