

## UK ELECTION RESULTS AND BREXIT IMPLICATIONS

December 16, 2019

### I. Executive Summary.

In the December 12, 2019 general election, the United Kingdom's Conservative Party won an outright majority in the 650-seat House of Commons, winning its largest majority since 1987 during the Margaret Thatcher era and dealing the opposition Labor Party its most crushing defeat since 1935. The results of the election, which was called and run as a "second Brexit referendum," should give returning Tory Prime Minister Boris Johnson a nearly free hand to negotiate Brexit or even accept a "hard" or "no deal" Brexit by the planned January 31, 2020 exit date.

### II. Results.

The final results, with gains and losses from the outgoing parliament, were:

- Conservatives (Tories): 365 seats (+47) (326 seats needed for a majority)
- Labor: 203 seats (-59)
- Scottish National Party (SNP): 48 seats (+13) (of 59 Scottish seats in the House of Commons)
- Liberal Democrats: 11 seats (-1)
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) (Northern Ireland): 8 seats (-2)
- Other: 15 seats (+2).

### III. Takeaways.

- a. Conservatives under PM Boris Johnson won an absolute majority, their biggest win since 1987 when Margaret Thatcher led the party and the most crushing loss for Labor since 1935. Johnson should be free to cut his own Brexit deal; unlike the disastrous June 8, 2017 "snap election" called by former PM Theresa May that saw the Tories lose the majority bequeathed by her predecessor, PM David Cameron, this election was explicitly called and run as a "second Brexit referendum." Johnson demanded Brexit negotiating authority and can claim the win, although exit poll evidence also indicated that an additional factor in the Tory win was that Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn, who will soon resign, was an unacceptable choice as Prime Minister for many Britons.

- b. With the new majority, Johnson does not need the DUP in a coalition anymore as was the case in the outgoing parliament, and therefore the "hard" vs. "soft" Northern Ireland – Republic of Ireland border issue should dissipate as a Brexit fulcrum; several of May's efforts to achieve a Brexit deal ran aground on the Irish border issue.
- c. The Tories and SNP split up the gains from Labor's 59-seat loss. Labor received only 33% of the vote, its lowest total since 1992, and is almost wiped out in its traditional strongholds of northern England and its midlands, maintaining strength only in some of central and suburban London and south Wales. In a sign of the cross-over strength of right-wing populism, the Tories made gains at Labor's expense in many working class areas.
- d. Scots abandoned Labor, and the SNP, a pro-independence, anti-Brexit party, now has 48 of 59 Scottish seats (up from 35 in the outgoing parliament). SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon may seek a second Scottish independence referendum that, however, Johnson may not allow and which, if allowed, the SNP might not win.

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