

2022 is not looking good

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I have just posted [this thread on Twitter](#). It actually began life as a blog post, but then I realised it suited both media, so it's gone there too:

It has to be said that things have a habit of not going to plan at present. I could not have guessed how 2020 would progress at the start of that year. I am expecting 2022 to be the same. A thread....

I began the year without a lot of optimism. But I did not really expect war in Ukraine, although the risk existed. I hung to the hope that Putin was not that callously stupid, but he was.

I similarly hung to a hope that the Tories would not really want to create a recession. I was wrong on that too. They are increasing interest rates, which is so absurd when it is obvious that demand is already being crushed, whilst Sunak's indifference to the crisis that is so obviously coming will do for him even if his own family's affairs do not.

Maybe I will be wrong on Le Pen as well, where I retain hope that the French might vote for Macron even if they do not like him, much.

And then there is Covid, where we are not, as someone said yesterday (and I cannot remember who), so much living with Covid but are instead living with an ideology of denial with regard to the reality of Covid.

Around the world populism is far from crushed. India, Hungary and the States prove that.

None of these are good signs. This government has contributed to all of them. It aided and abetted Russia and its oligarchs, and let Putin undermine democracy here just as Johnson wanted.

Brexit has encouraged Le Pen and made her toxic politics seem more plausible when they remain as offensive as ever.

But it is the UK domestic situation where in some ways I am most shocked, which is saying something given what is happening in Ukraine.

I did not expect a UK government to turn on its own population in the way that this one has done.

Despite years of preparation for the final assault of neoliberalism on ordinary people I simply had not anticipated that those in power in the Treasury and the Bank of England really cared so little.

What we now know is that they are willing to destroy the well-being of millions in this country to feed their dogmatic beliefs in a small state, balanced budgets and the power of markets to solve problems, for none of which is there any evidence.

I cannot predict the outcome of war in Ukraine, except that it will continue for much longer than anyone expected and with many more casualties, and refugees, which his government will continue to resist helping.

I have no clue what will happen in France, but the risk that it will go the way of Hungary looks to be real at present, and profoundly worrying.

I think I can safely predict that the Democrats will be trashed in the mid-term elections later this year and that will help no one.

I know Covid will not go away. When one in twelve have it, and reinfection is happening on a regular basis now with massive potential long term health impacts, the irresponsibility of the government on this issue will be one for the history books.

And what I am also now sure about is that the February GDP figures are not a blip: they are the sign of the recession that is to come. Frightened families are already cutting their spending as they face bills they do not know how to pay, and this can only get worse.

At first this will be called a cost-of-living crisis.

Then it will begin to be an unemployment crisis as the lack of spending begins to hit the leisure sector, first of all.

Then there will be a debt crisis.

And a housing crisis as both those with mortgages and who rent begin to lose their homes.

After that there may be a banking crisis.

All of which will be because the government has chosen to do nothing to help people facing the biggest economic crisis to hit families in living memory, and well beyond.

Sickness, homelessness, poverty, hunger, and the loss of hope are things I hoped we could avoid in the UK this year. But I now do not think that we can, all because of government decisions to impose them on millions.

None of this was necessary. But it's going to happen because the Tories want it to.

And what will they say in response? They'll claim there is nothing they can do about it "because we have to balance the books".

Martin Lewis has said there might be civil unrest this year. I would never want that. But unless this government learns very, very quickly that it has to tackle this crisis that is of its own making by refusing to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, by letting Covid run riot and by increasing interest rates then I think Martin is right.

What will happen then? I do not know. But with an authoritarian government in power I am worried about their potential reaction.

The world beyond our borders is very dangerous right now. But it's grim here too. 2022 is already turning out badly.