Twitter Thread by Shaun Lawson



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100 years ago, Argentina was one of the richest, most successful countries in the world. Even as recently as the early 1960s, its GDP per capita was higher than that of Japan, Italy, Spain or Austria.

What went wrong? Never-ending shambolic governance, never in the common good.

Argentina has scarcely had a decent government in a century. Its political system is a disaster. Its economy is a disaster. The right fails, the left fails, and Peronism - which stands for nothing, believes in nothing, but just drapes itself in emotion and the flag - rules.

It is the only economy I can think of which travelled from the Third World to the First World, then all the way back to the Third World again. There are four different kinds of economies:

- Developed
- Underdeveloped
- Japan
- Argentina

But this isn't a thread about Argentina. It's a thread about Britain: a country with which Argentina has this fascinating love/hate relationship. Conflict over the Falklands/Malvinas and football; but British culture is hugely influential among young, well-educated Argentinians.

And you see: I think the two countries have more and more in common. And not in a good way either.

I left the UK in 2012. When a Uruguayan here asked me why, I answered: "Because we're turning into Argentina".

What did I mean by that?

1. Economic illiteracy. Austerity isn't just immoral; IT DOESN'T WORK.

2. Corporatism everywhere.

3. Nationalism. I left 4 years before Brexit won - but the referendum outcome (and especially how it was conducted) did not surprise me at all.

4. Failing institutions

5. Shocking, miserably incompetent and malignant governance.

When did Britain last have a good government? I view Blair's as a decent one overall (not many do though!) Before that, heaven only knows. Wilson's? It included a devaluation, lest we forget. Macmillan's?

But the difference now is that Britain has gone from generally bad governance to utterly wicked governance. The Tories gaslight the public - and just as Cristina cynically distracted her people by pointing to the Malvinas, Boris does the exact same with the EU.

Both Peronism and Brexit play on the same thing: emotion. There's no reason involved at all. It's just tub-thumping jingoistic nonsense combined with blaming everyone under the sun.

Argentina has a disastrous modern history of protectionism. Will Britain do the same?

Argentina has an equally disastrous recent history of turning itself into an international pariah by failing to uphold its obligations.

Will Britain, seeking to break international law, do the same?

Argentina's modern history is of lies, more lies and constant corruption. Well - anyone who's paid any attention to Britain over the last decade should appreciate that their corruption has nothing on ours. And our so-called leaders lie about everything every bloody day.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was, of course, famous for writing about magic realism. MAGIC REALISM IS EXACTLY WHAT BREXIT IS BASED ON.

Pie in the sky. Unicorns. Bread and circuses. Half the country pitted against the other half. And we think we're still a First World nation? Really?

Both nations also have quite horrific tabloid media obsessed with celebrity and personalising everything - which refuses point blank to consider any detail, context or nuance about anything. So their publics just end up ever more ill-informed, ever more ignorant.

And in Britain's case, when Scotland becomes independent (which it inevitably will) and Ireland is united (which it inevitanbly will be), what becomes of England and Wales? An angry, reactionary rump full of xenophobes and gammon on the edge of Europe?

On the edge of the world.

Nothing that's happened in Britain over the last decade has surprised me. That's why I left in the first place. Britain is mired in a post-imperial nervous breakdown - but what many don't realise is that, like Argentina, it may never recover at all.

Every time people say "it can't get any worse than this", it does. It keeps doing so. Down, down, deeper and down.

On the other side of the Atlantic, its media and people woke up just in time. Ours are still fast asleep. Lemmings merrily toppling over the cliff to their doom.

cc @garvanwalshe

PS. The media parallel I mentioned above? Good luck to any Argentinian who wants to find out the reality in their country.

The leftist TV stations act like the President is Jesus Christ reincarnated. The rightist TV stations say they're living under a communist dictatorship.

"This is like North Korea! Quick everyone, leave while you still can!"

Anyone in the middle has nowhere to go, nowhere they can actually be informed.

Now flip it around because the right's in power (sic) in the UK. It's pretty close to the same thing there too.