

Family Policy: The Foundation Stone of a Post-Liberal Political Economy

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Liberalism is in terminal decline. Over the last decade, ordinary people across Britain and other Western liberal democracies have become painfully aware that our post-war economic, political and social settlement is failing. The search for economic growth has become desperate, with GDP per capita falling, debt and taxes rising, and inflation at eye-watering levels.

Polling shows that 80 percent of our population thinks that Britain is in a ‘bad way’ or ‘very bad way’.¹ Two-thirds think Britain is broken.² The appalling story of the Pakistani ‘rape gangs’ operating in English towns is a scandal that highlights the multiple failures of liberalism. Multiculturalism—the belief that all cultures should be equally respected—welcomes mass immigration and fails to criticise communities that do not value women and girls. Sexual liberalism—the idea that sexual morality is based only on the presence or absence of ‘consent’—blurs the boundaries between adults and children and allowed social workers and police to claim that the young victims were ‘choosing’ to have sex with older men. Family instability, stemming from the liberal belief that marriage and family structure don’t matter, left thousands of girls fatherless and vulnerable to predatory men.

¹ “Britons think UK is in a bad way, but French more pessimistic, survey shows,” *Jon Henley*, The Guardian, June 25, 2024
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jun/25/britons-think-uk-is-in-a-bad-way-but-french-more-pessimistic-survey-shows>

² “Voters don’t just feel Britain is broken – they feel they’re broken too” *Rachel Wearmouth*, The New Statesman, May 25, 2023
<https://www.newstatesman.com/thestaggers/2023/05/voters-polling-britain-broken-reform>

The rape gangs tragedy is also a story about the poverty and hopelessness in Britain's 'left-behind' post-industrial towns, the victims of the global outsourcing of industry in the search for more, cheaper consumption—a key policy of liberal economics. The failure to identify, investigate and prosecute the perpetrators out of fear of stirring up racial tensions demonstrates the cowardice of liberalism, and reveals a State so desperate to preserve the liberal order that it will cover up information that exposes its failure.

What is Post-Liberalism?

No one can consider the factors that led to the rape and torture of thousands of young British girls—in plain sight and over decades—and conclude that liberalism has a future. But just because our political economy is sick doesn't mean we have a cure. There are many suggestions circulating—especially online—about what a 'post-liberal' order might look like. Recent polling shows that more than half of young people would like a dictatorship, with a third of Gen Z expressing support for a military state.³ There appear to be some amongst the 'ultra online' right—many of whom see the rape gangs scandal as political opportunity rather than human tragedy—who would welcome some form of racist, ethno-nationalist state. Then there are those, including some in our present Government, who seem determined to pursue an authoritarian leftist surveillance state, built on the neo-Marxist ideas of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. And in the US, tech futurists harbour a post-liberal vision of trans-humanism and government by artificial intelligence.

Post-liberalism could easily be worse than what has gone before; we should be cautious about welcoming the death of liberalism. Nevertheless, for those who yearn to see a restoration of the principles upon which Western civilization was founded and for so long flourished, this is a moment of great opportunity.

A Declining Population

So, what should be the basis of a new political economy? First, we must look at the reason for the current collapse. While liberalism's cracks have been evident for half a century, the decline has only become terminal in recent years. There have been other troubled times of

³ "More than half of Gen Z wants UK to become a dictatorship, survey claims", *Jabed Ahmed*, The Independent, January 28, 2025
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/genz-dictatorship-survey-jordan-peterson-b2686927.html>

moral and economic crisis in our history, after which we have recovered and renewed; perhaps liberalism just needs a makeover.

But there is something different about our current malaise. It is not only an economic and moral decline; we also face numerical human decline. The one thing a political economy must be able to do is to sustain and replenish its population. Yet since the 1970s, and accelerating over the last two decades, Britain and almost all Western nations have failed to reproduce themselves either in terms of numbers or in economic fruitfulness.

In the 1960s, UK births reached almost one million per year.⁴ In 2023, there were fewer than 600,000 babies born.⁵ The UK total fertility rate (TFR) has been below the replacement rate of 2.1 babies per woman since the 1970s. Now TFR stands at just 1.49,⁶ meaning that, even if fertility rates stabilise, a random group of 100 people alive in Britain today can expect just 56 grandchildren between them.

In the 1970s, there were four people of working age for every pensioner; now the ratio is just three to one⁷ and in a few decades' time it will have fallen to just two to one. This shrinking 'dependency ratio' has enormous implications for our economy, with levels of taxation and inflation and shortages of labour set to accelerate.

But we are not only failing to replenish ourselves numerically. We also face a growing attrition rate among our population. Over one million young people are signed off work with

⁴ "Number of live births in the United Kingdom from 1887 to 2021", *Statista* 2025

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/281981/live-births-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>

⁵ "Births in England and Wales: 2023", *Office for National Statistics*, October 28, 2024

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2023>

⁶ "Births in England and Wales: 2022 (refreshed populations)" *Office for National Statistics*, February 23, 2024

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2022refreshedpopulations>

⁷ "Migration, Stagnation, or Procreation: Quantifying the Demographic Trilemma" *Philip Pilkington and Paul Morland*, ARC Research, 2023. p3

sickness, the vast majority citing anxiety and depression.⁸ One in four British adults takes anti-depressants.⁹ The majority of Britons are overweight, with nearly 30% obese.¹⁰

Every politician and commentator agrees we need economic growth. As economist Philip Pilkington demonstrates in a recent paper for the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship,¹¹ economic growth arises from a combination of natural population growth, the ability of those employed in the labour force to contribute to the best of their ability, plus a mystical variable called ‘productivity’ that is extraordinarily difficult to define. Yet all of our political focus now seems to be on trying to squeeze additional productivity out of the British economy, while failing to recognise that both the size and effectiveness of the workforce is falling every year. It’s as if the Government is telling dairy farmers to increase milk production when the numbers of calves being born has halved and where an increasing proportion of cows are becoming too sick to produce any milk. We are engaged in a fool’s errand.

So many of our current political and economic problems find their source in falling fertility rates. Low numbers of births are the driver for mass immigration, the reason why pensions and healthcare are becoming unaffordable and why our debt to GDP ratio is forecast to exceed 270% by the 2070s.¹² Our liberal political economy has proven unable to replenish itself.

Family as the Foundation

The primary vehicle for sustaining and building our political economy is the family. The family generates society, and a culture of thriving families is an indispensable condition of social health. It is the family into which children are born, nurtured and become the parents, citizens, workers, academics, leaders, doctors, soldiers and teachers of the future. If families

⁸ “Youth worklessness hits 10-year high amid mental health crisis”, *Chris Smyth*, The Times, November 12 2024
<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/youth-worklessness-hits-10-year-high-amid-mental-health-crisis-gvv0s0l2z>

⁹ “Epidemic of depression with one in four now taking antidepressants”, *Lucy Johnston*, The Express, May 18, 2024
<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1900695/antidepressants-depression-children-young-adults>

¹⁰ “Obesity Statistics”, *House of Commons Library*, February 10, 2025
<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03336/SN03336.pdf>

¹¹ “Family Matters: Why our choices determine our economic prosperity”, *Philip Pilkington*, Alliance for Responsible Citizenship, 2025

¹² “Public debt projected to exceed 270 per cent of GDP by the mid-2070s”, *Office for Budget Responsibility*, September 12 2024
<https://obr.uk/public-debt-projected-to-exceed-270-per-cent-of-gdp-by-the-mid-2070s/>

aren't formed, children aren't born. And when families fail, children don't achieve their full potential in life or in the economy.

As previously stated, economic growth is a combination of population growth, the effectiveness of employed labour and productivity. The only sustainable source of population growth is the family, and labour effectiveness is also dependent on the family, because healthy families raise children who are more likely to grow into flourishing adults, free from mental and physical health constraints and addiction, and less likely to be affected by poverty, abuse, addiction and criminality.

Nearly half of British children now experience parental separation.¹³ Those who experience family breakdown are up to twice as likely to experience poor health and reduced earnings, so we should not be surprised at the record number of young adults now not in education, employment or training. Children who are let down by their parents are far more likely to end up in jail; 24% of prisoners grew up in the care system compared to just 0.6% of the general population.¹⁴

Family is the foundation of a successful political economy. Yet since the 1970s, liberalism has steadily eroded its foundations. The family model is now on life support. There are many interesting discussions to be had about what a post-liberal trade or energy policy might look like, or how we wish to control migration in a post-liberal world. But if we don't restore the family, then there will be no future political economy.

The Three Pillars of Family

What do we mean by 'the family'? In the West, our understanding is based on the Judeo-Christian model, which is characterized by three 'pillars.' These are: a belief in the sacred worth of children; the establishment of lifelong, monogamous marriage; and the upholding of parental authority. If family is what replenishes and perpetuates culture, then the unparalleled success of Western civilization demonstrates that this is the most effective family model the world has ever known.

¹³ "Family and its protective effects", *The Children's Commissioner*, September 2022
<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/cc-family-and-its-protective-effect-part-1-of-the-independent-family-review-.pdf>

¹⁴ "Family Matters: Why our choices determine our economic prosperity", *Philip Pilkington*, Alliance for Responsible Citizenship, 2025

In modern Western countries, the idea that all children are precious and should be protected from harm is unremarkable. But this has not always been the case. In the ancient world, it was common for children to be sacrificed or for parents to leave unwanted babies to die of exposure.¹⁵ Yet in contrast to neighbouring tribes, Jewish law forbade child sacrifice.¹⁶ The Christian faith begins with a helpless baby, whose parents prioritised his welfare above all else, even fleeing to Egypt to preserve his life. In a challenge to the culture of his day, the adult Jesus held children in high esteem, blessing them instead of ignoring them as his disciples would have preferred.¹⁷

Jesus reserved his greatest condemnation for those who lead children astray, saying:

‘It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.’¹⁸

If children can be led astray with lifelong consequences, it is supremely important to raise them in goodness and truth. It is therefore not only the child that is held to be sacred, but also childhood itself. The Western belief in the sacred worth of children therefore stems directly from the Judeo-Christian tradition. But this belief is not just an abstract idea; it is realised through structures and institutions that ensure children are nurtured and protected from infancy.

Monogamous marriage, the public, lifelong, and exclusive union of one man with one woman, has proven to be the most reliable structure to provide this nurture and protection for children. Lifelong monogamy is neither a natural state nor a universal idea; yet Christianity established monogamous marriage as a foundational institution of Western Civilisation.¹⁹ Marriage ensures that the desires and whims of adults are restrained, protecting children from being deprived of the presence and commitment of both mother and father.

The belief in the sacredness of the child and the commitment to monogamous marriage have formed the basis of the Judeo-Christian family. The third and final pillar of the family—the one that ensures children are raised into virtuous, flourishing adults—is the expectation that

¹⁵ V. Harris, “Child exposure in the Roman Empire,” *Cambridge University Press*, (2012), <https://doi.org/10.2307/300867>

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 12:29-31

¹⁷ Matthew 19:14

¹⁸ Luke 17:2, King James Version

¹⁹ Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:3-9

children will obey their parents. Again, this is rooted in Biblical teaching, in the fifth commandment to ‘honour your father and mother’. Parental authority is the medium through which children are kept safe, by which they are trained in knowledge and virtues, and through which their cultural inheritance is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Philosopher Yoram Hazony writes:

‘This is the reason that the precept of honouring one's parents is at the centre of moral teaching and practice in every conservative society. The ability to give honour to a superior in an unchosen hierarchical relationship is the one capacity on which all other gains in knowledge, wisdom, skills and capacities depends.’²⁰

As one generation honours the values and traditions of those who have gone before, the benefits of our civilisation—economic, cultural and social—are passed through the ages.

These three ingredients of the Western family—the sacredness of children, monogamous marriage, and parental authority—are the pillars that have established Western Civilisation and supported it to flourish, as each generation is born, raised, and passes the baton to the next. Yet the family unit was never expected to bear the burden of rearing children alone. The ‘three pillars’ of the family model stood on the firm foundation of a culture that accepted collective responsibility for raising the young. Through institutions such as the wider community, the Church and civic organisations and a common moral framework, parents were supported in a collaborative effort to raise children.

The Pillars are Crumbling

Sadly, in Britain, these pillars are crumbling. It is not only birth rates that have collapsed.

Marriage rates have plummeted,²¹ and parental separation is more common than not.

Abortions now exceed 200,000 a year.²² Childhood itself is in crisis, with rising numbers of

²⁰ Yoram Hazony, *Conservatism: A Rediscovery* (Forum 2022), 131

²¹ “Marriages in England and Wales: 2021 and 2022”, *Office for National Statistics*, June 20 2024
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/UnitedKingdom/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2021and2022>

²² “Abortion statistics, England and Wales: 2021”, *Office for Health Improvement & Disparities*, July 26 2024
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2021/abortion-statistics-england-and-wales-2021>

children suffering from debilitating emotional, behavioural, and mental health problems that leave them poorly equipped to live fruitful and fulfilling lives.^{23,24,25}

The Collapse of the Family

Our political economy is collapsing because the family is collapsing. How did this happen? The answer lies in the dismantling of the three pillars of the Western family, undermining the primary vehicle through which children are raised and nurtured.

Children no longer hold sacred worth. The legalisation and expansion of abortion has transformed our view of children from being a blessing to a choice. The value of a child no longer derives from his status as being made in the image of God; rather his worth is determined by whether his life is wanted by others.

The sacred nature of childhood itself is also being eroded, with children increasingly seen as ‘mini adults’ rather than at a distinctly vulnerable stage of life. If children are not special, then their requirement for protection is not absolute; rather, it can be balanced against all manner of competing interests, as we saw during the recent pandemic and as has been demonstrated by the failure of liberalism to protect children from underage sex, smartphones and the harms of gender ideology.

As children and childhood have been devalued, so has the principal institution relied upon by the West to nurture them. The collapse of marriage rates and durability has resulted in more and more children being raised without a present father. The fall in marriages has also directly affected birth rates. Married couples still have high fertility.²⁶ Yet now so few young people get married that some demographers predict around a third of women will end up childless.

²³ “Percent Of Children With A Mental Disorder By Marital Status And Age Group”, Office for National Statistics, 2019

²⁴ “Family Structure Still Matters,” *Centre for Social Justice*, August 2020

<https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/family-structure-still-matters>

²⁵ “Family and its protective effects”, *The Children’s Commissioner*, September 2022

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/cc-family-and-its-protective-effect-part-1-of-the-independent-family-review-.pdf>

²⁶ “No Ring, No Baby: How Marriage Trends Impact Fertility” *Lyman Stone, Institute for Family Studies*, March 19, 2018

[https://ifstudies.org/blog/no-ring-no-](https://ifstudies.org/blog/no-ring-no-baby#:~:text=While%20women%20are%20married%2C%20they,to%204%20or%205%20kids)

[baby#:~:text=While%20women%20are%20married%2C%20they,to%204%20or%205%20kids](https://ifstudies.org/blog/no-ring-no-baby#:~:text=While%20women%20are%20married%2C%20they,to%204%20or%205%20kids)

As parental relationships have been undermined, so has parental authority. Many parents simply do not know how to train children in the basics of self-control and social and moral behaviour. Last year in the United Kingdom, an extraordinary 25% of four-year-olds started primary school without being toilet trained.²⁷ Many are unable to dress themselves, communicate with others, or follow instructions. Babies are not born with the ability to regulate their emotions or delay gratification. These virtues must be consistently modelled and taught by parents.

Parental authority has been weakened by the internet and smartphones such that we can no longer control the influences on our children. And parental authority has been undermined by the state. Until recently, it was understood that parents held primary authority for a child's moral development. Yet many schools now see it as their responsibility to drive social and even sexual change, swapping the teaching of knowledge and skills for false and destabilising ideologies such as critical race theory, queer theory, gender ideology and climate catastrophism.²⁸

When parental authority is undermined, it leaves children less safe and more confused and breaks the 'golden thread' that transfers our cultural inheritance and political economy from one generation to the next. Instead of encouraging collective responsibility for the raising of children, liberalism is inherently anti-child, since children constrain the freedom and autonomy of adults. Children are now widely viewed as a burden rather than a blessing – the majority of the British public support the two-child benefit limit.²⁹

It is not only social liberalism that has undermined the family unit. The liberal economic revolution has also weakened the family. A decline in industry has made it far more difficult for many men to find secure, well-paid work and thus become marriageable. The expansion of higher education has resulted in young people moving away from home, breaking up the extended families that are such an important support to parents and children. The financialisation of Western economies has raised house prices such that young couples cannot

²⁷ "School Readiness Survey" *Kindred Squared*, February 2024 <https://kindredsquared.org.United Kingdom/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Kindred-Squared-School-Readiness-Report-February-2024.pdf>

²⁸ Eric Kaufman, "Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary Britain", *Policy Exchange*, November 19 2022 <https://policyexchange.org.United Kingdom/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Politics-of-the-Culture-Wars-in-Contemporary-Britain.pdf>

²⁹ "Public support retaining the two-child benefit limit as Starmer gears up for first rebellion" YouGov, July 2024 <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/50140-public-support-retaining-the-two-child-benefit-limit-as-starmer-gears-up-for-first-rebellion>

afford homes or to live on one income. This economic pressure forces mothers of even young babies to leave their children in institutional childcare to return to paid work, a practice that is detrimental to both mothers and infants in the long-term.³⁰

Individual Interest vs. Family Interests

Our welfare state and tax system are designed around the individual rather than the family. We have socialised the cost of old age, and privatised the cost of having children. All British citizens are entitled to pensions and healthcare in their elderly years, regardless of whether they have replenished the tax-paying population by having children themselves. Yet those who bear and raise children—those who will become the workers and taxpayers of the future—must carry the cost alone. An emphasis on short term economic output above all else has devalued the status of parenthood, reduced public support for child-rearing, and demoted family life to the private realm.

If children no longer have sacred value, the decision to have children becomes a private endeavour rather than a social good, much like buying a luxury car. If raising the next generation is no longer a sacred responsibility, motherhood can be portrayed as mere



‘drudgery’. Even our state institutions perpetuate this narrative—a National Health Service advertisement for contraception implies women would be foolish to give up a life of heels and glossy lipstick for the unglamorous task of caring for an infant. No wonder parenthood holds insufficient appeal for many.

A nation that is hostile to the family is hostile to itself. Thus, a post-liberal, Christian political economy must begin by rebuilding the family. A sustainable economy—let alone a growing one—is simply not possible without more children and stronger families. Contrary to the liberal thought experiment, family is not a nebulous concept. The only consistently successful

³⁰ Erica Komisar “Why we should follow the science on motherhood and childcare” *Cap X*, April 11 2023 <https://capx.co/why-we-should-follow-the-science-on-motherhood-and-childcare/>

family model is the Western one, the Christian one, where children are given sacred status, marriage is monogamous and lifelong, and parental authority is sacrosanct.

Challenges For Public Policy

So how do we build a political economy on a foundation of family? First, we must re-model our welfare state, basing it not around the individual, or pensions, or worklessness, but around families. Marriage and childbearing should be encouraged and rewarded through fiscal incentives. We must re-establish a pro-natal culture, where babies and children are welcomed and honoured in all areas of life. There are no quick fixes to reversing the birthrate decline, but the example of Hungary³¹ demonstrates that generous family policies can begin to turn the tide. We must re-skill parents and give them back their authority, and crack down on state education that undermines, rather than reinforces, parental primacy.

It may take a generation or more to rebuild the family, but it is an important first step to recognise that the traditional Christian family, rather than GDP, is the building block of a successful post-liberal political economy. Strong families produce happy children who become virtuous adults. And virtuous adults build prosperous nations through their sacrificial efforts, motivated by love and loyalty for family, faith and flag.

³¹ "Hungary's Willingness to Have Children Increases the Most in Europe", *Hungary Today*, September 14, 2023
<https://hungarytoday.hu/hungarys-willingness-to-have-children-increased-the-most-in-europe/>