

Imagining a new order in the countries currently called...

Published: January 13, 2026, 11:09 am

Saturday morning is a time for reflection. And so I have done just that, on a week when the Brexit Bill passed through the House of Commons without a major revolt arising.

On reflection this is astonishing. A majority in the Commons, from the Prime Minister onwards, knows that the UK will be economically worse off for some time after Brexit. I know, of course, that some on the left argue otherwise, but so far they have offered not a hint of a coherent alternative that overcomes the constraints that trade deals with the EU will impose once we've left. Meanwhile, the Brexit right lives in cloud cuckoo land. And so it's reasonable to assume that, on reflection, we have decided to walk off the edge of a cliff.

I am aware that not all have given up hope. I have friends on the anti-Brexit march today. I hope it is a good day. I admire their optimism. I am on Dad duties and will be elsewhere. But I also see their hope as forlorn. I have reflected on the facts. I am beginning to accept reality.

We are leaving.

We will leave without a deal.

That is because the Tories will never come to a deal between themselves.

And nor will Labour.

So we will depart.

Not because we should.

Not because an actual majority in the country wanted us to do so.

Not because a majority now wants us to do so.

And not because it makes any sense.

But because no one in UK politics has anything like the authority or the ability, vision, intellect and charisma to explain that something else is possible and lay out the way to achieve that alternative.

Instead it is presumed that an advisory referendum was binding even though victory for Leave may well have been illegally secured meaning the result should at best be null and void.

There are moments when you can honestly say nothing will be the same again. This is one of them. Accepting that Brexit will happen does not change everything. But it changes a lot.

It means that I accept my children's future is a lot poorer in almost every way imaginable than I considered to be likely. Economically and socially, their world is not the one I imagined they would face, and I can see no upsides.

I do not know the country I will live in. Or even what it will be called. That's because I see little eventual prospect of Scotland and Northern Ireland staying in union with England and Wales.

I fear for the consequences as England and Wales realise how they have diminished themselves.

I wonder how we as a society can adapt to the shock of such massive reappraisal as to who we are.

I fear the political consequences that might give rise to at a number of levels.

I wonder why I would want to stay in such a country. Excepting that it is my home.

And nothing persuades me that there is going to be room for some 'great alternative new socialist experiment' that some on the left seem to think possible. Nothing persuades me such a vision exists, for a start. Or that it's desirable in the face of the environmental challenges we face that most on the left ignore and which can only be addressed collectively, which Brexit makes harder.

But just as the EU is now seemingly accepting that hard Brexit is likely, so am I. There is no better in this; there is only worse as far as I can see. But in the chaos to come (and chaos there will be) we have to seek to forge something that eventually releases the hope that people living in community can survive the worst blows utterly misguided politicians can inflict on them. This one is a massive blow. And I am reconciled to it happening now. But that requires redoubled effort to imagine a new order in the countries currently called the UK.