

Are we near a tipping point?

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Are we near a tipping point? I think this question has to be asked because so much of what is going on in the world right now feels so incredibly fragile that the sense that something must break, and soon, is very strong.

Let me be clear about what I mean by tipping point. In the context in which I'm using the term, tipping points are critical, often irreversible thresholds where small, incremental changes cause a system to reorganise abruptly, triggering self-perpetuating, rapid shifts to a new state. These phenomena, which are often characterised by positive feedback loops, can occur in climate, ecological, and social systems. The last is my concern here.

So what is so fragile in the world at present that the tipping point feels as though it must happen?

The US government

The US government is one system where it seems that change must happen. Trump is intent upon destroying even the pretence of democracy in the USA, with a regime of violence that is horrific in its actions. The scale of reaction in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and now elsewhere, has been so strong that it feels as if this reign of terror cannot last: a reaction that will overthrow the tyranny does feel as though it is inevitable. The only question comes down to timing, and what cost must be paid to effect the necessary change.

NATO

Also, because of Trump's actions, the realignment of world power now feels inevitable. The tipping point at which NATO, including US membership, ceases to be relevant would appear to have been reached. What is now clear is that a new defence alliance of the "middle states" of Europe and elsewhere must be created to challenge the power of the USA, Russia, and China, all of which are inherently divisive societies, [as I discuss in today's video](#). **The question, once again, is the cost: it is going to be big**.

The UN

This then suggests another potential tipping point. With the three powers mentioned in the previous section holding a majority of the permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council, the prospect of that organisation retaining any real relevance appears remote. If the world is to line up against their power, as seems likely, then either the rest of the world will demand reform of the United Nations, or an alternative organisation, dedicated to a continuing form of international justice around which countries can coalesce, seems much more likely. This would, at the same time, provide an alternative to the so-called “Board of Peace” that Trump is promoting, which is very obviously the exact opposite of what it claims to be. Again, a tipping point seems not just on the horizon, but fairly close in this case.

The Labour Party

There are also tipping points in the domestic political scene. Starmer’s actions in ensuring that Andy Burnham has been blocked as a candidate to contest the forthcoming by-election in Manchester guarantees that very large numbers of people in the Parliamentary Labour Party, and the broader Labour Party, will now feel alienated from his decision-making processes, and from what they mean for democratic representation within that party, and for that party’s relationship with the broader democratic process which is, no doubt, why many joined the Labour Party in the first place.

If Labour’s management of its engagement with democracy is to be solely about the preservation of the power of a deeply unpopular leader, then either that leader or the party has reached a tipping point. Either Starmer goes, giving the party a chance to redeem itself, or the party fails. The risk of one or both now appears to create tipping points.

Reform

There are other issues that might create tipping points within the domestic political scene. In particular, I know it is popular to say that Farage will be the next Prime Minister of the UK, but I think that is incredibly unlikely. I rule nothing out, but I think he has reached peak popularity now, a long time before having any chance of securing that office. His associations with Trump, and people’s revulsion at the advance of right-wing politics within the UK, including the threats to well-being implicit in Farage’s programme, will, I think, all lead to a fundamental shift in politics away from the far right. His actions will, over the next two or three years, alienate a great many people. Again, what I am suggesting is that the tipping point is likely.

Summary

Of course, I may be wrong about all these things, but what is undeniable is that we are

living in a period of intense volatility. If that is the case, the chance that momentum towards change will gather to the point of becoming unstoppable is very real. That momentum could deliver tyranny, or it could enhance democratic freedoms and deliver a politics of care.

I do, of course, live in hope of the latter. But what I am sure about is that things are going to change very rapidly over the next few years, and the period of chaos through which we are living will, as a consequence, continue, but might also provide the chance of something very much better.