**A continuation of last year**

**If you want to know where we are heading, look back to where we started**

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As 2022 draws to a close, we perform the familiar ritu al of celebrating the year gone by, while heralding the new one with the false promise of new beginnings. Wemake resolutions—to stop smoking, lose weight, find more time to relax—the same ones we’ve made before and failed to keep, hoping that this time will be different. But it takes more than a new page on the calendar to alter behaviour. And that’s true for both people and the world we inhabit. After reading dozens of fanciful projections by political commentators about “big” changes in store for 2023, offering a corrective note feels imperative. In many ways, 2023 will be nothing more than a continuation of 2022. In domestic politics and international affairs, the constants remain the same. Barring some dramatic unexpected events, things will slog on as they have been. Let’s look at a few: Russia’s war in Ukraine: Despite hopeful projections that Ukraine will decisively defeat Russia or that Putin’s rule will end, neither are likely. Russia, though negatively impacted by sanctions and heavy losses in Ukraine, shows no sign of ending its assault. And while the US provision of armaments has enabled Ukrainians to strike back, it has also exacerbated the conflict. Ukrainians and young Russian conscripts pay the biggest price—the former subjected to horrific attacks, the latter forced into service. This conflict will continue into 2023 with neither side ready or able to surrender or back away from their maximal demands. Europe, already reeling from an economic downturn and successive waves of refugees that have worsened internal fissures, will continue its rightward drift. Winter fuel shortages brought on by the war will continue to test the mettle of Europe’s democratic institutions. Iran: Iranians, who have long chafed under the Ayatollahled regime’s oppressive rule, engaged in inspiring and courageous mass demonstrations this year, but the repressive institutions of the state remain in control—and will continue to. Despite economic sanctions and the country’s increasing isolation from the West, Iran’s leadership has successfully found allies and markets for their oil (and weapons) reducing the prospects of either a new nuclear deal or a reduction in Iran’s meddlesome and aggressive regional role. Israel and the Palestinians: Israel’s new government has publicly declared its intention to accelerate settlement in the occupied lands and intensify the repression of the captive Palestinian population. The official US response, dictated by domestic politics rather than principle, has been a lame “wait and see”—as if the new government hasn’t already earned a rebuke. In the face of harsh Israeli policies, US public opinion will continue to shift, but not yet enough to push Congress or the White House to act decisively to stop Israeli behaviour. US Political Dysfunction: At home, political dysfunction continues. Republicans will do everything they can to disrupt the last two years of President Biden’s first term in office. And the Republican Party will continue to cannibalise itself, demonstrating the pervasive hold of Donald Trump and “Trumpism” over the GOP base. The same pundits who foolishly predicted a “Red wave” in 2022 and then mistakenly declared that Democrats had won unexpected victories are now convinced that Trump is finished. Writing his political obituary and searching for his successor, they continue to be wrong. The electorate remains deeply and nearly evenly divided. Trump and Trumpism live on, tapping into a deep vein of resentment in a substantial portion of the electorate. He has targeted the media, “elites,” the “deep state,” the courts, the FBI, and the Democrats—the very institutions that are attacking him. In his followers’ eyes, these institutions “going after him” validates their resentments, making him stronger. The GOP will only be able to replace him and remain a viable party if he voluntarily steps aside and endorses a successor—an unlikely event. The Lesson: If you want to know where we are heading, look back to where we started, see where we are today, and follow that trajectory into the future. Instead of a “new year,” absent a dramatic or transformative “act of God,” 2023 will be a continuation of 2022.