

Why the Theresa May Government Will Screw Up Brexit

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Just at the time we really do need government to perform at its very best for Britain, politician's have gone on holiday with the sole aim of plotting and planning the next Downing Street coup to replace the injured and limping Theresa May. Just as the predator in waiting is pushed to the front preparing for the kill, wolves are lurking in the shadows. Britain is more vulnerable now than ever and all politicians on both sides of the house can do is fight for personal glory.

It is bewildering the number of small and large sized projects the government (of both tribes) have completely screwed up and done so with spectacular aplomb. When you consider the sheer scale of planning done by professional experts and implementation carried out by highly skilled workers, you would think that disasters would be rare, unfortunately, history demonstrates something quite different.

Take software projects for instance, where the beleaguered and over-burdened taxpayer has been systematically fleeced by failure, whilst enriching private contractors.

The NHS national programme for IT was predicted to cost £6.4 billion. It actually cost more than £10 billion, was 56 percent over budget and then abandoned several years ago – the world's largest computer system failure was then recorded for posterity.

Richard Bacon, a Conservative member of the Public Accounts Committee, charitably said at the time the project was a “[systemic failure](#)” in the government's ability to draw up and manage large contracts. “*This saga is one of the worst and most expensive contracting fiascos in the history of the public sector.*”

The Defence Information Structure plan wasn't much better. It was budgeted at £4.8bn, cost £7.1bn and at £2.3bn it was over-budget by nearly 48 percent.

Then there was the defence overspend – just on its own kit. The FT reported in February this year that:

“A series of enormous British defence projects are at risk after the Ministry of Defence revealed that costs had risen by a fifth and that it has already eaten through the £10.7bn of “headroom” built into its budget last year. The projected spend on new equipment has risen by 20 per cent to £82bn over the next 10 years, while the spend on supporting the new kit has risen even further — up 30 per cent to £23.4bn, according to the latest annual equipment plan. As a result, the UK may have to choose between its new projects for ships, aircraft and tanks.”

'[Libra](#)' - a fairly small project in the grand scheme of things was a new system for magistrates across England and Wales and was costed by the Conservative government at £246 million. It actually cost £389 million, was nearly 60 percent over budget and couldn't produce basic information for its own accounts system, nor add up fines correctly, which was its primary role. Needless to say that caused chaos. The initial contractor was finally replaced by a Japanese one and now costs £10 million a year to maintain.

The E-Borders system cost £742 million and was abandoned.

The Police Crime & Criminal Intelligence Logging System was abandoned after 4 years of effort at a cost of £15 million.

£56m was spent on a Ministry of Justice back-office project that was cancelled after the department realised the Cabinet Office had a system doing exactly the same thing. You couldn't make it up!

The current Universal Credit system has universally failed. Its roll-out is now delayed until 2021. It is also destined for the record books one way or another. Hundreds of £millions have already been written off.

Whilst you wouldn't expect The [Guardian](#) to compliment a Conservative plan to overhaul social security, it was fair of them to describe its performance as: *"tens of thousands of appeals, many successful; considerable hardship; administrative chaos; and eventually the collapse of the DWP's contract with Atos. And the long-term downward trend in the number of people on benefit has now actually reversed. Ministers have yet to explain why, if it is really the case that hundreds of thousands of people were receiving the benefit when they shouldn't have been, the "reforms" are now actually seeing the numbers going up again."* That was in October 2014 and was then costing the taxpayer an additional £3billion a year. What it will actually cost by delivery date is anyone's guess. Here's a guess - lots we don't have.

In 2014, the [Major Projects Authority](#) - a central body set up to monitor large-scale government projects was tracking almost 200 schemes with a total value of almost £400bn. At the time, only 17 of some 150 projects in the spotlight - with a value of less than 4% of the total amount being monitored got a green light as having "the lowest risks to success" by the authority.

What does this tell you other than 96 percent of projects have been incorrectly budgeted and are being so badly managed that millions more needs spending to determine just how badly they are going.

So badly in fact, you might find it ironic that the the Major Projects Authority itself was scrapped and ended up becoming the Infrastructure and Projects Authority in January last year and almost immediately took its monitoring of those same projects worth £400bn and uprated them to £500bn. Can't think why. It's over-riding priority is to "build and develop a group of experienced project leaders, who can move across government to deliver our most important projects." Hmm!

Brexit - The Challenge



The Tory leadership fight - more important than Brexit negotiations?

To put the challenge into context of the above project failures, the United Kingdom has an annual GDP of nearly £1.9 trillion (\$2.5 trillion), taking 3.2 percent of the global share, is ranked fifth with a population of 65.5 million. India is right behind Britain with a GDP of \$2.4 trillion with a population of 1.32 billion. Only Germany, Japan, China and the US are ahead of Britain, but Britain lies third in terms of per capita wealth of those up front.

The day after triggering Brexit, the government published details of its "Great Repeal Bill". Described by Theresa May as an "essential step" on the way to leaving the EU. What it wants to do is "amend, repeal and improve" the laws as necessary.

Here's the first warning sign things will be difficult for the government. The Repeal Bill has been described as "one of the largest legislative projects ever undertaken in the UK." BBC correspondents describe it as "Swathes of UK law that will no longer work on exit, for example because they refer to EU institutions."

Many are already questioning the government on this, not least because it gives the state the power to legislate by proclamation. This is something you do not want to give to extreme neoliberal capitalists or militant socialists.

In the meantime, The government's own White Paper on the Repeal Bill alone believes there to be 12,000 EU regulations in force, while Parliament has passed some 7,900 statutory instruments implementing EU legislation, and 186 acts which incorporate a degree of EU influence.

The total body of European law, dating back to 1958, is known as the *Acquis Communautaire*, which covers about 80,000 individual pieces of legislation all told.

The Institute for Government think tank has warned that with thousands of pieces of legislation to be considered over the next 18 months, this will inevitably be a major drain on resources and just as inevitably push other government policies, and the management of ongoing ones aside.

There are other problems too. Somewhere between 10 and 15 other bills will be needed as well as the Great Repeal Bill just to help handle its tumultuous journey towards exit. For instance, as [economia](#) puts it *"There will need to be a substantial financial bill, and ones concerning customs, immigration, farms and fisheries, and many other areas of regulation now prescribed from Brussels. In a normal year, any two or three of these would constitute a full year's work."*

There are also other wide ranging implications here. Both Houses will have no available time to do anything else, probably until 2020 or so. The consequence is that Ministers are already quietly being told to pursue their own ambitions without the need for legislation.

Will the Conservatives ask Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in any meaningful way to pass their own bills on legislation that affects their own areas, but at the same time ask them to sign "legislative consent," the motions required giving their approval to UK

legislation that affects their powers? It's complicated. And complicated is something politician's don't do well.



Changing minds – YouGov survey July 19th – Q: In hindsight do you think Britain was right to vote to leave the EU?

Given the legacy of non-stop government failures of budgeting, managing and implementing even small scale projects, one can only come to the conclusion that delays to Brexit will be announced first, a sure first sign that the Brexit project is already in failure mode. And it will come soon. It will be called 'evolutionary' or 'transitional.'

The other small matter to point out is this. The Tories, with unlimited government resources available, managed to dramatically miscalculate the Brexit result, then followed up that calamity with a totally unnecessary election bid that blew up in their faces. Why would anyone give them the job of managing exactly what they just screwed up in the first place? The fifth largest economy in the world now has probably the most complicated post war transformation project to be managed and it's been placed into the hands of people who failed to outsource a logging system for the police at £15 million. This won't end well in their hands.

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