

The Rudderless State

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We have almost become used to politics being surreal. Yesterday it moved on from that. It became pure, but deeply dangerous farce instead.

On Thursday Theresa May published a long awaited White Paper that supposedly set out the basis on which the UK would leave the EU. It was poorly received. It was never going to win acceptance from the EU itself. Much of what it claimed possible was either politically naive or technically unproven, if not actually impossible. But it was still the supposed position of the government. And much of May's remaining stock of political capital had been expended on achieving that status.

And then yesterday the Rees-Mogg faction tabled four amendments to the proposal that destroyed any chance that May's solution to the critical question of the future functioning of the Custom's Union might work and May accepted them rather than fight the extremists in her own party. At that moment whatever power she had left vanished.

The Rees-Mogg faction won the votes on what had now become government policy, when it had not been at lunchtime.

Whatever anyone had previously thought of May's ability to deliver anything, it had now vanished.

The possibility of any back-stop position on Ireland having any meaning at all seemed to have disappeared in an instant.

And yet the Commons voted for it.

And with that the chance of the UK having any meaningful economic agreements with any country in the world come March 2019 seemed to have disappeared.

And all because a tiny number of MPs with that rare commodity that most cannot comprehend, called conviction (even if badly misplaced in this case), had taken charge of the government's agenda.

But what is the result? Seemingly it is a hard Brecit.

That, though, is the least of it. What we have is a Rudderless State. I once thought the opposite to my vision of the Courageous State was the Cowardly State, where politicians ran from all issues to let the market decide what should be done. But now I realise that things can be worse than that. Now I see that politicians, so out of touch with reality that only dogma and the security of their own wealth matters, will destroy the state and so the underpinnings of the very market they profess to favour in pursuit of their wish to inflict harm on the process of government itself.

This is the point we have reached. It has now fashionable to ask whether liberal democracy can survive in the world we now live in. What we now know is that the answer is that it may well not do so. And what we also know is that those who knowingly and wilfully broke the law to secure Brexit will also knowingly and wilfully create chaos to destroy the very structure of the state we live in on which all depend in their desire to destroy the democratic process that they have so deliberately subverted in pursuit of their goal of the destruction of accountable government.

What we also now know though is that they have not a clue as to what comes next. These revolutionaries are aimless. Their only desire is harm.

And as a result we are now rudderless, with parliament being suspended early in a desperate attempt to curtail the damage to which this government, hopeless as it is, also has no answer.

We are, quite literally, a country adrift. We have no effective government. No effective Parliament. No effective allies. No effective vision. No understanding of what our state is any more. Or our country, come to that. No idea where it is going. No popular philosophy telling us that there is an alternative. No effective opposition to promote another option. We have nothing at all.

I never expected to live in a Rudderless State. But that is where I now am. And it does not appeal.