

Foreboding

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I wrote yesterday's post on the need for a new approach to national security and resilience with what I admit was a growing sense of dismay.

I often suggest, when it's asked why I write so much, that my reason for doing so is to understand the world in which I live, and as that post developed and the logical conclusions that it suggested became apparent, it became increasingly clear how great the threats that we face at present are.

Simultaneously, it was obvious that so much of the current debate on what our politicians call defence, which can be described as actions dependent upon armaments, is inappropriate in a world where by far the largest threats that we face come from the actions of the USA and Israel. Each poses a threat far greater than anything that Russia might create, and yet the acknowledgement of this is only seemingly recognised by minority parties in this country, whose bravery in doing so I welcome.

At the same time, my sense of foreboding grew. That worries me because I am, essentially, an optimistic person. That sentiment has always been based on awareness of the need to recognise, appraise, and then, if necessary, take action to mitigate risks, whether immediate or remote. It would be entirely possible to suggest that there have been short-term occasions in my life when I have underachieved as a result. I have, however, always presumed that life is a long-term game and, as a consequence, I have made a habit of prioritising long-term advantage over short-term wins. Nothing has ever persuaded me of the inappropriateness of this strategy, which has served me well.

That said, no one who has read what I've had to say here, in my books, and elsewhere over the last 20 years or so could doubt that I have, over that period, questioned the neoliberal folly of adopting a strategy that I think is the exact opposite of that which I have personally adopted. Throughout the neoliberal world, in our country, and within our economy, short-term gains have been chosen in priority to long-term sustainability. I have long warned that there would be a price to pay for this, and my fear now is that the day of reckoning for this folly is very close.

Perhaps I should have recognised that the USA was always going to be the place to pull neoliberalism down because it has always pursued excess to a greater degree than anywhere else, and it was always that excess that was going to destroy the structure of this particular form of capitalism, which is now at the heart of the threat to our well-being.

Perhaps, too, I should have recognised the threat from Israel, because I remember the 1967 Six-Day War, and the Middle East crisis that evolved from 1973 onwards. Israel's unwillingness to live within its agreed international borders has been a continual theme throughout my lived memory, and that this, too, might reach a point where its aspirations created crisis should, I suspect, have been more obvious to me than it was until recent years.

That said, the sense of foreboding comes from something more. The international scene is disastrous. Our economy is heading for crisis, but what is at least as worrying is that, first, many politicians seem completely unaware of this, and, second, many people are indifferent to the fact that these things might happen because they see them as a necessary precursor to change. Far too many of that latter group also appear to want a far-right solution.

I sense that all around me. I now know that I live in a community where maybe 30% of people are willing to vote for neo-fascism, with all the cruelty that is implicit in that. Worryingly, there is nothing unusual in saying that now. Almost certainly, you live in such a community, too. That worries me most of all.

A sense of toleration has been lost. To look at a representative issue, I am aware that there has been a flood of new donations to the RNLI in response to the attacks on it, its operations to save people in the English Channel, and the threats made to its crews, but I am equally aware that many people are now deeply hostile to what it is doing. Hearts and minds are becoming increasingly divided, and that troubles me greatly.

In all this, there is a personal challenge. Do I give up, cower in the corner, and admit that I've been promoting something that people do not want, even though, by definition, if 30% of people are now supportive of neo-fascism, 70% are not? Alternatively, do I take a risk and continue to fight for what I think is right?

There is not really a choice in that, but I am aware of the divisions, hostilities, and sometimes straightforward nastiness that pervade this country now, and it is precisely because I am so worried that our lacklustre neoliberal politicians cannot see the responsibility that falls upon them to address the resulting crises that we face that I feel the need to keep working on things like a necessary alternative budget, as well as the book that I am writing.

I worked on both yesterday and enjoyed the writing process. The urgency, however, feels very high to me right now. I fear we are near a tipping point, where the

acceptance of fascism, racism, misogyny, prejudice, and intolerance is becoming normalised. The BBC appears to me to be at the forefront of this, and that is something new, and we all have a duty to resist it. The alternatives are too horrible to imagine, for everyone, including many of those who now think such things are a solution.

The reality can be expressed in a new way:

*First they came for the RNLI
And I did not speak out
Because I was not in a lifeboat crew.*

*Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.*