

Has anyone involved in Brexit been divorced?

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The more I read of the opinion of Brexit enthusiasts and their claim that all the necessary conditions for leaving the EU that required discussion were resolved by the referendum vote the more I think that none of those making those observations have ever been divorced, or ever observed what actually happens when a divorce takes place.

For the record I have been divorced. And whilst that divorce was abnormally harmonious (but still painful at the time) I have also, as a chartered accountant and friend, seen just what more commonplace divorce stress looks like. As a result I am all too well aware that the build up to the moment when the decision to separate takes place is often, whilst deeply stressful, less protracted and in many ways more explicable than all the processes that follow.

The pre-split stress has an essentially simple focus: the question is 'shall I stay or shall I go now?' The choice over this period is 'yes' or 'no'. Rather like a simple referendum choice, in fact.

What few who divorce, at least first time around, realise is that the relief of making that decision (if you are the decision maker, and 50% won't be) is fairly rapidly overtaken by more difficult emotions, fuelled by the antagonism of the other party, and a vast range of practical questions that will have not been much anticipated, the resolution of which will be very stressful.

Amazingly, many recover from the process of divorce and even try marriage again (I have). But the lesson is learned, I hope, which is that some sense of anticipation of the consequences of separation is a necessary part of the process of amicably resolving the stress after it happens.

There is however no sign of this awareness on Brexit. It seems that those wanting to leave the EU think that the decision to separate resolved all issues requiring decision making. It's as if they think that there are no practicalities left to resolve that have any bearing on our future: apparently the decision to separate was enough to make clear

how all those issues should be addressed although that is obviously untrue.

There are three consequences of this. One is that there is no plan; the need for one was never anticipated.

The second is the current denial of the need to discuss that absent plan; the purpose of any such discussion is simply not understood by Leavers.

Thirdly there is then no comprehension on the part of the Leavers (those who made the decision to go in this case) that the immediate focus of the aggrieved Remainers, who did not actually get their way, has turned to the consequences that the decision to which they were not a part might have for them, even though it is entirely logical and predictable that they should think in this way.

There is no Relate to resolve this incomprehension between the parties. And that's the problem. What has been unleashed by the use of a referendum is an endless source of conflict. Cameron thought he was solving his domestic dispute with the Conservative Party when choosing the referendum question. What he did instead was three things.

First he created greater division in the Conservative Party: an MP has resigned today.

Second he unleashed more division in society by undermining parliamentary democracy in a way no one knows how to resolve.

Third, he left no mechanism of any sort for resolving this.

As a result we are now engaged in a domestic dispute without end which leaves almost no chance of resolving relations with all the other parties involved. It's a staggering mess created by incompetence. Only goodwill can resolve that. It's absence on the part of Leavers makes that resolution unlikely for now, and until such time as some humility is shown.