

Weekly Blues — Dispatches from the Conservative Frontline

York Tories secretary [Eve Rimington](#) laments the communication breakdown that dogs modern politics

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Image: York Tories

From a young age, we are taught the importance of listening to others. Many of us were assessed on Speaking and Listening as part of our English Language GCSE in the days before Michael Gove. However, it is clear that in 2016, the skill of listening has been absent in global politics.

2016 has so far been fraught with challenges from all corners of the world. These challenges cannot be faced by one state, or a few states alone. These challenges require us to work together, yet no one is listening. This makes addressing these challenges extremely difficult, and it is time this changed.

An example close to home – where people have stopped listening – is with regard to Brexit. On both sides of the campaign in the EU referendum, there was ignorance of the other, which I believe led to so much upset and surprise at the result by many. The remain side and its leading politicians in particular, failed to listen to the concerns of many leavers about their future, and those who wanted to vote to leave were often dismissed as uneducated, xenophobic and just plain wrong. Yet, many who voted leave didn't do it because they hated the EU in particular. For many leave voters, their choice was an expression of the fact that no one had been listening to them, and they felt voting leave was their only way to be heard.

On the other hand, many leave voters failed to listen to those pointing out the obvious flaws in much of the scare mongering coming from the leave campaign. Many people I know who voted leave were swayed by the claim that Turkey was bound to join the EU. Of course, since the coup, it has become obvious that Turkey will not be joining the EU any time soon. However, even before this Turkish membership was not on the agenda. Turkey has a long way to go in terms of its democracy and freedom of speech. It would also face an almost inevitable veto from Cyprus and possibly the UK if it reached that stage of application.

Yet, many leave voters refused to listen to this, and voted on the basis of a falsehood.

Secondly, the US Presidential election exposes how American politicians haven't been listening to the American people. Since the end of World War Two, the focus of American politicians has largely been on foreign policy, and the US' standing in the world. Yet now, the people are tired of their country being the world's policeman. Many feel it is about time that their politicians put them first, rather than their foreign ambitions. Trump has recognised this and exploited it. Whilst I deplore him, and fear his potential election, he is right that ordinary Americans feel ignored. Perhaps if American governments of the past had focused more on key domestic issues, Trump would not be a potential President.

Finally, the migrant and refugee crisis is one of the most testing that Europe has faced since the end of the Second World War. Greece and Italy, already struggling with domestic issues, have borne the brunt of this crisis. This crisis could have been the opportunity for the EU to fulfil its purpose of uniting Europe and manage the crisis. Yet, it has failed, and Europe feels more divided than ever. Countries in the EU are failing to listen to each other's concerns. The EU has been dismissive about how much pressure – Greece in particular – is under. Germany has failed to listen to its neighbours about the impact Merkel's refugee policy has had on them. The only way the crisis can be eased is if all European countries affected, regardless of EU membership, sit down and listen to each other's concerns, rather than follow conflicting policies. It is unhelpful for those trying to cross Europe and unhelpful for the citizens of Europe.

As we can see by examining these three defining issues of the year, it is clear to see that a bit of listening could have eased them considerably. Maybe if voters in the UK felt like they were included in politics, they may not have voted leave. Maybe if American citizens felt like their politicians were listening to them, rather than foreign leaders, Trump would not be as prominent as he is. Maybe if the countries of Europe adequately listened to each other's concerns, a system would be in place to best manage the fallout of the Syrian civil war.

However, many are refusing to listen to any voice that isn't their own, or one they want to hear. I only hope that people open their eyes and ears, and realise that the only way to face the problems this year has thrown at us, is to face them together.



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