

Election hopes

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I sincerely hope that Opposition and other MPs take control of the House of Commons agenda today.

I hope they do pass legislation to prevent a No Deal Brexit and to provide time to negotiate an alternative.

I hope some Tories do have the courage to vote against their party.

I wish those Labour MPs who vote with the government - and some will - would have the courage to quit their party.

And I hope Boris Johnson does follow through with an election, because he is leading a government that is collapsing, come what may.

What will happen as a result? Who knows? I do not.

But I am quite sure he would rather not have an election now.

On 7 November he could ask for endorsement for what he'd done. And voting Brexit Party would make no sense as we'd already be out. But on 14 October they're in play precisely because the issues are unresolved.

On the other hand, on 7 November there will be clear signs of Brexit chaos. Because there will be some. No one can pretend otherwise. So that would be a bad date for that reason.

But if he could have hung on until next spring, as I think he'd prefer, then the chaos would have reduced (let's be clear, that's inevitable: there are always learning curves and we'll be through some of it) and the Brexit Party would have been neutered.

But 14 October? And only an 11 point lead, which 2017 suggests to be pretty small (not that history need repeat itself, but his honeymoon will be over by 14 October)? I'm not sure this is really his desire. I do think that this does imply a government out of control.

And that this does imply that there is a realisation that contempt for conventions is ultimately not possible. This is a sign of weakness by the Cummings standard in that case. And that I welcome.

And will he win? I reiterate that I do not know. But I am fairly sure of some outcomes.

The first is that the SNP will take most of Scotland again, with only one or two Tories left there, and then on the Borders. The LibDems will be the second Scottish Party and Labour will get just one seat north of the border.

Northern Ireland will see the highest ever vote for non-Unionist Parties.

And in England and Wales? My suspicion is the LibDems are the Remainer's choice in many Tory seats. In my own area what looked like a rock solid Tory seat looks like a marginal after the recent council elections.

Add this LibDem revival in England and SNP trend in Scotland together and in principle I'd say the Tories start the campaign many seats down, whatever the polls imply.

So, it will be down to a Labour / Tory fight for pro-Brexit seats, most especially but not entirely in the North. Labour's got to have a phenomenally good campaign. They start on a back foot with the Tories willing to run deficits and Labour apparently not. And Corbyn's lost his Glastonbury appeal. That means that there is no chance of a Labour win in my opinion, or anything remotely like it. So the question is whether it can stop Johnson forming the next administration.

Expect the anti-SNP line in England to be very strong in that case. That worked for the Tories when it was suggested voting Labour would deliver Alex Salmond. I think it will be tried again. The claim will be 'vote Labour, lose Scotland', even if it's the Tories who will be doing just that.

There's a long campaign to come.

My hope? A coalition on the broad left. It's the best that can be hoped for. That, and nothing for the Brexit Party, but with them having a big enough share to really harm Johnson.

And after that? A coalition agreement committing to electoral reform, the Green New Deal and Europe.

I can live in hope.