

Known Enemies Hide Behind Words. Our Own Side Hides Inside Them

Adam Tugwell | 22 March 2026



In the past week, a familiar pattern has begun to take shape. Following Iran's strike toward the US base at Diego Garcia, officials and commentators across Europe have moved quickly to suggest that the attack demonstrates a new and imminent threat: that Tehran may now possess missiles capable of reaching Berlin, Paris, or London. The claim may prove accurate, partially accurate, or entirely speculative. But its timing is unmistakable.

Europe has been hesitant about deeper involvement in a conflict that is already destabilising global markets and pushing the world economy toward a dangerous edge.

Public support is fragile. Political unity is thin. Economic resilience is weaker than governments care to admit.

Yet within hours of the Diego Garcia incident, a narrative emerged that expands the perceived threat dramatically and invites European governments - and their populations - to see themselves not as observers, but as potential targets.

This is how wartime narratives work. They do not need to be false to be effective. They only need to be **useful**.

Governments rarely lie outright. They simply emphasise the parts of the picture that encourage the response they want. A missile fired at a remote island becomes a hypothetical strike on a European capital. A regional conflict becomes a continental one. A reluctant ally becomes a necessary participant. And all of it happens through language - through the careful framing of risk, danger, and inevitability.

The danger is not the claim itself. The danger is how quickly such claims can shift public perception, close down debate, and create the sense that escalation is not a choice but a duty.

The Economic Reality Beneath the Rhetoric

While attention is fixed on military capability, a quieter crisis is unfolding in the background. The global oil market is already under severe strain. Shipping routes are disrupted. Insurance costs are rising. Supply chains - still fragile from years of accumulated shocks - are beginning to creak under the pressure.

Even without further escalation, the coming months could see significant disruption to the systems that keep food on shelves, fuel in vehicles, and businesses functioning. These systems are far more vulnerable than most political leaders are willing to acknowledge publicly.

A widening conflict would not simply raise defence budgets. It would reshape daily life. It would affect household bills, food prices, interest rates, and employment. It would test the resilience of communities that have long been encouraged to rely on global systems that are now showing signs of strain.

This is the part of the story that rarely makes the headlines. Yet it is the part that will matter most to ordinary people.

How Global Shocks Become Local Crises

This is the part of the story that is most often missing from public debate: the explanation of how geopolitical events translate into everyday disruption.

The mechanism is simple, and brutally fast:

- Oil prices rise.
- Shipping becomes more expensive or more dangerous.
- Import-dependent countries face delays and shortages.
- Supermarkets adjust stock levels.
- Businesses cut costs or close.
- Households feel the squeeze long before governments admit the scale of the problem.

Modern life is built on long, delicate supply chains that depend on stability, cheap energy, and predictable trade routes.

When any of these falter, the effects cascade. A conflict in one region can empty shelves in another. A disruption in shipping can raise food prices across a continent. A spike in oil can push entire industries into crisis.

This is why the public cannot afford to treat the current situation as distant or abstract.

The world is more interconnected than ever - and more fragile than it appears.

The Moral Distance Between What Is Said and What Is Done

In times of relative calm, governments justify their actions through policy papers, parliamentary debates, and legal frameworks. In times of crisis, the language becomes simpler and more emotive. Words like “threat,” “necessity,” and “protection” dominate. The moral complexity is flattened into a binary: us versus them, safety versus danger, action versus paralysis.

But beneath the surface, the same machinery is at work - the machinery that replaces morality with legality, accountability with procedure, and truth with narrative convenience.

When officials speak of new threats, they are not only informing the public; they are shaping the moral landscape in which future decisions will be judged. They are preparing the ground for actions that might otherwise face resistance.

This is why language matters.

This is why timing matters.

This is why scrutiny matters.

A World Changing Faster Than Its Citizens Are Prepared For

There is a final, uncomfortable truth that sits beneath all of this: **time is short**. Not because of any single missile or any single government statement, but because the systems we rely on are already under strain.

The oil crisis now underway is not a distant risk. It is happening now, and its effects are beginning to ripple through global trade.

If supply chains falter - whether through conflict, sanctions, market panic, or simple logistical breakdown - life will change quickly. And when it does, the burden will fall not on governments or institutions, but on households and communities.

This is where the conversation must shift. For decades, citizens in developed countries have been positioned as consumers of stability rather than participants in it. We have been encouraged to believe that supply chains are self-correcting, that markets are self-balancing, and that governments will always intervene before real hardship arrives.

But the assumptions that underpinned that worldview are eroding.

If the coming months bring disruption, the role of ordinary people will change. Not because they choose it, but because the world around them changes. The question is whether that shift happens consciously - or whether it is forced upon them.

Local food production, community-based supply chains, resilient local economies, and the rebuilding of practical capability are no longer abstract ideas. They are becoming necessary components of stability in a world where global systems can no longer be taken for granted.

This is not alarmism.

It is preparation.

It is responsibility.

A Closing Warning

The narrative emerging around Iran's missile capabilities is not just a story about military threat. It is a reminder of how quickly the world can shift, and how easily public attention can be steered toward the dramatic while the structural risks grow quietly in the background.

We cannot control the decisions made in foreign ministries or military headquarters. But we can control how we think, how we prepare, and how we respond to the changes that are coming.

Time is short - not for panic, but for clarity.

Not for fear, but for responsibility.

Not for retreat, but for rebuilding.

The world is changing.

Our role within it must change too.

Further Reading: Context, Consequences, and Constructive Responses

The articles and books below expand on the core themes of this essay: how narratives are formed in moments of crisis, how economic and moral systems shape everyday outcomes, and why resilience must increasingly be rebuilt from the local level upward. Readers may wish to move through the sections sequentially, or dip into the areas most relevant to their interests.

1. Understanding the Current Moment

Energy, conflict, and the gap between official reassurance and lived reality

If Government Is Sparing With an Energy Bailout, It Can No Longer Be Sparing With the Truth

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2026/03/21/if-government-is-sparing-with-an-energy-bailout-it-can-no-longer-be-sparing-with-the-truth/>

A direct examination of the emerging energy crisis and the political reluctance to speak honestly about its scale. This piece argues that when governments limit material support, transparency becomes a moral obligation rather than a communication choice.

The War Behind the World We Know

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2026/01/05/the-war-behind-the-world-we-know/>

An exploration of how modern prosperity is underpinned by ongoing, often invisible conflict. The article connects geopolitical instability to everyday economic systems that depend on continuous extraction, transport, and enforcement.

2. Moral Framing and the Language of Power

How legality, narrative, and procedure replace ethical accountability

The Moral Void at the Heart of War

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2026/03/14/the-moral-void-at-the-heart-of-war/>

This article examines how modern warfare is justified through abstract language that removes human consequence from decision-making. It highlights the widening gap between moral responsibility and institutional process.

When Legality Replaced Morality

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2026/03/05/when-legality-replaced-morality/>

A deeper philosophical critique of governance systems that prioritise legal compliance over ethical outcomes. The piece explains how actions can be “lawful” while remaining profoundly destructive or irresponsible.

3. Food, Energy, and Practical Resilience

Why local capability is becoming a necessity rather than a lifestyle choice

Grow Your Own — Home Growing

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2025/07/31/grow-your-own-or-home-growing/>

A practical and cultural argument for household-level food production. The article frames home growing not as self-sufficiency theatre, but as a foundational resilience skill in an era of supply disruption.

Foods We Can Trust: A Blueprint for Food Security and Community Resilience in the UK

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2025/12/15/foods-we-can-trust-a-blueprint-for-food-security-and-community-resilience-in-the-uk-online-text/>

A comprehensive proposal for rebuilding food security through regional systems, trusted supply relationships, and community governance. It connects food resilience to social stability and democratic accountability.

4. Rebuilding Local Economies and Social Capacity

Alternatives to fragile global dependency

A Community Route

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2025/01/17/a-community-route-full-text/>

This work outlines a practical pathway for communities seeking to regain agency over economic and social outcomes. It emphasises cooperation, shared responsibility, and locally rooted decision-making.

The Local Economy Governance System

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2025/11/21/the-local-economy-governance-system-online-text/>

A structural framework for managing local economies in ways that prioritise resilience, fairness, and long-term stability over short-term growth metrics.

The Contribution Culture: Transforming Work, Business, and Governance for Our Local Future

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2025/12/30/the-contribution-culture-transforming-work-business-and-governance-for-our-local-future-with-legs/>

An exploration of how economic participation can move beyond employment and consumption toward contribution, capability, and shared stewardship.

5. A Broader Economic Re-Imagining

Moving beyond crisis management toward systemic change

An Economy for the Common Good

<https://adamtugwell.blog/2025/02/24/an-economy-for-the-common-good-full-text/>

A foundational text proposing an economic model oriented around collective wellbeing rather than extraction and growth for its own sake. It ties moral responsibility directly to economic design.

Further Information

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www.adamtugwell.blog

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