

Of Cameron, May and Johnson my suspicion is Johnson wil...

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What if Brexit was taken out of this election? I know it's a fanciful idea to suggest that we take consideration of Brexit out of account in this election, but just suppose we did? What then would the parties stand for? It's a question worth asking for a number of reasons.

First, that's because we have a government effectively seeking (albeit with a third prime minister) its fourth term in office, and that is unusual.

Second, it is because on all the issues that usually matter, from the economy, to earnings, to the NHS and education, this government has really not done well. Indeed, that might be too generous: with wages (and much else) not recovered from 2008 it is possible to say that they have done very badly. In addition, at least two of the three prime ministers are already being consigned to history as amongst the worst we have ever had. And yet the Tories still have an opinion poll lead.

And, third, when you actually try to discern what the Tories are about, specifics are hard to find.

Their economic policies, some broad election giveaways aside (which will be as quickly forgotten as their promise to investigate Islamophobia), look like a continuation of austerity.

Their Green policies are feeble.

The NHS tells its own story, with 90% of NHS staff believing that cuts are hurting the quality of service and prejudice the care that they can provide, whilst drug shortages are a reality before Brexit.

Elsewhere, what is there to note? They can't even be bothered to try producing a manifesto as yet.

And what of other parties? The LibDems are defined by Remain and a simply dreadful economic policy that they're not even capable of working out guarantees austerity in

the event of another downturn when we know this is a disaster now.

The SNP have a message, and an issue. At least they're clear.

And candidly, for Labour if Brexit was taken out of the equation everyone would be talking about them as at least they have ideas, and a clear vision on what they want. They just have the problem of what remains to most people (and this is a fact) an opaque policy on Brexit.

My point is that we have an election on a non-issue when there is so much else that needs talking about. Brexit is not the most important issue on this country's agenda. Our relationship with Europe was fine, and concerned a tiny proportion of the country before 2015, with good reason. And we do know that we will be worse off post Brexit whatever happens, if it happens. And yet the pursuit of that one issue, the reason for which no one is able to adequately explain as a solution to any known problem from migration (if it is a problem) onwards, is what is defining us. And it is doing so wholly inappropriately.

That is because it means there is no real debate on anything else. What we aspire to be as a nation; what services we want and how; how we might really deal with the climate crisis, and so much more; all these are cast aside for Brexit. They are what this election should be about. That, plus the failure of the Tories over nearly a decade. But they're not. It's just Brexit, Brexit, Brexit and will be ad infinitum and forever to come if Johnson gets his way.

We can hope the leadership debates open issues up. If they don't then nothing but the almighty crisis is going to change the direction of this country. And we have not got to that point as yet. In the meantime, politics remains in the ditch Johnson swore he'd die in, because he has dragged it there to share his slow, lingering demise. Of Cameron, May and Cameron my suspicion is Johnson will be much the worst. It's just a matter of time.