

## Why left vs right politics is over in the UK

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2025/12/03/why-left-vs-right-politics-is-over-in-the-uk/>

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British politics is broken. The old left vs right divide no longer explains what is happening. Instead, we face a new choice: care or neglect. In this video, I explain how all major UK parties have converged on the same neoliberal economic model — and why we need a politics of care instead to fund a future worth living.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UtmjV6LNWA?si=LIm6wHJM9nVkb4-5>

This is the audio version:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=kh3mh-19dc82b-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo\\_link=episode\\_page&btn-skin=c73a3a](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=kh3mh-19dc82b-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a)

This is the transcript:

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Let me put an idea to you. My suggestion is that in political terms, the left and the right are finished, and that the political map is changing.

Traditional labels no longer explain our reality, as we, as ordinary people, watching the world of politics understand it.

What we can see is that there is what I call a 'single transferable party' that seems to shift power within itself under various different brand labels over time, but nothing

changes.

That's because, in technical terms, the antisocial, neoliberal economic policy that dominates the thinking of all these 'single transferable parties' is the same whoever we vote into office, and what we need, therefore, is a new dividing line in politics.

This matters for the future we must fund.

Let's be clear what the old meanings were all about. Once upon a time, being on the left meant that you were concerned with social justice and collective action.

Being on the right meant that you defended those with wealth and the social hierarchy.

The divide was centred on labour versus capital, in a sense, but you could also express it as public versus private, or redistribution versus protectionism, but that framework no longer fits the present.

The left has, in effect, collapsed. Many of those who call themselves left-wing have now, in effect, embraced market ideology.

Their fiscal rules come before any public need, as Rachel Reeves has very clearly evidenced.

Inequality is tolerated as necessary.

Unemployment is a fact of life, and government is seen by those who claim to be on the political left as financially constrained.

Social justice for them is secondary and not primary. Fiscal prudence is all they're worried about.

At the same time, there has been a transformation of the right, and let's be clear, it too has changed fundamentally.

Once upon a time, the right centred its claims to power upon its economic competence; that was what they said they could offer, and by and large, what people believed.

But the truth is that these days, right-wing politics has abandoned all of that. They have almost nobody inside their parties who understands the real world of work, or finance, or capital, or business, or anything else, and instead, culture wars have replaced their economic strategy.

They might permit continued unadulterated and unlimited wealth extraction, but they only do so because democracy is being sidelined by them in favour of finance, whilst grievance politics are used to defend privilege.

There is then a new divide; the old left-right story hides the true conflict now. The question now is actually about care versus neglect.

The right might be more neglectful than the left, but neither gives a damn about care.

Whether society protects its people or not is not an issue with which they concern themselves.

Nor are they worried about democracy and its ability to shape the economy.

What they worry about is finance and warring with each other, or with factions in society whom they have decided to blame or hate.

That is an act of gross negligence on both their parts and unites them in this common theme of neglect when what we need is care.

Care is all about the provision of collective well-being and not individualistic prosperity. In a society where care is prioritised, public goods are fundamental and not optional. Ecological limits are respected, and investment is essential, but it must serve society's needs. In other words, in a society that cares, people are enabled to live lives worth living by a state that is worried for them, and that contrasts with neglect.

In the politics of neglect that we now have, markets are given a higher priority than democracy. Inequality is treated as natural. Public services are run down to cut costs, finance dominates, productive activity is treated as second-rate, and people are treated as economic units. That is where we are.

The UK political reality is that Reform, the Conservatives, Labour, and to some degree the Liberal Democrats all embrace this common anti-social neoliberal foundation for their policies. Bond markets are treated as the real voters. Austerity is baked into their thinking, and growth is prioritised over people and planet.

In other words, even though they talk about GDP as though it is the measure of importance to them, they do not worry about the distribution of that resulting income, and they do not worry about the consequences for people yet to be born who might have to live on a planet that will bear the price of today's ill-thought-through economic policy.

They all therefore deliver variations on the same theme. The differences might be real; Liberal Democrats will most certainly be offended by being compared with Reform in this video, and I accept that the tone is different, but the underlying structure is not very much so. The wealthy remain protected in every model.

Tax justice is marginalised too often, and public investment is always constrained by the myth of a shortage of money when no such shortage exists.

Financial power, without exception, always remains unchallenged by politicians, too fearful to raise their voices to say, "We do not think you are getting it right."

And as a result, the left-right labels are failing; we only have politics that is sitting on the right where markets dominate everything. The left hardly exists. The right has lost its descriptive power as a deliverer of economic competence because we saw only too clearly during the course of 14 years of Tory rule that this was not what they had to offer, and, frankly, voters are left seeing no real choice at all.

In that case, democratic renewal is becoming hard. It's not surprising that Reform looks as though it's riding high in the polls as a result, because people are cynical and disengaged.

It's also not surprising that many on the left, are now moving towards the Greens because they have a leader who looks as though he might have a vision and an understanding of what the world should look like, and that is so rare that, of course, people are attracted to follow.

But the real question is, "Who does the economy serve?" That is the basis for a real new dividing line within our politics. We have to decide whether politics is going to be about financial markets and profit extraction, or is it going to be about life as opposed to capital? These are where the dividing lines now are.

We have to reject the bankrupt paradigm of antisocial neoliberalism, which is all about extracting value from the planet, from us, and from most working people, whoever they are, and whatever they do around the world.

They aren't interested in creating value; they're only interested in extracting it.

They're only interested in inequality being increased and social fracture increasing because that is the basis on which they can divide and rule. They undermine democracy and public purpose as a consequence, and they're fueling ecological breakdown.

There is no right for this neoliberal doctrine to continue in power. Its reign must now come to an end. We need a replacement. We need a caring centre to replace the failing centre. We need democracy to be in charge again, to take control over economic authority, which has been ceded to finance. We need public investment, which should lead and not follow markets. We need well-being to drive our decision-making. A future worth living needs a new political economy.

The old arguments of left versus right just distract from the real divide now. The real divide is between care and neglect, and it names the stakes honestly. One supports life, justice, and sustainability; the other serves wealth, power, and harm. One chooses the future, the other deals with the failed past. We need to put outdated labels behind us.

We need to build a politics of care. We need to replace neoliberalism with democracy, and we need to fund services, communities, and the planet.

If we are to fund the future, the paradigm around which our language of politics revolves must change. Left and right are history, neglect and care are the future and only one of those matters. We need a politics of care.

Do you agree? There's a poll down below.

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Poll

[poll id="266"]

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