

Revenge is a dish best served cold

By Graham Eardley, Chairman of UKIP Walsall

I get the impression that the majority of fellow UK citizens feel that, following the last General Election which gave the Conservatives an 80-seat majority, Brexit is done.

There is no man in a top hat shouting “Stop Brexit” through a megaphone outside Parliament. The TV towers and tented village that were located on College Green in anticipation of yet another knife edge vote on a Brexit issue have disappeared.

The Withdrawal Agreement is proceeding through Parliament at breakneck speed in order to get the UK out of the European Union by the end of January 2020.

The opposition parties are in disarray with both the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party both seeking new leaders and deciding in which direction they should now take.

One clear message sent by the electorate was that the Labour party’s position of fence sitting on Brexit clearly was a failure and that they should have been a party of leave or remain. As the UK will be out of the EU by the time of the next election, it will be interesting to see what The Labour party’s position will be as none of the declared leadership candidates advocated a leave clean break position.

The Brexit Party is all but finished, and Nigel Farage has returned to his media duties. As his MEP’s will be out of a job by the end of this month, it was interesting to see how many Brexit Party MEPs recommended that people vote Conservative in the General Election of 12 December 2019.

As for my own party, UKIP, there seems to be a realisation that any association with so-called far right figures is electorally a disaster. Hence, there are many internal issues to be settled both in and out of court before UKIP can confidently fight any future national election.

In fact most political commentators who concentrate on Brexit are already looking at future trade negotiations with the EU and other countries and how the UK will position itself in the world politically, and what clout it will have on the world stage in order to get the best deal for its citizens. Not least because of events in Iran and Iraq following the death of General Qassem Suleimani.

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson knows that he has little riddle room in any trade negotiation with the European Union other than to make sure the UK is in charge of its own destiny. Otherwise, he risks the anger of the European Research Group (ERG) of MPs. In particular, the areas of agriculture, fisheries and immigration controls will be looked at most carefully once people see what trade deal is on the table.

As for the mechanics of government, it was interesting to see the Conservative party transform itself from being the party of the establishment to what looks to be an anti-establishment party given the recent blog post of Dominic Cummings, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister^[1], where he claims to want to hire “Weirdos and misfits with odd skills” to work for the government.

I might question if this has anything to do with the resistance that Mr Cummings had found during his time at Number 10 within the ranks of the Civil Service and this may be the way in getting his own back. If this is so, I wish him good luck as many have tried to reform the civil service and few have succeeded.

With the opposition in such disarray, now would be an ideal time for the government to also push ahead with reform to the Supreme Court as it has already indicated it will do in the Queens Speech^[2]. As the saying goes, revenge is a dish best served cold it looks that there will be few warm dishes served up by Downing Street this year.

^[1] <https://dominiccummings.com/2020/01/02/two-hands-are-a-lot-were-hiring-data-scientists-project-managers-policy-experts-assorted-weirdos/>

^[2] <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1219558/boris-johnson-reform-supreme-court-commission-queen-s-speech-brexit>

Disclaimer: This blog is written in a personal capacity and does not necessarily reflect the views of Centre for Brexit Studies and Birmingham City University.