

Rule by a single party in Westminster is no longer cred...

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Something tilted in my way of thinking yesterday afternoon when I heard the news that Morgan McSweeney had resigned as Keir Starmer's chief of staff.

As some people will have noticed from the [blog post I wrote](#) suggesting a course of action for Labour to adopt, my proposal was that Labour form a national government. Instinctively, I felt that the threats we now face are so significant that this is required, particularly because the command that most politicians have over either authority or competence seems so small compared with the needs of the UK, its member states, and its people now. The more I thought about this as the day progressed, the more I realised that this idea is, in fact, based on the reality of how the United Kingdom now operates.

Those in Westminster would like to think that there is a single country that they govern. In fact, this is not true. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own governments. None of them will have a Labour administration from May 2026.

Labour is running a very distant second, or maybe third, to the SNP in Scotland, with Reform potentially outperforming it. The likelihood that the SNP will enter its third decade in power is very high, with support from the Greens.

In Wales, Labour is about to lose power for the first time in more than a century. The chance that it can now win the Senedd elections is vanishingly small, with Plaid Cymru almost certainly leading the government that will be formed in May. It might need Labour support. If it does, Labour will, at best, be a bit-part player. The most successful democratic record in the world of a single party dominating government in one country for more than a century will have been shattered.

In Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin is in power, and it will remain so. A growing Catholic majority wants that. To date, Labour has refused to recognise this reality.

Importantly, this degree of separation between politics in these countries and those that prevail in Westminster is a phenomenon not just seen outside England. It is also

seen within it. The Liberal Democrats dominate politics in the west and south-west of England, with clusters elsewhere. Meanwhile, Reform does at present have a significant presence, particularly on the east coast of England. Labour's bedrock is the English cities. The future direction of power in the United Kingdom is now determined in the swing seats of central and northern England more than anywhere else, particularly now that the Conservatives are heading into something close to oblivion. They may get no seats in Wales, for example, under a proportional representation system in the upcoming Senedd elections.

My point is a straightforward one. It is clear that all of this makes it obvious that Labour's supposed landslide majority in 2024 was completely aberrational and utterly failed to reflect the political reality of this supposed United Kingdom. We are not united at all. Different countries, regions, towns, and cities do, in fact, have the capacity to think for themselves, as is apparent from the political map. As a consequence, the claim that there is anyone who can now govern without accepting and reflecting this reality is absurd. There is no democratic way for this to be the case. The thinking that suggested this was, once upon a time, possible, is now profoundly out of date.

Instead, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland are making it quite clear that they wish to govern themselves. They are electing governments from parties that have that long-term stated objective.

Whilst this might not yet be the case in England, since I get no sense that there is a desire for that country to be broken up in any way, the differences are now so great that the likelihood that one party can provide the continuity and planning that the problems it faces also require is also very low. Meanwhile, the defence against fascism, which is now a national priority if we are not to descend into the chaos now developing in the USA, is absolutely essential.

The idea that we therefore require a government based on national cooperation simply makes sense. In fact, it may be the only thing that can make sense of the United Kingdom any more. If Labour can only govern one of the four countries within the UK, as will be the case from May onwards, then it has a duty to cooperate fully with the governments of the other three, and not ride roughshod over them, as its policy towards the SNP government in Scotland very clearly has been to date, for example.

In addition, if there are clear regional concerns being expressed at the ballot box in England, Labour again needs to consider those issues and listen to those elected to represent them.

Then, and only then, might some form of political credibility be restored.

A politics that reflects the fact that England respects the right of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to leave this Union might also just persuade people in those countries that England is not quite such an unacceptable political partner as they presently think

it to be. Few in England understand just how strong this sentiment is. It is time they did.

And if people thought that the central government in the UK, even if led by a party they did not choose, was actually listening to their concerns by showing respect for those they did elect, then the possibility that credibility might be restored to the electoral system, and to politics itself, is real. People might begin to believe that politicians are interested in governing in their own best interests, rather than solely for personal gain, few of which will ever be aligned with the needs of the people of this country.

I am not necessarily suggesting formal coalitions. Technically, of course, one is not required at present: Labour has a majority, while simultaneously facing the prospect of electoral oblivion. Instead, I am suggesting that imagination be used.

I do think that if Labour wishes to restore its credibility, it will deliver electoral reform. It will also reform the role of royalty, because the monarchy is discredited. It will abolish the House of Lords and replace it with a Senate with much stronger regional representation. It will set up working partnerships with the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as with regional representation through select committees for parts of the UK. Through these partnerships, it will establish proper integration of policy to ensure the best delivery everywhere, which has been far from the case to date. And the right of the three smaller countries within the United Kingdom to leave, if they so wish, should be formally recognised.

Why do this? Simply because Labour has a massive credibility problem, as does politics as a whole, as does government in Westminster when it is clearly unable to function, with prime minister after prime minister proving quite unable to govern within a system that is very obviously long past its usefulness.

At its core, the UK's political problem can now be summarised very simply. It is no longer credible to claim that any one party can govern without taking into account the complexity of political opinion in a country comprising four distinct nations, with its largest constituent also showing marked regional differences. Without this respect, whatever result is produced by the first-past-the-post system (or any other electoral system), acceptance by countries and constituencies of Westminster's right to govern them is never going to be restored.

This is why we need to think about government in a very different way.

This is what I mean by establishing national government.

At its core, there must be respect for the fact that difference is an inherent part of politics and of life.

That is why the two UK political parties that have altogether rejected centrism must be excluded from this. They are, of course, the Conservatives and Reform.

If democracy is to survive in the UK, the time for rapid, radical rethinking has arrived, with the rise of the Greens providing both evidence of and justification for this need.

Will Labour rise to the challenge? I doubt it under Keir Starmer. Might it under somebody else? That is my wish.. I do, of course, know that not all wishes are fulfilled, but I can live in hope.