Twitter Thread by Objective Columnist



Objective Columnist
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Along the way I wrote about considering Johnson's Brexit decision as a choice between clichéd narratives. What would read / play best? Well...

It is absolutely no surprise to me that he ended up choosing the ending that would most easily portray him as the hero who saved the day.

The tricky part of this narrative is convincing re the 'not giving in' part. Hence all the bluster about standing tough and being happy to walk away.

And yet.

I'm old enough to remember when we wouldn't accept any LPF provisions, any state aid constraints and we wanted all our fish back right now. Otherwise it's an 'Australia' style Brexit.

Were their tactical and negotiating manoeuvres that were successful? I'm sure there were. But it's noteworthy that we've ended up with the sort of deal that everyone thought we would end up with a year ago.

Will it proceed smoothly through the hawk-eyed (sic) gaze of the ERG and pals? It's looking hopeful. Needless to say there's a full court press from D Street comms and friendly media to present the deal as most meritorious.

Best in mind that the ERG has been happy with various deal iterations in the past and then rowed back furiously. But post Johnson's election the ERG is largely a spent force. I suspect they'll go for it.

The most insightful part of the Times piece is this:

'Critics ridicule Johnson's self-reverential mirroring of Winston Churchill, but even they can scarcely contest that he has become the most consequential politician of his generation.'

But the problem (and benefit) of being consequential is the consequences. Has he really thought about them? I sincerely doubt it. We've just agreed the biggest rupture to the country's trade relations at the last minute during a pandemic.

The short term consequences range from disruptive to disastrous. FWIW I'm at very disruptive. It's worth remembering that whatever the level of disruption its acceptance (ie no implementation period etc) is a policy choice.

As for the longer term consequences, the most obvious are the damage to trust in government (principally from those among the c 50% of the public who lost the referendum), the decline of the manufacturing sector, and the turbo charging of independence movements.

Would the referendum have been won by Leave knowing what we know now? I sincerely doubt it. There was always a good argument for Leave but the campaign and subsequent government policy and messaged have denied or downplayed the painful trade-offs.

This vast obfuscation of the truth has been a hallmark of politics over the last five years. Ironically it's another symptom of the sort of attitude (not caring about people's interests) that led to the referendum result except this time aimed at a different part of society.

A substantial majority of people below the age of c 49 do not think all of this is a good idea. A substantial majority of people in Scotland do not think this is a good idea. A substantial majority of people with degrees do not think this is a good idea.

An overwhelming majority of young people do not think this is a good idea.

These people's views have been ignored and belittled. You lost, get over it.

Will there be consequences? Oh yes.

/ends