

Starmer: the real extremist

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This was [posted on X](#) by Steven Swinford of The Times on Friday night:



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Sir Keir Starmer will claim on Saturday that Reform UK and the Greens are ideological extremists who would undermine Britain's national security and make war in Europe more likely

In his strongest attack yet on Labour's new electoral rivals, the prime minister will use a speech in Munich to warn that, for all their differences, both parties are "soft on Russia and weak on Nato"

He will argue their approach would lead only to "division and capitulation" and the result would be that "the lamps would go out across Europe once again"

His comments are a direct quote of Sir Edward Grey, a former British foreign secretary, who, on the eve of the First World War, warned that the lamps were "going out" all over Europe

"It's striking that the different ends of the spectrum share so much," Starmer will say. "Soft on Russia and weak on Nato — if not outright opposed. [They are] determined to sacrifice the longstanding relationships that we want and need to build on the altar of their ideology. The future they offer is one of division and then capitulation. The lamps would go out across Europe once again."

He will add: "We must level with the public and build consent for the decisions we will have to take to keep us all safe. Because if we don't, the peddlers of easy answers on the extreme left and the extreme right are ready. They will offer their solutions instead."

Sir Keir Starmer: Vote Reform or Green and risk war

thetimes.com/article/ad7fe8...

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The comment noted, and the proposed speech by Keir Starmer, are revealing, not because of what they say about Reform or the Greens, but because of what they say about the state of British political argument. When governments run out of economic

ideas, as Labour so very obviously has, they resort to fear as the only tool left.

That is obvious here. Starmer is trying to tell us that voting the wrong way risks war, that dissent is weakness, and that lamps will go out across Europe again. That is supposedly serious language, but it is far from being a serious analysis.

To claim that parties are “soft on Russia” or “weak on Nato” is a charge that demands evidence. None is offered. Instead, we get Edward Grey’s line from 1914, which was spoken on the eve of a catastrophe brought about not by democratic debate but by elite failure. Invoking that moment today is not about recalling history; it is only about political theatre.

Doing so, it distracts from the real question, which is what security actually means in modern Britain, most especially when NATO is actually failing, as is clear from US actions and [the speech Marcus Rubio gave](#) as US Secretary of State for Defence at the same conference as that at which Starmer was speaking, in which he rejected everything that has defined the Western consensus and US foreign policy since 1945.

What Starmer is ignoring is that security is not only military capacity. It is about much more than that.

A country with broken housing markets, underfunded health services, insecure energy supply, stagnant wages and rising inequality is not secure.

An economy dependent on a fragile finance sector and short-term speculation is not secure.

Both of these are political choices, and they are choices Labour could address if it wished to talk about investment, taxation, industrial policy, banking reform and social security. Instead, we are offered warnings about extremists.

The problem is, and this is the other aspect of defence that Starmer ignored, that security is also about working with allies you agree with, and either Starmer is saying his government is now aligned with Trump's fascism when making his comments, or he is lying.

Starmer is, then, ignoring real issues about which he is accountable. Instead, he is resorting to the trick of calling opponents dangerous while invoking national peril and demanding unity behind policies that are not clearly explained. This is absurd given that there are genuine geopolitical threats in the world, and he is unwilling to address them.

If higher defence spending is needed, it is his responsibility to explain why.

If he thinks NATO can still work when the USA is setting itself up as an enemy of Europe, he has to say how that might work.

And if economic change is required to reallocate resources to a defence strategy, he has to explain what change is involved and how it might happen. Consent around security is, after all, built on clarity, and not fear, but Starmer does not seem to appreciate that.

Britain does need strategic renewal and must be secure, but renewal comes from rebuilding the real foundations of security. They are decent housing, health, education, energy resilience and a functioning economy that serves people rather than slogans.

Starmer is justified in pointing out that Reform has no interest in any of those things, but that is not true of the Greens in any way. Lighting lamps today, as far as they are concerned, seems to mean investing in people and institutions at home. That is how a country becomes strong, and that is the conversation we should be having, because that is the foundation of the security we need. When, then, will Starmer talk about that and stop the nonsense?