

WHO FUCKED OVER HIS COUNTRY WORSE IN 2020, BOJO OR TRUMP?

For some weeks, I've been contemplating which bombastic populist asshole has fucked his country more in 2020: Donald Trump or Boris Johnson. BoJo stubbornly pursued Brexit, slowly weakening his negotiating hand and finally agreeing to a result that favors the EU on most issues. The chances the UK loses Northern Ireland (which will be the recipient of soft power support from the Republic of Ireland going forward) and Scotland have gone up. To feed populism, then, BoJo has weakened the economic strengths of the UK and may have dismantled the last bits of the "kingdom."

Meanwhile, Trump has spent four years feeding his ego and weakening our alliances. He has systematically delegitimized democratic government, and shat on the Rule of Law. He has spent the months since his loss riling up his mobs, heightening the likelihood of political violence going forward. And unless Warnock and Ossoff win the Georgia runoff, President Biden will be stuck with a hostile Senate and legions of right wing Trump judges to constrain his power.

Plus, it's likely too soon to weigh the damage Trump has done. As if 2020 hasn't been interminable already, Trump will have 20 more days to punish the country for rejecting him, all the while deliberately undermining Biden's ability to operate going forward.

Both, of course, have bolloxed COVID response.

So I really don't know who is more fucked. Sitting between the US and UK in Ireland, I guess I'd have to say they're different kinds of fucked, but I suspect the UK may recover more quickly.

Some weeks ago, I asked this question of Dan

Drezner, who argued the [rump] UK is more fucked, because it is a small less powerful country and because it is stuck will BoJo going forward.

There are multiple reasons to believe that the United Kingdom is facing the darker horizon.

For one thing, Brexit turned out to be the bigger self-own than the election of Trump. To be sure, the Trump administration has wreaked all kinds of policy carnage over the past four years. Its foreign economic policy was particularly boneheaded, leading to a lot of economic coercion but not a lot in the way of concessions. Plunging the United States into a pre-coronavirus industrial recession to negotiate a trade deal with China that has fallen well short of 2017 or even 2020 expectations is not a sign of winning. Trump's post-electoral decompensation, and the stranglehold he continues to possess over much of the GOP, is extremely disconcerting.

With all of that acknowledged, however, Brexit is still worse. The referendum decision triggered an exodus of the financial sector away from London and toward myriad E.U. destinations. As predicted, the United Kingdom experienced three years of reduced inward foreign direct investment as a result of Brexit. That trend reversed itself but other European countries experienced an even larger surge in FDI. A hard Brexit at the end of this month will merely add to the economic trauma. And all of this ignores Brexit's deleterious effects on British control over Scotland and Northern Ireland.

To be blunt, however, the United Kingdom is in the worse position compared with the United States for two simple

reasons. The first is that the United States is the wealthier and more powerful country, which means it can afford to make serious mistakes and keep on chugging. Britain must now deal with the fact that it has much less bargaining power compared with either the United States or the European Union.

The second reason is that the U.S. mistake proved to be more ephemeral in nature. A majority of British voters approved Brexit. In two subsequent elections, British voters awarded the Conservative Party with majorities – the second time by a considerable margin. The United Kingdom will continue to be governed by Boris Johnson, a human approximation of an Avenue Q muppet.

Another smart person argued that the US is more fucked, because even if Joe Biden were in the best possible situation, the US simply doesn't prioritize solving serious problems, notably the economic plight of working class Americans, whereas the UK still attempts to do that, imperfectly. COVID has exacerbated those problems. And unless Biden addresses the grievances of those Americans, Democrats will continue to cede power and some smarter authoritarian (Josh Hawley is already auditioning) will replace Biden.

Consider this a debate thread on which country has been fucked worse.