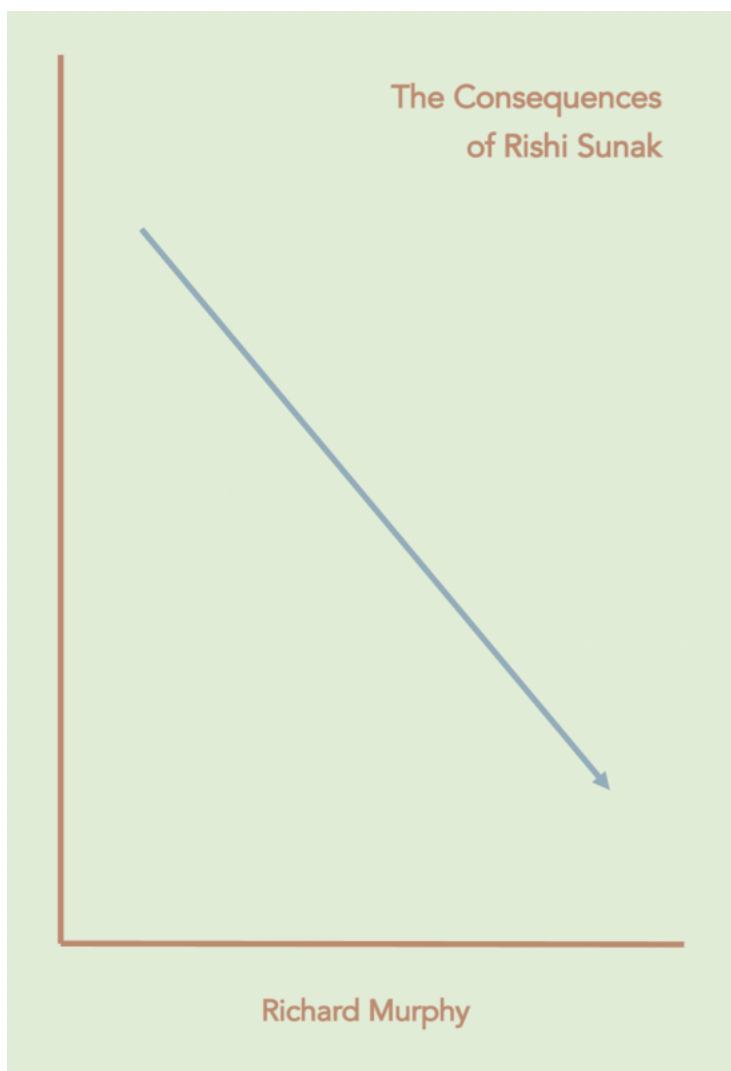


The consequences of Rishi Sunak: the PDF version

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I have this morning turned yesterday's long thread, and those from the two previous weekends, [into a PDF, which should be easier to read](#):



If printing this (and it's really intended for screen reading) the layout really requires two pages be printed per A4 sheet.

I have added this new introduction to the thread:

I wrote the text of this pamphlet on 24 and 25 March 2022 as a reaction to Rishi Sunak's Spring Statement (or budget), made to the House of Commons on 23 March 2022.

I got my first public comment on this statement in early. Alongside Mark Littlewood of the Institute of Economic Affairs (with whom I rarely agree) I have been offering budget commentary on the Jeremy Vine show on BBC Radio 2 for more than a decade now. We go live almost the moment the Chancellor sits down.

Oddly, we were the first guests to apparently appear live in the studio with Jeremy for two years, having been just about the last to do before Covid lockdown in March 2020, and now we were back. Jeremy noted that this felt like a Blues Brothers reunion, aided by the fact that we all happened to be wearing blue jackets. His pleasure in having familiar guests in front of him was apparent.

What I reminded Jeremy of as a result was that in March 2020 my comment to him on what turned out to be the first of the many Sunak statements made that year was that Sunak had completely misunderstood the scale of the crisis that he faced with regard to Covid at that time. What I suggested this time was that Sunak had completely misunderstood the scale of the crisis that he now faces with regard to mass poverty in the UK.

In comments between the three of us, which were not broadcast, I went further and suggested that the real Crisis was that Sunak did not appreciate that the challenge that he was really facing was the end of globalisation and the neoliberal politics that has underpinned that economic process. Quite simply, what was happening was that the old was dying and that the new was waiting to be born. It's a phrase that I did, of course, borrow from Gramsci, but that does not in any way change its relevance: this is what I think is happening.

I headed from BBC Radio 2 to the studios of LBC in Westminster later that afternoon. I was on the Andrew Marr show on that station between 6.30 and 7 pm that evening. In a discussion with Andrew before the show began, I made much the same point, that we appeared to be at the political point where everything had to change. I admit that, like Jeremy before him, I am not entirely convinced that he agreed with the argument, but equally, he was very clearly interested in it. Indeed, in his particular case, I am fairly sure that his own departure from the BBC was motivated by the desire to have more freedom to explore the changes that he very obviously thinks need to happen.

At the close of the Andrew Maher show I enjoyed a slightly surreal experience. At 6:58 the program changeover to bring in the following show began. I rose from my chair,

took off my microphone, and passed them over for Rishi Sunak to use because he was my replacement as the studio guest. We shook hands and spoke briefly as we changed places.

It was on the train home afterwards that I realised I probably needed to write a little more about the reasons for the failure of Sunak's Spring Statement that day. The universal condemnation of that statement right across the media, including in newspapers normally totally loyal to the Conservative party, the next morning was unusual, to say the least. However, almost no one was picking up the consequences of what Sunak was saying. It was easy for the media to concentrate on the immediate impacts of his negligence. Tales of real, and impending, poverty were everywhere. However, extrapolation of the consequences of Sunak's choice to strip large parts of the UK population of almost any disposable income over the which they might have any real choice as to how they might spend it was almost entirely ignored. As a consequence, I realised that the thread in this pamphlet needed to be written.

Writing a long Twitter thread is not a new activity for me. I have previously published a collection of them entitled 'Money for nothing and my Tweets for free'[\[1\]](#). In the run-up to this Spring Statement I had published a couple more that had attracted a lot of attention. One explained the cause of the inflation we are facing, and the other the scale of the resulting poverty. These are now appendices in this pamphlet and provide background information to the main argument within it.

I admit that I did not plan to write a thread as long as the one that follows. Nor did I expect that many people would read it once I had published it. No one should really write a Twitter thread of around 6,000 words, or expect anyone to get to the end of it, but they did. This note is being written on the morning of 27th March, just over 24 hours after the thread was published. The stats for the opening Tweet in the thread are as follows at this moment:

Some people said in response to the thread that it should be a pamphlet. I agree. That is why I have produced this version.

Others said it read more like a book plan than a Twitter thread. Those doing so are right: this thread had a dual purpose. Many of the themes in this thread need significant elaboration. My publisher will have a copy of this note soon after it is published.

These points are, though, incidental. The key issues are those noted in the thread. My sense that Sunak's apparent total indifference to the crisis developing around him, about which he claimed he could do nothing, has only grown. In a sense it is epochal: it does, I think (and hope) mark the end of an era.

Anyone who has been following my blog since it began in 2006 will know that I have rarely been happy with neoliberalism and all its consequences, from tax havens onwards. Those a little more observant will also have noted that I have rarely promoted

solutions that might be described as socialist. There are three good reasons.

The first is that I do not see conflict-based dogmas that are used to underpin a political creed as a solution to the problems that we face, which I think require cooperation, and socialism is a confrontational creed of this sort.

Second, I do not think the public ownership of assets is in itself a panacea. It is all too obvious that mismanagement, from simple incompetence to outright corruption, can exist in the public as well as the private sectors and for that reason I see any change of ownership as being a little relevance in itself in many (but not all) cases. The exceptions are based on need driven by market failure, or the simple absence of market-based solutions, and not dogma.

Third, I had to think that there is real value in the partnership between the state and private sectors, so long as each does what it is best at, and plays within the rules laid down by ethical, liberal democracy where the needs of all are paramount.

What is described in this thread is, then, something which as yet does not really have a name. I might use social democracy, except that seems timeworn. I am also, candidly, not too worried about that absence of a name as yet. That's because I'm not really very interested in labels. I am interested in consequences.

At this moment the consequences of Sunak are mass poverty, failing public services, injustice, and failure to tackle climate change. He can only plead guilty to all those things. The evidence on the ground is that there is no defence available to him on any of these allegations. He is, quite literally, destroying the whole fabric of society as we have known it with a casual indifference that is callous and very painful to both witness and experience.

I wrote this thread to say just that. I suspect there will be more to come that will explore the issues that we must address in more depth.

Richard Murphy

Ely, Cambridgeshire

March 2022

[\[11\]](#) Available as a free download, here
<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2021/04/14/mfnamtff/>