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Beneficial Chaos: the Good News About Brexit

By Margaret Kimberley
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This week the world has to be thankful for hubris and political miscalculation. These two factors have temporarily thrown a wrench into the imperialist project. No one in the British or American establishment foresaw the “Brexit” vote that called for a United Kingdom withdrawal from the European Union.

The post-referendum recrimination and political chaos benefit humanity. The latest trade deal monstrosity, the Trans Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), is on hold for now and NATO provocations against Russia will take a back seat. Millions of people will get a respite from American meddling in their lives.

If there had been any inkling of a Brexit victory, Prime Minister David Cameron would never have agreed to put the matter to a vote. Even politicians on the right who made it a condition of supporting him may not have pushed the issue, either. Nor did the Labour party see Brexit coming. If so they would have been in front making the principled left case against neo-liberalism and United States hegemony. Instead they straddled the fence and meekly supported the Remain camp at the 11th hour.

Despite its well-cultivated image of progress and enlightenment the European Union is not a bulwark of peace and international cooperation. It acts as America's 28-nation gang of enforcers, as it impoverishes Greece, or tears Ukraine in two or bribes Turkey to keep the desperate refugees they all had a hand in creating. But the EU nations are also victims of American power. The United States is the invisible senior partner of the EU, making sure that it keeps the international banksters well funded, expands NATO and makes certain that no one steps out of the American orbit. Angela Merkel may want to end sanctions against Russia, or allow Greece to exit the Eurozone but both requests were dead on arrival because Washington opposed them.

While David Cameron and Barack Obama and the *New York Times* and the BBC all sneered at anyone who thought of leaving, ordinary citizens kept their own counsel. They watched as EU rules precluded deficit spending and created an austerity hell for the British people. Under American pressure the EU expanded its membership to include poorer countries whose people then had a right to immigrate to more prosperous countries like the UK. This race to the bottom for workers was not just the concern of xenophobes and racists but of people whose living wage jobs disappear.

The insults heaped upon the Leave voters by the establishment certainly didn't help. It was bad enough that the Cameron government gutted Britain's once proud national health system but late in the anti-Brexit campaign they added insult to injury by threatening to withhold even more money if the Leave vote won. In one of the worst acts of desperation, Cameron invoked the spirit of the much maligned Vladimir Putin, declaring that a Leave vote would only benefit the man turned into a villain by western politicians and media.

The warnings of economic catastrophe were ignored in favor of a desire for freedom from a cooked up union that exists to make capital flow more easily. It is true that the most visible Leave campaigners were motivated by anti-immigrant sentiment. That did not have to be the case. But the Labour Party are also under the sway of finance capital and the discredited specter of criminal Tony Blair. What passes for the left was caught flat footed instead of making the case for escape from the imperialist hostage takers.

The media reaction to the vote is proof of how much the establishment want to stay within the bounds of the neo-liberal project. Voters who chose the Brexit route have been labeled as stupid, and we are told that 17 million people didn't know what they were doing. Every instance of hate speech and hate crime is now blamed on the Brexit vote, as if there was an absence of racism and intolerance before.

Cameron will step down, but there is turmoil in the Labour party ,too. Their constituents voted to go and there were even more fissures along generational and geographic lines. Scotland voted to

stay, and its leadership has already said that the referendum will not be binding upon them. There is talk of a second referendum, which makes a mockery of the constant shrieking about democracy in the capitalist world.

Other nations are watching and people in the rest of Europe are making the case for once again having their own currencies and leaving NATO behind. That is why they are vilified so badly. They want freedom from the big bullies on the school yard, the United States of America and finance capital.

Ordinary people may not be able to articulate their discomfort but they'll speak up when given the opportunity to express their unhappiness. Some who voted to leave the EU may be well versed on the subject, some were anti-immigrant, others were fed up with politicians who lie to them about wars or austerity.

The end result of Brexit may be the end of the United Kingdom. Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU while England and Wales voted to leave. Given another opportunity, Scottish people may choose independence. The *New York Times* and the *Guardian* may wring their hands about this possibility but no one else should care.

Britain committed some of the worst criminal acts in history ranging from slavery to colonialism. It violently repressed freedom movements and owes its wealth to its criminality. Now it acts in concert with the United States to sanction and to threaten. For now it is unlikely to play a major role in provoking Russia, which has suddenly moved down on the imperialist to-do list. Let the sun finally set on the British empire.

There is no downside to David Cameron's impending resignation either. He is a symbol of every form of corruption in western so-called democracy. Cameron went to Libya to personally gloat after NATO overthrew that government, killed thousands of people and murdered president Muammar Gaddafi. The corporate media went to great lengths to connect Vladimir Putin to the Panama papers scandal, but it was Cameron's family who hid money offshore to keep from paying taxes. Cameron should suffer but he won't. He will undoubtedly join the ranks of former heads of state who become well paid errand boys for the 1%.

Chaos can be a good thing. The current mess of post-Brexit politics is a sign that one part of the capitalist coalition is in trouble. They won't give up easily and will do everything in their power to negate the will of the people. But this earthquake can't be papered over easily and that is a good thing indeed.