

The almost inevitable path to No Deal

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I have been in discussion with others about the likelihood of a No Deal Brexit next week. I confess I do not share the optimism of some I have been talking with that this will now be avoided.

Their logic is that the Lords will pass the Cooper / Letwin bill on Monday with what might be called the Maugham amendment having been added. This will mean that if on Thursday there is no deal with the EU May would have to put a motion to the Commons that would require a vote on whether or not the UK wished to leave with No Deal. If that resolution was not passed (and if precedent is to be believed then it is very unlikely that it will be) May is then required to submit notice to the EU that Article 50 is revoked. As a result we would stay in the UK.

This is the legislation that I always suspected Bercow would permit to be tabled. When I said we had to rely on him this is what I meant. And those I have been debating with seem to think that this is all a foregone conclusion now. And I have to disagree.

I do think that the Lords will pass this legislation sometime late on Monday. I have little doubt that it reflects their desires, and so will happen.

But that's when things get harder to predict. The Commons has, first of all, to accept the Lords amendment to include the Maugham amendment, which requires the actions I note above. And very bluntly, I think that there is no hope of that. The Tories will oppose it. We know that. Then we have to imagine what Labour will do.

If Labour know that if this law is passed that this will require a vote on Thursday which is binary i.e. vote No Deal or Revoke then to avoid any chance of voting for revocation - which Corbyn will argue goes against the will of the referendum - they will whip against this amendment. That is precisely because they will want to avoid any chance that it can be said that they did not deliver on 'the will of the people'. And if

It whips against this amendment then the Letwin / Cooper Bill will become the toothless tiger it was when first presented, the result of which is that there will be no binary vote

on Thursday.

And there is no chance that May will ask for a long extension because that will require Euro MEP elections and that will tear the Tories apart, and that she will not risk, come what may.

And so we will leave with No Deal.

I think that almost unavoidable now.

And I hope I am wrong.