

The new world we need is going to be messy - and that w...

Published: January 23, 2026, 9:21 am

I am tired. Specifically, I am tired of Trump. I am tired of the confusion that he is creating. I am tired of the chaos that he is leaving in his wake. I am tired of the uncertainty that is harming people's lives. I am tired of the threats. I am tired of the obsequiousness of UK political leaders in response to Trump. I am tired of the incoherence of leaders whose only success at Davos was in exposing their own lack of courage.

I guess, to a certain degree, I am also just tired of talking about this. It has been a physically and mentally draining week. I cannot be the only one thinking that. Unless you've stuck your head in the sand, the events of this year, so far, have been like the worst kind of rollercoaster: the sort that cannot guarantee it will return you to the start point in safety, having terrified you on the way, nonetheless.

That said, what has really got me is not Trump. I called him out long before he was returned to the White House for a second term. I knew he was a fascist. I described him as such. I took his threats to Greenland and Canada seriously, long before it seemed the world was prepared to do so.

You only had to read Project 2025, well before the year arrived, to realise the intention of those around him. It was to deliver mayhem and chaos in pursuit of their ultimate goal. That goal is to turn the USA, and those regions of the world that it might be able to control, which they now term the Western Hemisphere, into a white male Christian theocracy. They made it clear it would be governed as an empire, by a president who wants to be king. All of that was evident in advance.

Seeing them seek to turn this into practice is not, then, as surprising to me as it might be to some. But what is staggering is this: despite the vast sums we, and our supposed European allies, spend on defence intelligence, our leaders appear to have been wholly unaware that they should prepare for this eventuality. That Trump was intent on pursuing policy totally alien to every one of our supposed allies should have been abundantly clear. Except that it appears it was not. Not to any of our NATO allies, or to us, all of whom now appear to have been caught off guard by what has happened,

despite all the warnings that were issued.

So certain have they been in what they like to think was the rules-based order, which has now very clearly been consigned to history, that they never imagined the possibility that Trump would really break the rules. And that he would deliberately spread disorder. This possibility was, apparently, beyond their imagination. That is why we are all left in such a dangerous situation now.

My point is this. Defence is not a matter of just having the right armaments, in the right place, at the right time, to challenge the physical threat that another state poses. That is the last resort, when all else has failed.

Defence is, instead, about making a commitment to something worth defending, and then evidencing why it is worthwhile, so that support can be secured from the people of a country. Defence relies, then, upon support for a system of government that people can believe in, to the extent that they are willing to sacrifice a part of their material wellbeing and, in some situations, their lives, to defend this thing that they believe to be of value.

Unless such a system exists, which necessarily means that it integrates ethics, political vision, ability to deliver, good government, good governance, accountability, sound economics, and a commitment to everyone, and not just a few, so that all can prosper, then defence through armaments is almost meaningless. Unless such a system exists, people will not be willing to sacrifice whatever is demanded of them when the time comes to man the barricades, trenches, or whatever else is physically expected of them.

And it is this vision, and even that understanding, that is missing in NATO. That has been cruelly exposed.

Rules and order were never enough.

Nor was the neoliberal system of government, which was never intended to benefit most in society and was always about delivering rewards for a few, ever going to be enough to inspire people to believe it was worth defending, because it clearly is not.

If we are to have a new defence system now, and it is clear that we need one, then we must start with the definition of what it is that we want to create that is worthy of defence. That definition must be focused around a politics of care, where everyone is treated as being of value, and society is organised so that everyone can take part to the fullest extent possible. Only such a society will ever foster the sentiment that it is worth defending.

Can we do that? That is the question that needs to be asked. But I admit it is leaving me feeling worried about the possibility of success. And that is because I can already

see too many people resorting to thinking about rules and order.

I've been told in the last few days that my willingness to think flexibly about MMT, and how it might be used as a tool rather than an ideology to be defended, is wrong.

It isn't.

MMT is like a spade. Its only usefulness is what it can be used for. Attempts to define it precisely are meaningless. What matters is experimenting with the opportunities it creates. Those who should understand that and be pragmatic are, instead, becoming the enemy of the good.

I feel the same about being told that I have a hang-up about the term socialism. That statement is not untrue. I do have a hang-up about the term socialism. But that is precisely because so much of the socialist ethos is about creating division.

It says that society can be divided into workers and the rest. And that simply is untrue. The rest are not capitalists. They're not exploiters. They're children. They're students. They're the elderly. They're people who can't work. They're people who work for themselves and who therefore create and provide their own capital. And so many others besides.

The world simply does not exist around neat definitions like "workers" and "the rest", or "the bourgeoisie", if you like. That is not true. Not in MMT. Not in political thought. Not in anything else. And that is why the term socialist does not work, precisely because it does, and is intended to, alienate.

I have also been told that I should not have welcomed [Mark Carney's speech at Davos](#), which was genuinely courageous. Let me be clear: I am entirely sure that my political differences with Mark Carney are real and remain in place. But if he can see that neoliberalism is over, and has been ruptured, and that a replacement is required, then he is on the same journey that I am on. That makes him a fellow traveller, whether those who wish to divide us like it or not.

My point is this. Creating the new world we need is going to be messy. It is going to require compromises. It is going to mean that we have to work with people with whom we don't always agree entirely. And it is not going to produce perfection, because that is a goal that only guarantees we go nowhere.

I've lived in this world for long enough now to know that what I've just described is fact. It is how progress is made. It is how change happens. And it is in our ability to create common ground instead of differences that strength is created.

I am fatigued by this pointless opposition, and that is fuelling my tiredness, because I fear that this need for compromise is not understood, just as the threat from Trump was not. I fear this incomprehension is just as dangerous as that of our leaders.

If you're expecting purity of outcomes from what I'm writing, you are seriously mistaken. In this messy world we live in, where accommodation of the other is vital for any form of success, that is not what I am looking for. And it is not what I ever hope to achieve.

The world we need to build now will be built upon recognition that there is sufficient of ourselves in others, with whom we may have some disagreement, that we can work in common for the greater good, and to defend what is valuable to be found amongst our fellow travellers here on Earth, whoever they might be, and however we might find them.

What we have in common is much greater than what divides us. And if the result is a little messy, so be it. The greatest political successes come from letting all people believe they have most of what they desire, even if perfection is just out of reach.

Please understand that. If you want rules and order, go somewhere else. If you want progress towards what is good, I am interested in finding how to achieve that. That is my goal. It should be our goal now, I think.