

The Conservative victory will lead to the UK's departure from the European Union on 31st January 2020 at the latest

The Conservative Party led by outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson won a landslide victory in the UK legislative elections on 12th December. The Tories took 43.6% of the vote and won 365 seats (+48 compared to the previous election of June 8th 2017) in the House of Commons, the lower house of Parliament. This victory, which gave Boris Johnson an absolute majority, was the most important for the Tories since Margaret Thatcher's victory on June 9th 1983 (42.4% of the vote and 397 elected officials).

The Labour Party suffered one of its biggest electoral defeats. It won 32.1% of the vote and 202 seats (-60). This was its biggest defeat since the election of November 14, 1935 (38% of the votes and 154 elected) and also its fourth consecutive electoral failure. The party lost working class constituencies that it had held for decades. The only consolation is that London and Wales remained loyal to Labour. Its leader Jeremy Corbyn has indicated that he will not lead the party in the next elections.

In contrast, the Scottish National Party (SNP) achieved a very high result. It obtained 3.9% of the votes and 48 seats (+13). *"The overall result is bitter but the Scots have the choice of a different future. I have obtained a mandate to offer Scotland this choice, there is no doubt about it. Then it will be up to the people to choose. Boris Johnson has no right to force Scotland out of the European Union and I have no right not to give us that choice. Scotland has shown that it wants to remain in the European Union and independence*

is the only way to meet this wish," said Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon after the election. However, it will need a majority in the House of Commons for the referendum to be authorised and the Prime Minister has already indicated that he would refuse to hold such a poll.

The Liberal Democrats (Lib-Dem), who had campaigned on the outright cancellation of Brexit, suffered a heavy defeat. They received 11.6% of the votes and won 11 seats (-1). Their leader, Jo Swinson, lost her seat in East Dunbartonshire (north of Glasgow) to an SNP candidate and resigned from her position. She has been replaced by Ed Davey and Sal Brinton.

The Green Party of England and Wales (G), led by Sian Berry and Jonathan Bartley, won 2.7% of the vote and one seat (=) in Brighton.

The Ulster Unionist Democratic Party (DUP), a Protestant Unionist party in Northern Ireland, led by Arlene Foster, won 0.8% of the vote and lost 2 of its 10 seats to Sinn Fein (SF) and the Alliance, both parties in favour of keeping the United Kingdom in the European Union and reuniting Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland.

The Brexit Party, founded in January 2019, led by MEP Nigel Farage and in favour of a clean and rapid break with Brussels, won 2% of the votes and no seats. *"We used our influence to avoid a second referendum and it seems to have succeeded,"* said Nigel Farage when the results were announced. The party chose not to run in

the 317 constituencies won by the Tories in the 2017 elections.

Turnout totalled 67.3%.

Boris Johnson's success signals the end of hope for all pro-European Britons who were hoping for a second referendum on the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. *"Get Brexit Done"* hammered the outgoing Prime Minister throughout the election campaign. The British, probably tired of the endless soap opera and the situation their country has been in for more than three years, listened to him and voted to close the divorce chapter with Brussels. *"The Conservative Party has received a powerful new mandate to make Brexit a reality. This mandate is irrefutable. It puts an end to the threat of a second referendum. We will leave the European Union on 31st January, no more "ifs" or "buts",* said Boris Johnson after the results.

He was able to gather the popular electorate under his name, including the one traditionally loyal to the Labour Party. He thus perfectly identified and targeted the Labour constituencies in central and northern England that were won by the opposition in the previous elections of 2017, which in their majority had voted for Brexit. *"Perhaps you have only lent us your voice. You may not consider yourself to be conservative activists or sympathizers, you may return to the Labour Party in the next election. If so, I am touched that you trusted me,"* said Boris Johnson to thank these voters.

"Boris Johnson's true genius was to gather the Leavers behind him. 78% of them had said they would vote for him; however, the Remainers scattered between the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats or they did not vote," said Sara Hobolt, Professor of European Politics at the London School of Economics (LSE), *"It is very rare to see so many seats change sides in an election and it will probably take several Labour votes to hope to catch up and return to*

power," said Simon Hix, LSE political science professor. *"This is a brand-new base of voters for the Conservatives, they will have to respond to their demands to maintain jobs and social gains by minimizing the negative economic impact of Brexit,"* he added.

"We have won votes and the confidence of people who have never voted for the Conservatives before. These people want change. We can't, we mustn't let them down," said Boris Johnson. During their election campaign, the Tories promised to spend more than £13.80 billion (€16.54 billion) by 2021 to strengthen police forces, improve the education system and improve the National Health Service (NHS), a health service so dear to the British. The outgoing Prime Minister also said he would end the austerity policy (which the country has suffered for nine years).

Boris Johnson, 55, was born in New York City. After studying classical literature and philosophy at Oxford, he worked as a journalist for the Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Spectator and others. In 2001, he was elected Member of Parliament for Henley. He was re-elected in 2005. In 2008, he became Mayor of London, a position to which he was re-elected four years later in 2012.

He became a Member of Parliament again in 2015, elected for the constituencies of Uxbridge and South Ruislip, Greater London. The following year, after having been the spokesman for the pro-Brexit camp during the referendum campaign of 23rd June 2016, he joined Theresa May's government as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Disagreeing with the Prime Minister's conduct of the Brexit, he resigned on July 9th 2018.

After winning 66.1% of the Conservative Party members' votes on July 24th 2019, Boris Johnson succeeded Theresa May as head of government, the latter having resigned on May 24th.

On December 12th, Boris Johnson won his bet to win the legislative elections and obtain an absolute majority in the House of Commons that will allow him to bring the saga of Brexit to an end. His sweeping victory will allow him to decide which Brexit he wants for his country. "He will be less dependent on the hard Brexiters of his party than if he had had a shorter majority," said political scientist Sara Hobolt.

For the time being, the Treaty on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union is ready. It was negotiated last October between London and Brussels. It provides for a transitional period of eleven months, until 31st December 2020, during which time the British will continue to apply European rules.

Results of the General Elections on 12th December 2019 in the UK

Turnout : 67.30%

Political parties	Number of votes won	Percentage of votes casts	Number of seats
Conservative Party	13 966 565	43,6	365
Labour Party	10 269 076	32,1	202
Liberal Democrats (Lib-Dem)	3 696 423	11,6	11
Scottish National Party (SNP)	1 242 372	3,9	48
Green Party of England and Wales (G)	835 579	2,7	1
Brexit Party	642 303	2	0
Democratic Unionist Party of Ulster (DUP)	244 128	0,8	8
Sinn Fein (SF)	181 853	0,6	7
Plaid Cymru (PC)	153 265	0,5	4
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	134 115	0,4	1
Alliance	118 737	0,4	2
Others	345 214	1,4	0

Source : <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2019/results>

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