

New glossary entry: the politics of hate

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The term **the politics of hate** describes the deliberate use of fear, resentment, and division to win and hold power. It works by persuading people that their problems are caused not by failed policy or unequal power, but by other people, whether they be migrants, minorities, the poor, neighbouring nations, people of another gender or sexual orientation, or anyone else who can be turned into an enemy.

First, the politics of hate is a strategy of distraction. When living standards stagnate, public services fail, or inequality widens, attention is redirected away from structural causes such as austerity, financialisation, tax abuse, wealth inequality or underinvestment. Blame is placed on those with the least power to resist it. We see this repeatedly when social security recipients are scapegoated while corporate tax avoidance goes unchallenged.

Second, the rhetoric depends on false economics. Myths about “taxpayers’ money”, the household analogy, or the obsession with balanced budgets are used to claim that there is not enough to go round. Scarcity is manufactured to justify exclusion. Once people believe resources are fixed, it becomes easier to argue that some groups must lose so others can survive.

Third, the politics of hate corrodes democracy. It weakens the relationship between voter and representative by replacing accountability with loyalty to a tribe. Leaders who cannot justify policy outcomes resort to culture wars, misinformation, and attacks on institutions. As a result, independent courts, regulators, journalists, and civil servants become enemies because they ask questions and seek to hold those promoting false ideologies to account.

Fourth, hate is profitable. Media attention, campaign funding, and political mobilisation often increase when fear is stoked. Divided societies are easier to govern in the interests of concentrated wealth. If people blame each other, they are less likely to question illicit financial flows, secrecy jurisdictions, or the power of finance over policy.

Fifth, the cost is social collapse. Trust erodes, cooperation declines, and communities

fracture as everything that holds them together, from trust to volunteering and simple friendship, fails. Economic policy becomes reactive and punitive rather than constructive. Investment in the five forms of capital (environmental, human, social, physical, and financial), which are key to wellbeing, is neglected because long-term stewardship cannot coexist with short-term anger.

Finally, the antidote is clear. We need politics that starts from shared humanity, not division. We need **politics for people** – policy designed to meet real needs – and a **politics of care** that recognises our interdependence and our duty to future generations. That means fair taxation, strong social security, honest economics, accountable government, and investment in the common good.

The politics of hate thrives on fear and falsehood. The politics of care builds on truth and solidarity. If we want a stable economy and a functioning democracy, the choice between them cannot be postponed.