

Britain Needs Values-Based Leadership To Steer The Ship Through Uncertain Water

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By Randall S. Peterson

In times of crisis people look to their leaders for clear, values-based [leadership](#) from real people. Not perfect people, not necessarily considered debate and discussion, but anchors to hold onto as uncertainty takes hold.



Michael Gove (Photo by Jack Taylor/Getty Images)

It is not only the financial markets that abhor uncertainty, but ordinary people find it disquieting as well. Looking at the state of British politics right now, it is incredibly hard to see any anchors for the public to hold onto. We see a lot of politicians seeking advantage and stepping forward in search of power, and not enough clarity on who and what they stand for. I can only hope this will come into focus in the coming days. For example, Michael Gove announcing: “I have come, reluctantly, to the conclusion that Boris cannot provide the leadership or build the team for the task ahead” is a “me too, I am better

than that other guy" bid for power. Looking across to the other side of the house you have Jeremy Corbyn saying: "I was democratically elected leader of our party for a new kind of politics by 60% of Labour members and supporters, and I will not betray them by resigning. Today's vote by MPs has no constitutional legitimacy." This is not about what happened months ago, this is about what is happening now, and lack of leadership during and after the referendum. Both parties seem to be in a truly sad state.

I can contrast this with a higher standard of leadership seen in some businesses. The morning after the referendum, [Barclays](#) issued a statement: "We have stood in service of our customers and clients for over 325 years. We have been here for them through equally profound changes before. And no matter what has been laid before us, we have been here to help them achieve their ambitions." This is a clear statement of both stability, but also about what they are about as an organization – helping people achieve their ambitions. For all of the criticism they have had in recent years, they seemed to get this one right.

The Bank of England widely reported this: "The Bank will not hesitate to take additional measures as required as those markets adjust and the U.K. economy moves forward." Equally important was this very clear statement of purpose and values: "The best contribution of the Bank of England to this process is to continue to pursue relentlessly our responsibilities for monetary and financial stability."

Imagine if politicians could work together, in a spirit of genuine national interests, to promote these kinds of messages, rather than comparing themselves favorably to others and clinging on to power for what seems to be the sake of power. Rather ironically, the only one that seems to be doing this at all right now is [David Cameron](#), but then I rather expect he is trying to restore his reputation in light of everything that is happening.

The U.K. deserves and needs better than this. And there are many shining historical examples of strong principled

leadership in times of crisis in the U.K. Where are those leaders right now when we need them?

Boris Johnson seems to at least have enough clarity about his own divisiveness after the campaign to not run for the leadership – so there are small glimmers of reason here.

What the U.K. needs right now is leaders in both parties who are not strongly associated with either the Remain or Leave campaigns, but those who are focused on stability and will remind the British people of their own best selves: the rule of law; individual liberty; and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different perspectives other than our own.

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