

Richard Tuck, *The Left Case for Brexit. Reflections on the Current Crisis* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2020).

*The Left Case for Brexit* is Richard Tuck's first book not to be divided into ordinally numbered sections or chapters. Rather, the book is organized chronologically into a series of dated entries, like a diary or daybook. The dated entries trace a trajectory from the run-up to the Brexit referendum in 2016 to the run-up to the December 2019 UK general election, which offers an absent coda to the present work.

Whatever one may think of the political analysis or the political perspective on offer in the work, the book has the pacing of a finely wrought novella. It is engagingly written by an author with a vast array of knowledge both of the history of political thought and of British history.

The book defends a left case for Brexit upon the basis of three interrelated claims. Up front, Tuck maintains, Brexit (followed by a Labour victory) offers the best (and, in the author's view, perhaps, the only) chance for the nationalization and re-nationalization of British industry and for a socialist future in Britain. In addition, for Tuck, Brexit offers a tactical antidote to Scottish Independence and will allow the British Labour Party to reclaim lost ground from the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland. Not least, Tuck avers, Brexit offers a chance for ordinary citizens to reclaim and reassert political control over their everyday lives.

The most fascinating claim of the book is the author's contention that a Labour Party committed both to Brexit and to the nationalization of industries (with attendant expropriations) has the best chance of thwarting the ambitions of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland and, thus, maintaining Anglo-Scottish Union in the United Kingdom. One potential critique of this view is that this hopeful analysis of Labour's prospects in Scotland as a pro-Brexit, pro-nationalization political party may underestimate both Scotland's historic ties to the continent as well as a broad tradition of Scottish liberalism. One might see how a moderate liberal voter in Scotland, with commitments both to European membership and citizenship as well as to rights of private property (thus opposing the expropriations which this book at times seems to advocate) might be forced to vote tactically in a general election for the Scottish National Party in constituencies in which the Liberal Democrats stood no chance of winning. Indeed, in 2019, the election results of which are not discussed in the book, the SNP won 81% of Scottish constituencies, with only one constituency in Scotland being represented by a Labour MP.

No less, the book bears some similarities to other works on the political crises of the early twenty-first century, not least to Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos* (2015). Both works draw a distinction between market institutions and democratic institutions, which may, in the views of the respective authors, come apart from one another. Both works commend the post-World War II social and political consensus and the social welfare programs which have dwindled with the lapse of this consensus. Both works emphasize the role of institutions in forming and framing the subjectivities of democratic citizens. Of particular interest here are Tuck's reflections on the relation between political psychology and democratic institutions. In his *Left Case*, Tuck argues that omnicompetent or absolutist democratic institutions (such as the Crown in Parliament) actually hinder the development of fascist political movements and fascist sentiments in democratic electorates. In part this is so, Tuck contends, because within more robustly democratic political institutions (without check by constitutional courts or independent central banks) citizens are instilled with a feeling of control over their own political lives and their shared futures together. These feelings of control or sentiments of self-determination, in turn, Tuck maintains, serve to moderate the behavior and sentiments of voters. It is primarily in the absence of such feelings of democratically instituted control that voters tend to immoderation and to lashing out against disfavored groups. Thus, Tuck contends, if the issue of immigration, for example, were a matter of full Parliamentary discretion, Tuck thinks, a more liberal position would manifest itself in the British (and, especially, English) electorate. This position, like the view expressed on the partisan political balance related to Scotland's independence, is an empirical prediction and the reader wonders whether these matters will turn out as Tuck's political psychology predicts.

The book weaves together a number of side threads from a eulogy for mass citizen armies of the World Wars (and the democratic potential emerging from them), to a discussion of the ways in which constitutions construct political subjectivity and frame the horizon of that which is politically possible. Of particular interest is one idea in the book that socialism is an implicature of democracy, that democracy and socialism go hand in hand. One argument which the work does not address is a citizenship-based argument for remaining in the European Union. On such a view, Brexit amounts to an *Entrechtung*, a forced forfeiture of rights, above all, the rights of citizenship (with attendant rights of movement and residence) within the varied member states of the European Union. In addition, the book also offers something of an intellectual and political biography of its author, who is and remains one of the great historians of political thought. The interested reader will find traces of debates over Hobbes, democracy, the sovereignty-government distinction, and of Tuck's numerous and ongoing debates and exchanges with other historians and scholars. The book should interest a liberal and conservative, no less than a socialist readership.

With the final entry in the book dated to the end of October 2019, the book's absent ending is the December 2019 British general election, which leaves the reader wondering how the author might analyze this event and whether the 2019 general election in Britain bears implications for the status and claims of the argument of the book.

While the book was composed in the years between 2016 and 2019, *The Left Case for Brexit* was published in Britain in late March of 2020, amidst a pandemic lockdown leaving readers unable to purchase it in bookstores. The context of the book's composition thus differs markedly from the context of the work's publication and reception. The disjunct between the Brexit debates of the early twenty-first century and the global pandemic which forestalled a reception of this work offer the reader of this engaging book an invitation into the seemingly distant and perhaps unfamiliar country that was the recent past.

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