This week in Brexitland

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[NICK TYRONE](#)

The biggest reason why Brexit has failed is a tricky one to approach, from both sides of the Brexit debate. I'm going to give it a try

The Brexit divide refuses to heal. Despite what they assume, this is the Brexiters' fault. As the winners of the referendum, it was up to them to also win the peace; to establish Brexit as the new norm. They have singularly failed to achieve this, mostly because they have never tried. "Liberal tears" were just too enticing to pass up, even if it meant dooming the long-term future of the project. To be fair, Brexit has always been more of an oppositional thing - even now, more than three years after we've left, the Brexiters can't help but talk about the "Remainer establishment" and how Brexit is constantly being sabotaged by some "blob" or another. I don't think they know how to accept victory and move on. I think they are phobic of success.

This isn't the biggest reason Brexit has failed, however. The biggest reason is more structural and has even less ability to be overcome by anyone, including the leading lights of the Brexiter movement. It comes down to the fundamental nature of the British state. It's something no one is ever supposed to talk about and I have never heard any Westminster pundits remark upon this, even though they must all know it on some level. It's possible that being this close to the problem blinds you to it; on the other hand, perhaps wanting a career within the Westminster bubble makes you the type of person who simply can never accept this as reality.

Britain is fundamentally poorly governed. And I don't just mean right at the moment, as in, this particular government is bad, I mean Britain is *never particularly well governed.*

The current government wants to blame this on the civil service, but that's projection. The civil service, for all of the faults about it I could offer, is the most functional part of the British state by some stretch. The vast majority of the dysfunction comes, sadly, from our elected officials.

This isn't a partisan point I'm making either. Labour governments tend to be just as bad as Tory ones in this regard, at least eventually. There are many things that go into why the country is poorly governed. One is structure. The prime minister has way too much power, for a start. Secretaries of State are moved around departments after laughably short periods of time, never able to even begin to fix any of the problems. That this happens constantly only solidifies the issue; every MP knows when they come into a big job they aren't going to be there for very long, so why worry all that much about trying to achieve something difficult when you can just wait to be reshuffled?

Another problem - and I get why Westminster journalists don't want to talk about this one - is that the calibre of politicians we get, well, aren't exactly brilliant. That isn't to say that there aren't many excellent MPs and some of them are remarkably smart. It's just that unfortunately, I have to say those ones are the minority. And these days, the smart, competent MPs don't tend to get the top jobs. One of the reasons Labour looks so much more competent than the Tories at the moment is at least Starmer has for the most part put his best and brightest front and centre (it took him a while, however, it must be noted). Sunak has in common with Johnson the fact that he has promoted people to his cabinet seemingly not on merit but on some sort of warped political calculation that doesn't even make sense.

To make this problem exponentially worse post-Brexit, it seems like the competencies Britain got back from the EU are the things our government is least equipped to handle. Look at how badly trade deals have been dealt with since Brexit. Total shambles, a disgrace to the nation. It hasn't helped that some of the worst MPs in parliament have had their fingers in this particular pie - *cough* Liz Truss *cough* - but that alone tells a story. International

trade seems to be a department party leaders place the people whose careers they wish to destroy. It's like it was baked into the system, even before we'd left, that Britain was bound to be exceptionally shit at making trade deals. It has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Britain is great at lots of things. It is an international cultural centre on par with anyone, leading in many artistic pursuits - creating great music, just to name one. We have a great university system, the envy of the world. When we were in the EU, we left things like trade negotiations to actual professional people instead of having the dregs of the Conservative party turn up in a boat in Singapore and hope for the best. In other words, Brexit helped us take back control of things we do *really, really badly* as a country.

This is why Brexit has failed - it turns out that all of the stuff we delegated to the EU over the years we have no ability to be good at doing for ourselves. "The Westminster model may not be the most suitable foundation on which to build the post-Brexit policy process," is a line I read recently in [an LSE blog written by Patrick Diamond](#), and I don't so much agree with that statement as I feel it's stating the bleeding obvious.

Brexit has revealed many things about Britain since the country voted for it in June 2016, but I think the most revealing thing of all might be this: it turns out that Britain is really, really bad at Brexit itself.

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