



Britain on the edge

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Britain on the edge-Whichever direction the country takes from here on Brexit, it will remain deeply divided

Many adamant parties

- Last week, the respite that came after the British Cabinet formally backed a withdrawal agreement reached with European Union (EU) negotiators lasted less than 24 hours, for a series of resignations later and the prospect of a no-confidence vote now threaten to disrupt the deal.
- Five Ministers are lobbying Prime Minister Theresa May to change the terms of the deal. However, Ms. May is adamant that she won't step down.
- They are eager to avoid any form of customs alignment with the EU that will dent Britain's chances of forging trade deals, even if the limits are only temporary.

A bumpy road ahead

- Ms. May win a leadership contest, it's highly likely that her deal would be chucked out of Parliament.
- Should she be replaced, there's a good chance that the hard line pursued by any successor would lead to no deal being forged and Britain crashing out of the EU on World Trade Organisation terms.
- Most rational observers agree that this situation would be disastrous for the country.
- There's also the increasing possibility of a second referendum, and the more remote one of a general elections.
- But what is remarkable is that all these scenarios share one thing in common: not one of them commands support from a majority of politicians or has clear support from the public.
- Many, particularly within the Conservative Party, have been scathing in their assessment of Ms. May for the current deal.

- The trouble has been that right from the start, the Brexit envisaged could never have matched reality.
- The idea of Britain untethering itself from Europe and magically floating around the world was never going to happen.
- This is a world of shifting priorities and this is a country whose supply chains for goods and services sector, which is a major component of the economy, are enmeshed in Europe.
- The government's determination to run a hard-line immigration policy that continues to frustrate business and anger potential trade partners makes this vision even more farcical.

The language of Empire

- So determined have Brexiteers been to shout down anyone warning of potential disruption that they've remained firmly oblivious of basic realities.
- The trouble is that in the hubris, the public had been left with a distorted sense of reality. It's not surprising that many think it's fine to leave the EU when they are fed such castles in the air.
- The idea of an independent trading nation not structured by pesky foreign courts or regulations is pure fantasy in today's world.
- Whichever direction Britain takes from here, society will remain deeply divided.
- To even begin to move forward, Britain needs a good dose of reality and an honest conversation.

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