

Brexit chaos was entirely predictable because the world...

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Every newspaper [has the story](#) that Honda has stopped production today. The issue is straightforward: port logistics are stopping them getting the parts that they need. And rumour has it that they are far from alone. All this is happening before Brexit adds to the woes come 1 January.

I do not wish to revisit Remainer sentiment. That some of us said this would happen is not the point. Unless, of course, it is. By which I mean that some of us said that this would happen not because we were Remainders but because it was entirely predictable that chaos would ensue from leaving the EU, and that was before COVID 19 was added into the mix.

It takes only a little understanding of the human condition, and what follows on from it about the business condition, to realise that most of the time most of us survive by a thread. The stresses of life seem to be pretty big for many. Whether they really are is irrelevant: perception is what matters here. That is what is actually real, because perceptions relate to how we see the world. And, if most of us, most of the time see the world as stressful then that is what it is.

How do we cope? Through the use of routine. We eliminate as many decisions as we can during days that demand we take more decisions than we might wish for by simply reducing the rest to the level of repetitive action to which little thought need be given. And that's fine. Broadly speaking, most of us do not create destructive routines (or we would no longer be here) and so this process works.

The same is true of most of the remaining decisions, of course. We reduce them to the point where heuristics can handle most of the required choices. That leaves our energy for what is difficult. And even then those remaining decisions seem to be hard,

What Brexit was always bound to do was require massive degrees of decision making, almost none of which could be based on routine, and where the heuristics simply cannot work because the rules are not known. So, what Brexit was always going to do was increase stress. And it was always going to increase the error rate, because the

great thing about routines and most heuristics is that we know that we can use them because mistakes do not happen when we do; experience has proven that. But now we have no such back ups.

So, right across the country right now very large numbers of people are flying blind. The government has not told them what to do, because the government has no deal, and so does not know what to say (and if in doubt, note that the Northern Ireland arrangements were supposedly agreed yesterday, weeks before being used and years after the need to know them was understood to exist). And, as is usual in life, training is absent and there is no time to read the manual.

Of course, such situations happen daily in life. But the ratio of routine and heuristic decision making to 'flying by the seat of your pants' judgement is usually quite high. Only now it is not. There is far too much guesswork in the system now. And that means the system will fail.

All human systems are, proverbially, as good as their weakest link. Right now there are vast numbers of very weak links. Of course systems will fail. And the impact can and will be exponential. Once something has gone wrong the scale of decision making required grows, very rapidly over relatively short periods. And every one of those will carry a high risk of being called wrong. The risk of chaos is very high.

And that's what is happening. This has nothing to do with Remainers, the EU, or anyone else sabotaging anything. With the greatest will in the world, this was likely. It has been exacerbated by the government's refusal to reach an early deal so that the transition period could be used for actual Brexit preparation. And Covid has obviously not helped. But I stress, this was always going to happen. Asking literally millions of people to amend their routines and heuristics and simultaneously make decisions based on ignorance was always going to be a recipe for disaster. And disaster is what is unfolding.

I take no pleasure from this.

People will probably die because the government did not understand this.

Others will suffer considerable hardship.

And none of those is necessary. Even if Brexit was the right thing to do, and even if the vote was properly held (and neither is true), this could only have been avoided by having a deal agreed before a transition and then having as long a transition as possible before the new rules had to be used. Simultaneous systems would have made sense to the greatest degree possible. But none of that has happened. There has, in effect, been no transition period. There has just been an extended negotiation.

Who do I blame? It's not hard to work that one out, is it? The UK government is, of

course, responsible. It wanted Brexit. It created the chaos. It created the delay. It has not done the preparation. But most of all, the people in our government have no comprehension of the issues I have noted in this post. The idea that in the real world it takes time to make things work has clearly not occurred to them. And that is why they are to blame and no one else is.