

# The going of Prime Ministers

Most Prime Ministers are removed directly or indirectly by General elections and referendums. In the post war Conservative party only two Prime Ministers have been removed by the party despite being big election winners, Margaret Thatcher and Boris Johnson

Edward Heath was a one term PM. He used a lot of political capital forcing the U.K. into the EEC against the wishes of a substantial portion of his party. He imposed a ludicrous range of controls on the economy to try to control inflation and picked a fight with the miners he was unlikely to win. Electors despatched him.

Mrs Thatcher won three great victories in a row. The experience of government and the evolving EU power grab changed her from Europhile to Eurosceptic. She was brought down by MPs in her own party led by Europhiles.

John Major won an election in 1992 and ploughed on with the deeply damaging European Exchange Rate mechanism policy which duly wrecked the economy. The party foolishly kept him and he went down to a predictable defeat. So comprehensively had he trashed the Conservative reputation for economic competence that he suffered the biggest post war defeat of any Conservative leader in 1997. It was only when Labour did worse by the economy 10 years later that the Conservatives had a chance to win again in 2010.

David Cameron won a good victory in 2015. Misunderstanding the importance of the EU referendum to the win, he backed the wrong side in the popular vote he had granted on the EU and lost. He accepted his defeat and resigned.

Mrs May fought and lost an election in 2017 and then persisted in backing a Brexit sell out to the EU. When she stubbornly insisted on her poor deal for a third time and lost the Commons vote she had to go.

Boris Johnson won a great victory in 2019 by backing Brexit fully. He was then brought down by a range of different MP groups for a range of different reasons.

The common thread seems to be the Eurosceptic PMs were more successful in elections with the public but more vulnerable to party dissent. The more popular PMs faced a much more vitriolic barrage of criticism from Opposition parties, the BBC and the rest of the Establishment. Two of the Europhile PMs, Theresa May and David Cameron were brought down directly by the EU issue, and John Major indirectly as it was his support for the European economic policy that did the damage. The party ratings fell when we were evicted from the Exchange Rate Mechanism and could see the damage, and never rose again in the following 4 years.

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## Visit to Biointeractions in Shinfield

I visited Biointeractions at their request. It is a successful company making products to control infection for surgical implants and in other medical uses. They showed me their laboratories, with research, production of their coatings and testing all in the same building at Collegiate Square.

They have grown the business over the years and now have 20 staff. They are developing new products which they think will help infection control in hospitals. It is good news that local talent is working away on one of the crucial issues for the NHS as well as overseas medical services. There is always room to improve infection control to reduce the numbers of people who develop a condition after surgery and treatment.

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## My intervention in the Prime Minister's Statement on CHOGM, G7 and NATO summits

**Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con):** Western purchases of Russian energy are paying for Putin's war. Will my right hon. Friend redouble his efforts to ensure that we invest in more production and output of oil, gas and electricity here, to make our contribution to reducing western dependence?

**Boris Johnson, Prime Minister:** Yes. I think the UK can be very proud of the way we have moved beyond hydrocarbons in so many areas, but we must recognise the limits and the pace of what we have achieved, and be less neuralgic about using our domestic hydrocarbons, particularly when the alternative is just to import them from abroad.

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## What should the government do now?

It is difficult to know if the interim government will feel it can do things. Constitutionally of course it can, as it is still formed from the same Conservative majority from the General election of 2019. It still has the same Prime Minister who won that election. Yet some around the table may think they should mark time pending a new decision about direction to be

made in the forthcoming leadership election. What is clearly true is there will not be the same uniformity of view and collective responsibility as usual, as several in the Cabinet will be campaigning to be Leader and will wish to differentiate their views from the current line.

I would urge them to be liberated generally. They should try to get agreement to necessary courses of action that cannot easily wait until October and the formation of new government. Here are some of priorities they should press on with or adopt:

1. Intensify the campaign to get more people into work all the time there are so many jobs on offer, as there are still too many people on benefits who could improve their finances by taking work.
2. Put in place all that is necessary to cut the government overhead under the plans identified but not yet implemented fully by Jacob Rees Mogg.
3. Press on rapidly with the Northern Ireland protocol Bill. We need to be free to set our own VAT rates for the whole UK as soon as possible, and to restore GB/NI trade.
4. Produce a better package to tackle the cost of living crisis. Suspend VAT on domestic fuel, and halve VAT on petrol and diesel immediately. Remove the National Insurance rise. Lift the threat of higher business taxes next year, to show the world the UK is open for business and welcomes more investment.
5. Strengthen legislation to take full control of our borders.
6. Amend the Levelling Up Bill to allow local communities to set the amount of new housing in their local plan.

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## Leadership of the country

Given the unusual events playing out this week I write this short piece to give people an opportunity to send in their views. I am consulting widely on what should now happen.

I am strongly of the view that the issue of leadership has to be resolved by the Conservative Parliamentary party. An early General election is not in the national interest. We need urgent Ministerial action to promote growth and tackle the cost of living crisis. There is a majority to do what needs doing.