

Nothing will be the same again, whatever the Cabinet de...

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Today may be historically important for the UK. We are told there is a Brexit Deal, but we have no idea what it is. The Cabinet have to decide on it without having the time to read it properly. And then, we are told, parliament will have to decide on what happens next. Which is, of course, not the end of the matter as so too do the EU member states and the EU parliament. Today is not the end of the matter. But, if May does not get her way today then there is, in all likelihood, no deal. Or, possibly, the option of staying in the EU. But whichever way it is looked at, today is likely to be pivotal.

My position is clear. We are unambiguously better off in the EU. The idea that by leaving and literally becoming an isolated player in world markets we can be better off, when most markets we deal with have made clear already that this will not be the case, is very obviously wrong.

And the left wing perception that leaving will permit the creation of a new socialist era in the UK that will be a role model for the world is, to be kind, deluded. If that was true Labour would have said that is its plan. It hasn't. It hasn't got remotely near doing so, and that is because it is not its plan. Which is because it knows there is no mass appetite for this, and we live in a democracy, and that at a time when it might inherit power the last thing it will need to do is imperil more jobs by suggesting policy that will reduce inward investment even more than Brexit has already done.

What that tacitly accepts is something that Lexiteers, including those whose comments I have got bored with moderating on this blog, have not got close to doing, which is that the UK has always survived through its external relations. Once that was Empire. Then it was the Breton Woods institutions, that permitted the closed social democracy many on the left pine for, not realising that this was only achieved by the existence of these powerful institutions that did, however, remove major elements of political control from within our economy. After that it was the EU.

And now far left and right want nothing. No alliances. No strings. Just glorious isolation from which we can apparently show the world how things are done as a buccaneering swashbuckler or socialist nirvana, between which we will presumably oscillate if

democracy is going to be respected (which inconvenience both seem to ignore).

It must be pretty disappointing for all involved that there are no successful role models for this new state (of either sort) in existence. Maybe it adds to the appeal for those promoting it. It also fuels my fear - which is an appropriate description. That is because these models ignore three things.

The first is that no state does exist in isolation, unless you wish to suggest North Korea, and it could not do so without the tacit support of China, so even that does not work.

Second, the swashbucklers forget that trade only works on the basis of rules, and the WTO rules are significantly less attractive than the EU's and may be all we have for decades in some cases if we leave the EU.

Third, the socialists (if that is what they can be called) ignore the fact that socialism, if it is to work, has to be internationally orientated, and for us the only way to do achieve that goal is to change the rules of the EU, and not leave it. That's because, like it or not, that is where our neighbours are and unless we are intent on EU destruction, and a massively increased chance of war as a result, that is where they will stay.

To put it another way, leaving the EU, whether motivated from left or right, is a policy promoted without consideration for international relations. But the truth is that these will still exist, and will still need to be dealt with. But there is no plan for how to do so, barring exploitation for national gain from the swashbucklers, which has never been a good basis for securing international agreement on anything, and isolationism from the socialists, which has a track record no one would aspire to.

Bringing that back to today, what is the implication? Simply that there is only one good outcome from today and it is the least likely. That is, we stay. We'd be massively diminished if we did. Our influence will be minimal for a while. And we will be riven as a nation, presuming we might remain just one country, which I still consider unlikely.

But at least we would have a framework for recovery. And a basis for trading. As well as a network of some influence, rather than none. Whilst we would also have the chance to work in partnership on how international law can be adapted to make possible what is now necessary, which is meeting the challenge of the changing environment in a socially just fashion, above all else. In isolation we cannot do that. Worse, all leavers seem to ignore that issue, precisely because it can only be dealt with cooperatively, which means internationally.

I do not pretend otherwise: what now happens on Brexit profoundly worries me. I can but hope. And I now realise that, just as civil war in Ireland a century ago tore that country apart for generations, so too will Brexit tear the countries of the UK apart in much the same way. Old friendships will fail. New alliances will have to be built. New politics will emerge. Nothing will ever be the same again, whatever happens. This is the

reality.

But through it all, those with political concern do, I think, in the light of the now known facts, have a duty to do what is best for the people of the UK. And that is achieved by staying. Which is because that route does, at least, involve a plan to maintain positive international relations, which no other option does. And no successful state has ever survived without such a plan.