

## Is Jacob Rees-Mogg the greatest risk to our peace?Â

Published: January 13, 2026, 1:34 am

---

The papers are full of debate on Tory divisions on Brexit today ([try here for some links](#)).

That party is as riven as ever on this issue. Many are portraying Jacob Rees-Mogg as the leader in waiting, seeking an opportunity to pounce.

Many others rightly pick on his attack on the civil service, that appeared deliberately staged with a minister last week, and suggest that he is already laying out the defence for the failure of Brexit, seeking to establish in advance who will be accused of stabbing that cause in the back when, as he knows will happen, the hopeless charade of logic that it still clings to are finally revealed as being totally false and so a sham.

Most commentators do not, however, take the logic of this post-failure of Brexit beyond consideration of Rees-Mogg's electoral prospects; a new strained relationship between the government and the civil service; and Tory inability to govern for any longer in any meaningful sense. I suggest that is negligent of them, for Rees-Mogg and his cronies need to be wary of the forces they are letting loose.

I agree with [Simon Wren-Lewis when he wrote](#):

*Leavers often say they do not understand why Remainers cannot just accept that we are leaving. There are many good reasons, but the one that I keep coming back to is this. Brexit is fantastical. There is nothing about the case for Brexit that is based in reality. This is why everything Brexiters say is either nonsense or untrue.*

I think that the time when this will finally dawn on a significant majority in the UK is fast approaching. I would suggest that 75% (at least) of those in the Commons and well over 90% of those in the Lords already know it. And in the Treasury, for all its many faults - and they are legion, I suspect that the awareness rate is nigh on 100%. And when this happens the mood in the country will turn. In that case the chance of Johnson, Give and Rees-Mogg taking over the government, as the Sunday Times suggests they are plotting to do, will cease to have any serious relevance, except, and this is my point, to a die-hard Brexit minority.

That die-hard minority are not dedicated to Brexit for reasons of logic. Nor do they have much regard for democracy, as is apparent from their dismissal of the fundamental democratic right to change one's mind. Instead they are driven by what Simon Wren-Lewis calls a fantastical vision that has no relationship with any known economic or political reality that determines the actual outcome of international relationships, which is, of course what Brexit is actually about. But this fact (for fact it is) does not matter to those in the die-hard minority.

I think it inevitable that some Brexit supporters will over coming months see how impossible Brexit is and will seek sufficient compromise that any outcome achieving public support in the likely forthcoming second referendum that I now think likely will be in favour of a Norwegian style soft Brexit that will retain very close relationships with the EU, largely because the economic reality of trading with the EU requires this whilst it continues to exist, which it looks like doing for the foreseeable future.

But for the diehards this will be tantamount to a declaration of war on all they hold dear and which they will then think has been clutched from their grasp. And Rees-Mogg is laying the grounds for their blame game.

My fear is about the nature of this blame game. I see little chance of it being restricted to the media, whether conventional or social. Nor do I think it will be limited to Westminster. What troubles me is that whilst the vast majority will accept the outcome a tiny minority will not. And for them the alternative, in a world where so many boundaries have been torn down and radicalisation to support so many causes where the relationship between realistic possibility and dogmatic political aims has become fantastical, is violence.

I have lived through political violence. We had it in Northern Ireland for thirty years. It spread to mainland UK. And we now suffer it again, with the weapons of choice being those we cannot control. I believe that the risk of such violence if we do not have a hard-Brexit is very high. It only takes a few thousand disaffected people and some alienated communities to harbour them to create such a scenario. Let's not pretend that in this country these conditions are implausible: to me they seem likely to exist.

I do not for a minute suggest that this means we must acquiesce to the demand for a hard Brexit. We do not pander to illogical dogma by granting what it demands. But let's also be realistic about the risks in the horribly divisive path on which the UK is now set, because they are enormous.

As it is Brexit will define the politics of the UK for the next two generations - and so well beyond my lifetime. That is what the divisions of Irish partition in 1922 should teach us. But what we have to do now is ask for all sides to think carefully. Ireland wasn't just divided in 1922: it had a civil war in which thousands died. I doubt we will have civil war in the UK. But the risk of domestic terrorism is very real unless Brexit is now handled with great sensitivity by all sides.

And in this context Jacob Rees-Mogg currently ranks as the greatest risk to peace. I am not suggesting for a moment he would ever endorse violence. But he is already fanning what look like the sparks that could ignite flames through the recklessness of his actions and comments. And that worries me, greatly.