

EDELMAN

GENERAL ELECTION 2019

BORIS GETS HIS MAJORITY



Contents:

Why did Johnson win?

Domestic policy priorities

What next for Brexit?

The future of the Union

Where next for Labour?

The new parliament at a glance

Five new Tory MPs to look out for

DOMESTIC POLICY PRIORITIES

1) Infrastructure

A self-styled 'infrastructure revolution' will see £100 bn in additional spending going towards improving transport in the north and the midlands. Whilst a decision on the future of HS2 is expected, further detail on other transport priorities could be revealed in the **National Infrastructure Strategy**, rumoured to be published alongside the Budget expected shortly after Brexit.

2) Business

A key Government mission in a post-Brexit future will be to make Britain 'the best country in the world' to start and grow a business. Party rhetoric has thus far centred on attracting growth in the **technology, financial services and creative industry sectors** and, despite a freeze rather than cut to corporation tax, businesses will be bolstered by a **reduction in business rates** and supported by a new **£3 billion National Skills Fund**.

WHY DID JOHNSON WIN?

Boris Johnson's share of the vote was just one percentage point higher than Theresa May's. Instead of a hung parliament, it translated into a majority of 80, and victory in seats including Tony Blair's former seat of Sedgefield and Dennis Skinner's Bolsover seat.

Confident of a five-year term if he wants it, **this new political geography will have significant impact on Boris' agenda**. In 2024 he will have to account for his record to the voters in Britain's de-industrialising heartlands. No wonder his victory speech talked about the NHS and infrastructure investment alongside Brexit.

Analysis of how Boris smashed the 'red wall' is going to be key to understanding what he and his competitors need to do to succeed electorally in the future. Labour won by 20 points in cities, but lost everywhere else. **It is going to be increasingly important to understand the interests of people who don't live in the big cities where most of our big companies are based.**

The Corbynite analysis is that the divide was all about Brexit, but transparently it wasn't. Labour was down 10 points in strong Leave areas, but it was also down 6 points in strong Remain areas. Brexit cannot explain why Jeremy Corbyn was less trusted than Boris Johnson on the NHS; and when Lord Ashcroft asked people what most put them off voting Labour the number 1 answer – Leave or Remain – was Jeremy Corbyn. Delta Poll found something similar.

The result shows the importance of trust and credibility. The video link below takes you to a clip from our focus group with swing voters near Stoke. Who wouldn't want free broadband? The problem is that Labour was not trusted to deliver it.



In contrast, Boris effectively only made one pledge and he was utterly believable on it – he will get Brexit done. On that note...

WHAT NEXT FOR BREXIT?

The UK will be leaving the EU on 31 January 2020. But that's just the first step of 'getting Brexit done' – what comes next, and will it all be over by this time next year?

Clearly, Johnson's large majority and personal mandate will give him a lot of leeway in getting his preferred form of Brexit. His statements so far suggest he wants a **relatively narrow UK-EU FTA which prioritises trade and regulatory sovereignty** over a more comprehensive arrangement such as May's Chequers plan, however the new political reality may mean that changes.

3) Housing

The Tories will look to amend planning rules to boost local infrastructure and house building and support the development of more affordable housing. Leasehold reform will aim to make housing fairer for consumers, alongside better protections for renters.

4) Environment

During the campaign the Prime Minister was keen to brandish his green credentials and this will likely continue. A pathway to achieving net zero by 2050, which will have a direct impact on businesses, will be a key priority alongside publishing an Energy White Paper. The Tories will also look to put their proposals on plastics and recycling into primary legislation.

5) Health

The Tories have committed to billions in additional funding, to new hospitals and to thousands more doctors and GPs. Keen to demonstrate his post-austerity credentials, the Prime Minister's success in proving this will rely heavily on his ability to inject funding into the NHS, and prove he is delivering for the health service.

Such an FTA would **preserve tariff and quota free goods trade**, but it would increase costs for business in the form of regulatory obligations and associated checks – these would be particularly felt by the advanced manufacturing and services sectors (the Government’s own figures expect an FTA Brexit would still leave GDP 5% lower than staying in).

Some now hope that, not beholden to the hard Brexiteer ERG bloc, Johnson could again pivot and embrace a softer Brexit. However, such an arrangement would be a lot more complicated, entail tricky trade-offs and take a lot longer to negotiate with an EU that is as weary of Brexit as the UK electorate.

Could an FTA be negotiated within 11 months? This timetable is certainly very ambitious, not least since the relationship will also need to encompass non-economic issues such as security cooperation. However, a relatively narrow, goods-focused FTA **could feasibly be agreed in this time**, although the EU’s price will also be potentially painful compromises on level playing field provisions and fishing rights in UK waters.

Either way, **it is unlikely Johnson will take up the option to extend the transition period by the 1 July deadline**, having promised not to do so – this **means a no deal Brexit on 31 December 2020, while unlikely, cannot be ruled out**. That said, if necessary, some kind of further extension mechanism could probably be manufactured closer to the deadline as both sides want a deal. It is also likely specific transition arrangements will be required to phase-in the new ‘points-based’ immigration system and the new Northern Irish dual customs regime.

THE FUTURE OF THE UNION

The results in Scotland and Northern Ireland – which saw a surge in support for the SNP and nationalists win more seats than unionists in the Province for the first time – **pose a range of constitutional challenges for the Government**.

Winning 48 seats has convinced the **SNP they have a renewed mandate for independence**, with the party expected to publish a new legal case for a second referendum next week. The anticipated rejection of such a request by a Tory Government with only six Scottish MPs and a distinctly English voice suits the Nationalist argument that Scotland suffers from a democratic deficit and makes the terrain difficult for pro-Union parties in the long-term. A crumb of comfort for dejected unionists is that **the pro-independence share of the vote is still, despite Brexit and Boris, just over 45%** which is the same figure the losing Yes side achieved at the 2014 poll.

In Northern Ireland, the DUP’s losses can be attributed to tactical voting among Remain voters and selective collaboration between the SDLP and Sinn Fein. Despite this, questions are likely to be asked of Arlene Foster’s leadership given she has presided over the **loss of unionist hegemony at the devolved Stormont assembly and now Westminster**.

However, **this should not be taken as an indication that a united Ireland is imminent**. Sinn Fein’s vote share fell more than any other Northern Irish party including the DUP, while the cross-community Alliance party increased its share most. Rather than categorising Ulster’s politics in traditional orange v green terms, it is clear that an incipient middle ground is actually growing increasingly weary of the constitutional question.

WHERE NEXT FOR LABOUR?

In the face of last night's disappointing results for Labour, Jeremy **Corbyn has said he will not lead the Party into the next election but will stay on as Leader during a 'process of reflection'**. Further details of the timetable for his departure and the election of a successor are yet to be confirmed.

Labour frontbenchers were quick to pin the blame for last night's results on a Brexit-focused election, **seeking to deflect criticism away from Jeremy Corbyn and his radical policy agenda**. As the ground is laid for an upcoming leadership battle, the debate on why Labour lost will continue in the days and weeks ahead.

Contenders to succeed Corbyn are already being discussed, with candidates ranging across the Labour Party. Current Shadow Cabinet members Emily Thornberry, Keir Starmer, Rebecca Long-Bailey and Angela Rayner are all tipped to run, whilst prominent backbenchers Yvette Cooper and Jess Phillips are also potentially in the frame. One possible key challenger from the left, Laura Pidcock, lost her seat overnight. **Whoever puts their hat in the ring, we can be sure a fierce debate over the Labour Party's heart and soul is on the horizon.**

As Labour considers last night's results and reflects on how to rebuild, a new intake of MPs will arrive in Westminster. **Many, including the leadership hopefuls, will be looking for issues to champion or campaigns to throw their weight behind.**

FIVE NEW TORY MPs TO LOOK OUT FOR

1. Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire)

Staunch Brexiteer replaces troublesome Remainer

The Tory rebels, who frustrated May and then Boris' attempts to pass Brexit legislation, have been replaced largely by true Brexit believers. Anthony Browne, who narrowly beat the Liberal Democrats in the seat formerly held by Heidi Allen (who left the Tories to set up ChangeUK) is symbolic of this realignment. The former director of Policy Exchange has been consistently vocal about the bright future he sees for Britain once it leaves the EU.

2. Jacob Young (Redcar)

Breaking through the red wall

A number of seats across the Midlands and the North have turned blue for the first time. Experienced backbench campaigners in the Labour party such as Anna Turley have been ousted in favour of fresh-faced Tories. As one of the youngest MPs in parliament, Young will be keen to ensure

NEW PARLIAMENT AT A GLANCE

Whilst a record 220 women have been elected to Parliament, two-thirds of seats are still represented by men. Tory dominated south-west England has the highest proportion of male MPs at 80% whilst the north-east is now represented by a far higher proportion of women at 41%.

However, there are still concerns over the high number of female MPs who chose not to contest their seats, many of whom

his constituents are well represented in any regional investment decisions that are expected to be undertaken by the Prime Minister. He forms part of a 'blue wave' of young Tories to enjoy election success on Teesside.

3. Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs)

Boris' inner circle delivered to the backbenches

As with most elections, part of the new intake is made up of former advisers who have the ear of party leaders. Former Business Adviser to the Prime Minister Andrew Griffith now represents a safe seat in the Tory heartlands. The former COO of a major listed UK business, he will be an important voice, initially on the backbenches.

4. Sarah Atherton (Wrexham)

Historic win in Wales

In a night peppered with surprises the Conservative wins in Wales were particularly noteworthy, with Sarah Atherton being elected as the first ever female Conservative MP to represent a Welsh constituency. Despite only securing a slim majority of 2,131, her win is notable in a constituency that has returned a Labour MP at every general election since 1935.

5. Laura Trott (Sevenoaks)

Changing of the guard

Replacing former Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, Laura Trott will be Sevenoaks' first female MP. She has had a long association with the Tory party and was the director of strategic communications at No.10 during the Cameron years. Despite spending some time in the wilderness at a public affairs agency, she returns to Westminster as a prominent one to watch on the green benches.

pointed to abuse they had experienced in office as a contributing factor.

The next Parliament will also represent greater racial diversity, with 65 MPs from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The new house will be 10% BAME, up from 8% in the 2017 chamber with 41 candidates for Labour from an ethnic minority background – up from 32 in 2017. The Conservatives also increased the number of BAME MPs from 19 in 2017 to 22 now.

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