

## Some indication of how bad things are in the UK is that...

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I was asked yesterday if I might like to consider writing another two year forecast, since I did reasonably well with the one I wrote before the referendum. I admit I will decline the request for the next day or two. I would not like to predict what will happen by lunchtime today. But if Liam Fox remains in office I will be amazed. Not that I suspect anyone would notice if he did not. We have a government that is in turmoil. It's time to take stock.

The first thing to say is no one need be surprised by this turmoil. The country elected (given our rotten political system) a government that was bound to be torn in two by Brexit. And it is proceeding to tear itself, and the country, to pieces. It is time to face the reality that has been left unaddressed for twenty-five or more years, which is that Conservative Party does not as such any longer exist. Brexit was not in any way a Conservative policy. Nor was it pro-business. Or pro-capital. Let alone pro-elite. It was an ultra-nationalist policy unbeloved by most Tory MPs, who retained true to their roots and that divide is what is now tearing the Party and country apart.

There is no solution to this for the Tories. Only power has held them together. And even that is not enough now. Unless the ultra-nationalists are purged I suspect the Tories face another 15 years in Opposition starting sometime soon. And that will even be true if the UK breaks up, as I still consider likely. My only forecast is that this saga has to play out. We have a long summer and autumn ahead.

So let me move beyond the Tory crisis. I predict the EU will extend the Article 50 notice period now to allow for the problems that have arisen. My forecast is that if a general election happens this autumn - and I think that likely - then an end of 2019 extension will be allowed.

But that would mean a new government would have to address the Brexit issue. And I have no idea who will form that government. Logically Labour should be sitting on a landslide. It isn't now. Even as I write that I can hear Labour supporters saying look at last time, and the swing during the campaign. I note that. And I am not convinced. And for one reason. Labour too has been kicking a can down the road, just as much as the

Tories have, and for exactly the same ineffectual reasons. Unless it decides what to do in Brexit now, just as the Tories are having to do, it will be rumbled and people will not vote for it. Talk of 'a' customs union and not 'the' customs union will, for example no longer do. People have had enough of fantasy politics, and Labour is partaking in them as much as the Tories.

The reality is Labour needs to acknowledge that it can control borders vastly better than we have to date within EU rules.

And we can control the economy much more too, including nationalising when appropriate.

The Green New Deal is possible within EU rules.

We can have a progressive tax system.

We could have decent benefits, housing, pensions, education and more within the EU.

Dammit, we could even do the impossible and fill potholes by empowering local government to act.

We could do all these things and vastly improve the country and sign up to Norway plus with an option to return.

But unless Labour says so it will not be elected.

And as worryingly, it will not represent its membership who Corbyn knows want this option, despite which he is steadfastly ignoring it. He will also tear his party apart unless he does what they want now.

Only in Scotland is there a party that knows where it stands. And they have, unfortunately, hitched themselves to the Growth Commission report that will be dire for its future.

So we have chaos, and politicians seemingly incapable of making appropriate choices for those they seek to represent right across the spectrum. It is a horrible perspective.

I can be pleased that Johnson and Davis have gone. But the chaos to come is not diminished as a result.

And worst of all, I can see May surviving unless Corbyn finally decides he has to reflect the clear wish of his membership. Little demonstrates better the mess that we're in than the fact that it is conceivable that May might through all this still be chosen as PM despite her own very obvious failings because she has at long last decided she has to act on Brexit.

One thing I can say as a result is that we are no longer a United Kingdom or Great Britain. But what we are is as yet anyone's guess.