

Let Brexit take its course – the need now is to focus on the domestic agenda

Graham Norton's quip of the week was "the Prime Minister was asked two questions in China, both of which had the same answer: 'What is your name?', and 'Until when will you be in office?'". This may reflect the current state of leadership anguish in the Conservative party, but we should not forget that there is indeed a big political challenge coming up in May: the local elections.

No doubt many view that leadership anguish as being the result of Brexit uncertainties, and the absence of any public targets as to how they should be resolved. But the urgency of the domestic agenda is by far the most pressing issue so far as elections are concerned. In the country at large Brexit is seen as yesterday's decision and, even then, the primary driver was how mass migration has threatened people's livelihoods and jobs (see [our comment on 'Brown's legacy'](#)).

Now the urgent need is to address the polarisation of wealth, the lack of opportunity and hope for disadvantaged young people, and the deep social concerns exacerbated by seven years of austerity. It calls for a more egalitarian form of capitalism, where the free market genuinely works for the benefit of everyone in our society. Such new vision and hope can propel popular support and re-vitalise young people with a new sense of purpose: but it needs to be delivered.

But Brexit squabbles go on and on, and are always pushing their way into the headlines as if it's the only thing that concerns our governing party.

Why is this, when there is clearly only one sensible outcome? This is a [Canada style relationship](#) with the European Union, together with a peculiarly Irish customs 'partnership or arrangement' and a transition period to year-end 2020, coinciding with the completion of the European Union's seven year 'Multi-Annual Financial Framework' (during which EU regulations will apply). There is no other game in town except for World Trade Organisation rules, in which few people are interested.

So 'Remainers' and Brexiteers' in the Conservative party should just let Theresa May and her team get on with the job of putting this in place, and business leaders should restrain their impatience for a result. It will happen: just let it happen. Theresa May has not proved herself as a great election cheerleader, but she's a good manager and, as she herself says, 'not a quitter' - so let her get on with the job.

However she and her domestic team of ministers must concentrate on putting her social vision into reality with urgency. It would far more destabilising to lose ground heavily in the local elections, and that's a major risk if the Government continues to appear so introvert. The challenge is not just about building new houses: it is about giving people, and especially young people, the opportunity to break the cycle of deprivation.

Our commentary continually demonstrates [how this can be done](#). The last thing we need is to experience years of protectionism, state interference, and capital flight that would inevitably ensue if the government changed hands.

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