

George Monbiot

Our Path

9th November 2022

Because Twitter threads aren't working at the moment (thanks Elon!), I'm republishing a [chain of tweets](#) about how we should rise to the challenge of democratic collapse.

By George Monbiot, published on [monbiot.com](#), 9th November 2022

Here's where I think we now stand, and how we should respond. A thread.

1. There is a global trend towards political impunity. In many nations, politicians are testing the limits of constitutional power, and discovering that they can get away with almost anything.
2. Lying, corruption, dark-money funding, voter suppression, vote-rigging as cynical pols around the world learn from each other, they find that constitutions and legal systems can everywhere be gamed, using similar tactics, in almost any way they wish.
3. In the age-old contest between money and democracy, money now wins hands down. Those who spend most win. Thanks to the Pollution Paradox*, the arc of politics bends inexorably, under this system, towards corruption.
4. *The Pollution Paradox: "The more damaging the commercial enterprise, the more money it must spend on politics to ensure it's not regulated out of existence. As a result, politics comes to be dominated by the most harmful commercial enterprises."
5. Cynical politicians also know that the persuasive power of modern communications enables them to win elections even when they offer nothing to the people. This knowledge, more than any other factor, has changed the nature of politics and made a mockery of democracy.
6. To put it bluntly, an increasing number of those who claim to represent us couldn't give a cuss about us. And they make ever less effort to disguise it. Power in many nations is

little more than a supermarket sweep: fill your trolley before the whistle goes.

7. As trust and hope collapse, the attractions of “anti-politics” rise. “Anti-politics” means fascism, or something adjacent to it. Fascism is, of course, highly political, and funded by the very interests that caused the political mess it claims to address.

8. Fascism’s vehicle is conspiracy theories. Regardless of where on the political spectrum they arise, conspiracy theories transport people – sometimes *the most surprising people* – into fascism’s parking lot. CTs, born of political despair, have reached epidemic levels.

9. Global negotiations are a charade. The rich world governments meeting in Egypt at the moment have *no intention* of taking the action required to address the climate crisis, paying the money they’ve promised poor nations or doing anything other than what corporate lobbyists demand.

10. They would rather see the end of the habitable planet than upset their sponsors.

11. In many nations, mainstream progressive parties have responded to this disastrous slide with precisely zero political innovation and design. They seek to hold power within the existing system, rather than rebuild it on different lines. So they are constantly fighting a losing battle.

12. In the US, some analysts believe that the failure to resolve this political crisis will lead to civil war. We might shake our heads at the follies of that nation, but it is just further down the road we are also travelling.

13. There has been plenty of democratic innovation proposed by citizens, but a tacit elite consensus prevents it from penetrating the political establishment.

14. Keir Starmer exemplifies this elite consensus, resisting even the most basic change, demanded by reformers in this country since the 19th century: proportional representation. Let alone the innovations required to respond to our 21st-century crisis.

15. So what do we do? Two things, I think. First, we spell out our theory of change. I’m pretty clear about what mine is: using our new [knowledge of social tipping points](#) to create the shift we want to see.

16. What this knowledge tells us is that it’s pointless and unnecessary to try to persuade people in the opposite corner. In seeking to do so, we have destroyed the efficacy of our

movements, endlessly compromising for fear of alienating those most antagonistic to us.

17. We *should* preach to the choir, but keep expanding the choir, pushing out the concentric circles until we reach the 25% penetration of a new perspective or a new idea that [triggers social tipping](#).

18. A good model is the campaign for marriage equality, whose aims have been achieved in much of Europe from a very low baseline in a remarkably short period. What it shows above all is that **you do not need to persuade your opponents**.

19. Once you have passed the tipping point (acceptance of the idea by roughly 25% of the population), almost everyone falls into line with the new status quo. People who fiercely opposed marriage equality now claim they always supported it, and they genuinely seem to believe it.

20. After the war, everyone became a member of the Resistance.

21. What this tells us is that we do not have to water down our message. We do not have to meet neoliberals, reactionaries or fascists halfway. We pursue what we want with courage and determination.

22. If you want another example, look at the systemic change achieved by our opponents, the neoliberals. They didn't seek to bring us round to their point of view. They had a clear theory of change, they knew exactly what they wanted, and they didn't stop until they got it.

23. Admittedly, it was easier for them, because they had big money on their side. They could bulldoze their way to power. But once they had got there, most people seemed grudgingly to accept their worldview and shifted their beliefs to accommodate it. At least for a while.

24. Second, we strategically seize every opportunity that presents itself. As soon as a city, region or nation elects a sympathetic government, we don't just leave them to get on with it, we press for maximum political redesign.

25. The classic example is the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil, in which innovative citizens used the opportunity of a PT municipal government to introduce participatory budgeting in 1989. It transformed the city and their lives.

26. The next challenge is to embed and spread the change.

27. Sure, none of it is easy. Like anything in life, if it were easy, it would not be worth doing. But it's much easier than living with the results of our gathering political dysfunction.

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