

Brexit is an issue too deep to go away: it will be the ...

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A commentator asked on the blog overnight whether I might change my mind on Brexit in due course. After all, he pointed out, I have not always been the biggest fan of the EU. And, he argued, it is quite possible we will muddle through Brexit and then reach the socialist promised land some on the left think possible. Since it's always wise to think you might be wrong, I have given this some thought.

I am not convinced I will change my mind. I accept we will muddle through Brexit. Let's be quite clear; whilst I think it will be a tough experience that could be a nightmare in the case of hard Brexit, I have no doubt that people will continue to live in the UK, and most will be able to provide for themselves, even if not quite as well as if we'd stayed. Those who will struggle will be those who always seem to suffer - and who both Labour and Tories (but especially the latter) have not been good at protecting for a long time. That is what worries me.

The fact that I cannot see the Union surviving Brexit for long means I worry more about the fate of those on lower incomes in a Tory dominated England and Wales.

And I see the chance of the socialist dream in England and Wales as very limited in that case. In Northern Ireland and Scotland the chances are at least higher, although Northern Ireland will still take time to heal divisions and the SNP will have to abandon the Growth Commission or neoliberalism will still be having a field day there.

So, overall, I see little political gain from any of this. At least, not in England and Wales.

And I see little economic gain anywhere.

As for the broader politics. I am at heart a European. Of course the fact that I have allegiance to two European countries fuels that feeling. But it is more than that. Maybe WW2 was just too close when I was being brought up to be ignored: the wounds were very obvious in my parents' generation. So were the stories. So was the fear of what might have been. The feeling of 'never again' was real. It remains with me. And imperfect as it is - and I acknowledge all its faults - the EU is a means of saying 'never

again'. As it challenges Hungary and Poland now in ways that could not otherwise be achieved it does that. Let's not ignore that when we also note its failings in Greece and now Italy.

So, will I regret leaving that union, which I believe is deeply wounded by our departure? Yes, I do. And yes, I think I will continue to do so. In which case I do not think I will change my mind. Instead, as I discussed with my eldest son last night as the dog witnessed yet another political discussion during his evening walk, I think on which side people stood now will define politics in this country for at least two generations, and could well result in new political alignments as wounds across this divide are not healed.

Which is why May's letter to the country saying we should all move on is absurd. Ireland has taken a century to get over its issues of the early 1920's. We may not take quite that long, but to pretend that this issue will go away soon is absurd. Brexit is, and will remain, the major political theme of our times. And if we leave the debate about rejoining will be ever recurring. This one is going to run and run. And it is not economics or short term politics that will solve it. This is about deep world views - and none to do with neoliberalism at all. This is about embracing the other, or not. And that's an issue too deep to go away. It's where politics now is.