

We need freedom from fear

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The core purpose of government is to provide freedom from fear. That means freedom from physical threat, Freedom from want, freedom from discrimination and freedom from the deliberate chaos that destroys the social fabric on which democracy depends. That is what government is for. And right now, in the UK and across the Western world, government is doing the precise opposite.

The far-right has a strategy. It is not chaos by accident. It is chaos by design. Disorder is their desire. Crisis creates their opportunity. Division, whether between communities, between religions, or between nations, is the mechanism by which an authoritarian minority dismantles the institutions that protect the majority. And it has been working, not because the far-right is powerful, but because too few are stopping it.

It is something called traditionalism that is driving this. Steve Bannon promotes it. Liz Truss travelled to a US conference to sell it, using the phrase "Europestan" to describe the continent where she lives. Traditionalism rejects Enlightenment thinking. It rejects equality. It rejects democracy. It promotes hierarchy, privilege, and the restoration of a pre-democratic order. It is fascism with better branding. And it is now operating inside mainstream political parties.

In this context, the danger is that democracy in the UK is already weakened by an electoral system that can return governments rejected by the majority of voters, by institutions that were designed for a different century, and by a political culture that mistakes caution for neutrality. The far-right's chaos strategy is not meeting effective resistance as a result.

This video explains how that strategy works, why traditionalism is the intellectual cover for fascism, and what a genuine politics of freedom from fear would look like in contrast.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxbcWmlRruQ?si=4Pbqo0WYBmO-HVYn>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=9xi5c-1a9e48d-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:

I've long argued that the role of government is to deliver something that I call 'freedom from fear'. That, I've said, is the core purpose of government. That is what it's really all about, and this isn't some abstract idea. This is about the reality of people's lives.

I'm not talking here about markets. I don't think that they are a government priority.

I'm not talking here about growth. I do not think that is what governments should be focusing on.

I am saying that people should always be the priority of government, and that is their starting point, and let's be honest, also their ending point. Freedom from fear is what they should be talking about.

Fear can take many forms. There is physical fear, the fear of harm and violence.

There is social fear, the fear of exclusion and prejudice.

There's economic fear, the fear of insecurity and poverty, what Guy Standing describes as being part of the precariat. The insecurity of life for many these days.

These fears often combine, and they even reinforce each other. We do, in fact, have a politics that is built upon fear; the far-right, and those parties that are now moving in a rightward direction, which does include both the Conservative and Labour parties, have built their politics on the basis of fear now, and the far-right themselves build their politics on the basis of hate.

This is now normalised. Fear is being deliberately amplified within our political spectrum, and enemies are being constantly invented, all of whom we are meant to be frightened of. Division is now a clear political tool right across the UK and elsewhere, and this isn't accidental.

The US provides an example of this. On the far right of American politics right now,

anti-Muslim narratives are central. In much of the language that is used in far-right debate in the USA, if you substituted the word 'Jew' for the word 'Muslim', it would be entirely possible to think that you were hearing Nazis speaking.

The fear of takeover by Muslim majorities is promoted everywhere by the American far-right. They dress conspiracy as politics, and their language echoes our darker histories.

That should alarm us. They're turning rhetoric into power. That is their goal, and these ideas are not being confined to the fringes of politics. They're moving upwards, and Donald Trump is, of course, amplifying them.

Threat is becoming a policy signal. We see it in what Trump has to say about Iran. We see it in what he has to say about the Pope. We see it in what he has to say about communities in the USA. When violence becomes thinkable by the president of the USA, there is real danger.

In this context, the UK is now being targeted as an example by those in the USA who are promoting this atmosphere of fear. They are claiming that the UK is now a fallen state. The story is that Sharia law now prevails in the UK; that we have succumbed to Muslim power, and that freedom has been lost. None of this, of course, is true. It's complete nonsense, but we hear it being said by Donald Trump. He talks about London as if it is a fallen place; that Sadiq Khan is running it as if it is a Muslim enclave. That is complete nonsense. I happen to know Sadiq Khan. We worked together at one time, and the point is that's nothing like the man I know or the man he is, but Donald Trump is trying to shape perception, and there are UK politicians who are willing to repeat this nonsense.

Liz Truss is one of them. She was at a conservative conference in the US recently, talking about something called 'Europestan'. Implicit in that was the prejudice against Muslims that so many far-right politicians talk about and seek to exploit as the basis of their politics.

We can see it in the language of both Reform and Restore. Both those parties now echo this far-right anti-Muslim rhetoric, and Labour isn't immune either. Let me be clear. They're very keen to stand up against antisemitism. I hear no such enthusiasm from them when it comes to anti-Islamic fervour, which is being expressed by the far-right, but which Labour is not willing to condemn.

So, the question is, who is the real target of this narrative of hate that is being used to promote fear and to divide our communities? Those like the Conservative Party claim it is the new migrants into the UK who they wish to prevent coming to this country, but the reality is that I don't believe, like Restore and Reform, the Tories actually are targeting all ethnic minorities in this country, and I have a fear that Labour is as well by making it harder to become a naturalised citizen in the UK.

The difference between what is considered to be the resident population of the UK and those who have arrived in recent times is framed as a threat. Entire groups in our society are being 'othered', as I would call it, as a result, and that is deliberate.

The ideology behind this is 'traditionalism', which is a form of fascism, but a particular form that is very dangerous. It's the form that has been promoted by people like Steve Bannon, and I think Liz Truss. It is the belief that there were better times in the past, that there was a time when we lived free from fear because we lived with an era of certainty.

The claim is that we now live in a time of decline. Liberalism is seen as decadence. Equality is seen as an error, and democracy is seen as weakness. Hierarchy is considered to be vital and to be restored, and there is a natural order within it, it is claimed. Some are seen as superior, and privilege is justified as natural, so that power is concentrated at the top of society and equality is rejected outright.

All the Enlightenment values from the 17th and 18th century, which have underpinned all our ideas about democracy, accountability, governance, equality, and the development of a fair world in which we want to live are being rejected as a consequence.

So too is science being dismissed. A recent blog by Paul Krugman in the USA demonstrated this. The amount of scientific funding coming from the US government under Trump is falling dramatically. Faith is replacing evidence in the worldview of these people, and at the same time, the equality of all is being denied. That's not just equality between ethnic groups, of course, it's also equality between men and women, people of different sexual orientations and more.

All of this is a reversal. Chaos is being embraced as political strategy, and disorder is seen as useful. Crisis is being created as opportunity, as Naomi Klein once said it would be, and old orders are being reestablished. That is the aim. The consequence is, democracy is being destabilised, and that is intentional.

Our democracy here in the UK is currently under threat. It is outdated. It doesn't suit our new multi-party environment. It cannot return people to power who are selected by the majority of people in this country, and hate is fueling instability and creating these divisions, which is undermining that representative democracy, as a result. Institutions are being weakened. Trust is being deliberately eroded. Fear is replacing debate, and that is the objective.

We can choose something better. We can have a politics of care which does deliver for everyone.

We can have a politics that is about inclusion and not exclusion.

We can have a politics that delivers security for everyone and guarantees the most important thing of all that a government can create, which is freedom from fear.

That is central to the narratives that we need to create.

That is the alternative that we need, and there is no real room for neutrality on this issue anymore. We must resist the move towards the far-right, which we are seeing. We must either care or accept hierarchy. We must stand up for inclusion, or we must accept oppression. We must stand up and fight back, or we must accept defeat.

There's a poll down below. There's the opportunity to provide a comment. Please do, we will read them, and if you're so inclined, please share this video and like it if that's what you do, and subscribe to our channel. If, at the same time, you want to lend us some further support by making a donation, we'd be very grateful.

Poll

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