

ELECTION 2017: Brexit – the new dividing line

By [Joseph Silke](#), Editor

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THE SHADOW OF the exit negotiations from the European Union looms over this fateful election. The Prime Minister has sought to frame the upcoming ballot very simply; it is a vote to determine who will lead the negotiations with the other 27 member states: Theresa May or Jeremy Corbyn.

An increased majority, Mrs May says, will strengthen her negotiating hand throughout the withdrawal process as the government can rely on the smooth passing of business through the House of Commons. This can either be interpreted as a sensible move to ensure “strong and stable leadership” or an underhanded plot to silence opposition at Westminster and give Mrs May a free hand to act as she pleases.

The onus is on the leader of the Opposition to prove that he is capable of the difficult task ahead as the only viable alternative occupant of Number 10.

Shadow Brexit Secretary Sir Keir Starmer’s speech at Chatham House set Labour’s priorities as protecting worker rights and retaining the benefits of the Single Market and Customs Union.

Trapped between “Hampstead and Hull”, the traditional alliance of working class communities and city intellectuals which have held the Labour Party together is collapsing, as many of the former voted ‘leave’ and many of the latter ‘remain’.

Labour risks haemorrhaging ‘leave’ voters to the Conservatives and ‘remain’ voters to the Liberal Democrats or even losing more voters to the SNP in Scotland, making it very difficult for Labour to come close to a majority alone.

Tim Farron, leader of the Liberal Democrats, presents a clear line. The party’s anti-Brexit message has successfully courted ‘remain’ voters since the referendum last June. Mr Farron is positioning himself to be the “true voice of opposition”. He claims that the Labour has failed to hold the government to account and advocates for a referendum on the final death with Brussels.

The 2015 general election saw a seismic shift in Scotland as the SNP swept to victory in 54 out of 59 seats. The people of Scotland voted overwhelmingly for the United Kingdom to remain a member of the EU.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon claims that the UK’s exit from the organisation entails Scotland dragged out against its will. The SNP hopes that the EU exit will be a catalyst for Scottish separation.

Unthinkable even a few years ago the Scottish Conservatives are losing their toxicity in Scotland under the leadership of former ‘remain’ advocate Ruth Davidson.

It is hoped that the return of new Scottish Tory MPs will stave off another separation referendum despite the recent request for a re-run from the Scottish Parliament.

Following uncomfortable leaks to the German press indicative of strife between the EU and the government, it is clear that the coming negotiations will be tough.

Europe will dominate the Parliament. The electorate must decide who can provide the best leadership to secure the best deal for Britain.



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