

Anger is driving people towards the far right. Only car...

Published: February 18, 2026, 9:07 am

There is a question haunting British politics, which is why so many people are angry enough to look to the far right for solutions.

This question does not imply people are irrational.

Nor does it suggest that all people doing so are inherently hateful.

Instead, it asks why so many millions of people sense that the political and economic system in which they are living is failing them, and why no mainstream political party is willing to address that failure with anything that looks like an adequate policy response.

Implicit in the question being asked is something else. That is the understanding that anger, if misdiagnosed or explained, is then misdirected and that the far right thrives on that misdirection.

So, the need is to identify the real causes of that anger. This is my attempt to summarise those causes as briefly as possible.

1 - Stagnating living standards

For most households, life has not improved for more than a decade. In some cases, it may be very much longer. The reasons are obvious:

*

Real wages for most people have barely risen since the financial crisis of 2008.

*

The cost of living for many people has risen by more than wages over that period.

* Overall financial well-being and security have reduced as a result.

*

Secure employment has been increasingly replaced by precarious work over that

period.

*

Fiscal drag has quietly raised tax burdens while public services have declined.

The core problems are easy to identify:

* Rentier economics is stripping people of their incomes, and they see no gain in return.

* Wealth is flowing to asset owners while labour incomes stagnate.

* People are working harder and feeling poorer.

* Austerity has reduced social safety nets.

* Successive governments, obsessed with their own finances and not those of the people they are meant to both govern and care for, have made matters very much worse with irresponsible fiscal policies that evidence their lack of care.

When people feel they are going backwards, they look for someone to blame.

2 - Housing insecurity

Housing is now Britain's biggest social failure. Many older people do not feel the scale of this issue, and the blight it is creating on so many people's lives. Younger people know all about the exclusion that it creates as:

*

Rents consume large shares of income.

*

Home ownership feels increasingly out of reach for younger generations.

*

Social housing has been sold off and not replaced, denying people the option of security that this scheme provided.

People are persuaded to blame migrants in reaction to this. But the real causes are:

* land speculation,

* tax-privileged property wealth, and

- * deliberate under-investment in social housing.

This is manufactured scarcity. We could securely house everyone in the UK. We choose not to. The resulting housing insecurity breeds permanent anxiety, and that anxiety all too easily turns to anger.

3 - The collapse of public services

When you:

- * cannot get an NHS appointment,
- * find an NHS dentist,
- * get reliable transport,
- * secure SEND provision for your child,
- * get care for your elderly relatives,
- * face a penal social security system, and
- * watch the nation's infrastructure collapsing around you

you rightly conclude that the system is broken.

And then politicians say:

*

"There is no money."

*

"The country cannot afford social security."

* "We must live within our means."

*

"Taxes must rise before spending."

These claims are false. A currency-issuing government can always fund essential services. Taxes are for controlling inflation and redistributing income, not funding spending.

When people are told the state cannot act using false arguments to justify austerity and the hardship it causes, they lose faith in democracy itself. This is the vacuum filled by

extremists.

4 - Regional decline and community loss

Large parts of Britain feel abandoned:

*

Deindustrialised towns have lost secure jobs.

*

High streets are closed, or closing.

*

Public transport has vanished.

* And hope has faded to match the crumbling infrastructure of decay too many places now endure.

People interpret this as neglect by distant elites who do not care.

They are not wrong about the neglect.

They are wrong about the cause. The problem is not migrants. It is the refusal to invest in communities and rebuild local economies.

A politics of care would start with place. It would rebuild towns, transport, culture, and dignity. There can never be hope unless politics matters where people are.

5 - Inequality and visible injustice

People see wealth everywhere:

*

Millionaires and billionaires appear to live in a world apart.

*

Companies still avoid tax through secrecy jurisdictions.

*

Luxury towers rise while social housing waits decades.

* Everywhere, advertising delivers images of a world out of reach for many.

You do not need a degree in economics to know something is wrong when this is the case.

My work on tax havens shows the system is rigged. People sense this instinctively. But the far right tells them the problem is foreigners or social security claimants, not tax injustice that could be addressed, but which they always want to exacerbate. That lie works because mainstream politics refuses to confront inequality honestly.

6 - Loss of status and identity

Economic insecurity has become cultural insecurity because:

*

Industrial jobs that defined communities disappeared.

*

Local institutions closed.

*

Most especially, people feel they no longer matter.

This links to something that is important. People need to feel they belong and matter. The need is for both. When they feel neither, they will listen to anyone who promises recognition, even if that recognition comes at the expense of excluding others.

The far right offers a false sense of pride. It replaces solidarity with resentment, but those who feel left aside do not notice that.

7 - Political failure and distrust

Trust in politics has collapsed. The reasons are readily apparent:

*

Brexit promises were not delivered because they never could have been.

*

Austerity has been justified by myths about “taxpayers’ money” and a lack of capacity to spend, even as the impression of misdirected wealth is all around us.

*

Labour now repeats Conservative fiscal rules.

* The popular perception that there is a disconnect between what politicians say they care about and what they do is reinforced by their actions.

When all major parties share the same economic dogma, voters conclude that democracy offers them no real choice.

This is why I argue that so much of what politics has to say is so often CRAp – a completely rubbish approximation to the truth. When the model politicians use is wrong (as it is), policy fails, and trust collapses.

Into that vacuum step extremists with simple answers.

8 - The media and manufactured fear

We live in an economy where there are multiple demands on our attention, and where those who want it know that fear is profitable. As a result:

*
Social media rewards outrage.

*
Newspapers scapegoat migrants.

*
Advertising, as I have often argued, is deliberately designed to make us unhappy with our lives.

Much of our media's overwhelming desire is to make us dissatisfied, angry, and agents whose role is to direct blame

The reasons are obvious. A frightened population is easier to manipulate, and it is easier to fear what you can see than what you cannot. So, people are told their neighbour is the problem. They are not told about rentier capitalism, tax injustice, austerity and the deliberate politics of destruction that most politicians pursue.

The politics of distraction replaces the politics of care.

9 - Fear of the future

In the background, but real nonetheless, is a recurring fear of the future.

Whether it is climate change, AI, war, or economic instability, people sense uncertainty. They are right to do so when most politicians seem to have neither the slightest idea

what to do about any of these issues nor the desire to tackle them.

Without a credible vision of hope, fear turns into anger. And anger looks for targets.

10 - What the far right offers

The far right thrives because it provides:

*

Simple explanations

*

Visible enemies

*

Emotional certainty

Migrants, academics, “woke” people, and social security claimants; all of them are turned into scapegoats, but none of these groups caused stagnant wages, housing shortages, failing services, or tax injustice.

The far right offers anger, not answers.

What a politics of care would do

If anger is real, the answer must also be real. A politics of care would directly address the causes of anger in this country. It would:

*

Invest in housing as a public good.

*

Restore public services through proper funding.

*

Strengthen social security so no one lives in fear.

*

Tax wealth, land rents, and unearned income fairly.

*

End tax avoidance through transparency.

*
Rebuild regional economies with green industrial policy.

*
Recognise care work, education, and health as core economic activities.

This is not utopian. It is practical political economy.

A politics of care says every person matters, and policy must prove it.

Why this matters

People do not turn to the far right because they are evil. They turn because they are angry, frightened, and unheard.

If mainstream politics continues to deny the causes of that anger, extremism will grow.

But if we address the real issues – inequality, insecurity, stagnation, and neglect – anger can become hope.

The choice is not between anger and apathy.

It is between the politics of hate and the politics of care.

Only one of those can build a society in which everyone matters.

And the last point is key: we need everyone to make this happen. Everyone would belong. Everyone would matter. And that is how we overcome hate, not with nice words, and not with laws, but by delivering what people need:

- * Secure homes
- * Stable employment
- * A strong social safety net
- * Public services they can believe in
- * A sense of social, economic and political justice
- * A sense of belonging
- * A belief that they matter

That's the politics I want, and the politics this country needs. That's what motivates me to write the economics that I can, I know, deliver it when nothing is being said by most

of the economic mainstream has the slightest chance of doing so, precisely because it is the basis of the whole sense of alienation that this country suffers from. That is why we need an economics of hope.