

Heading for chaos

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I was talking to a Labour politician last night. He was quite confident of several things. The first was that 'blue on blue' action will continue. Second, He thought May will survive despite that. Third, Labour has no appetite for a general election.

I think there is some evidence that all are correct. But that is not a complete reading of the situation. The reality is that we are in a deepening mess and that at some time analysis on pure party lines makes almost no sense at all. That's because it is now obvious that May will not have a majority for any Brexit deal, whatever she does. In other words, it is only with Opposition support, either from Labour or other parties, that any Brexit deal will now be passed, if at all. The question is not, then, whether May will survive, which I suspect she will, but what her survival as Prime Minister, solely on the basis that no one else wants the job, means?

That entirely depends on how Labour and the SNP react to this situation. May knows she needs them. Both say they want Brexit deals. Neither wants us to crash out. So the basis for compromise exists. But I have no idea what price they will extract for their support.

In the case of the SNP the deal to be made is not hard to imagine. It is devolving the powers to Scotland that it should have if the UK is not in Brussels. This I can imagine May conceding. And it may be a written agreement to a second independence referendum, although I think that unlikely. That may be still enough to get May all the votes she needs given that the chance that Labour will successfully whip its MPs on any Brexit issue is low.

But what deals would Labour try to extract if it could? That's my big problem, because I simply do not know what they might be. I literally can't be sure. What they seem to want is something like the PM is offering now, which provides them with a hopeless negotiating position. And I am vague, deliberately. 'Something like' is as good as it gets in analytical terms on this issue. In that case what can the Labour front bench extract to what advantage? And if they cannot agree on that will they let no deal happen?

I wish I knew the answer to that. I don't. And so the Tories will instead rely on 70 or so Remain Labour MPs to break ranks with Corbyn and carry the Tory Remain Brexit through.

It's a mighty mess for everyone. Not least the Left. And that's to be regretted. I'm bored with Labour thinking that 'blue on blue' action is enough to bring it to power. It isn't. But they still do not know what is. And the time to decide is fast running out.