

Theresa May has proved she is serious about Brexit. Here's what she must do to deliver



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Mrs May's job is immense, both at home and abroad. She deserves the support of her party CREDIT: TOBY MELVILLE/REUTERS

Brexit is an idea, an intellectual vision for Britain, a 10- or 20-year journey to reshape our economy and society, reinvigorate our democracy and reinvent ourselves as truly global, high-wage, high value-added trading superhub.

It matters little who begins to deliver this, as long as our withdrawal from the EU is executed in the best possible way: the referendum was about changing our destiny, not about making any specific pro-Brexit individual our next prime minister.

We were voting for an idea, not a gang; this was a referendum, not an election. Ideas both predate and outlive individuals, and Euroscepticism is no different: the mark of true ideological victory is when erstwhile opponents implement a policy that they used to oppose and hire their former enemies to assist them in the task.

Capitalism triumphs when ex-socialists privatise industries, deregulate and cut taxes; Euroscepticism truly wins when an ex-Remainer takes us out of the EU.

This is why [all Brexiteers should welcome Theresa May as our new Prime Minister](#). She has pledged that Brexit means Brexit, as has Philip Hammond, our new Chancellor, and said that there will be no going back. She should be taken at her word.

The fact that she has [appointed Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary](#), in an inspired move, confirms that this is now a certainty. The same is true for the vital jobs given to David Davis and Liam Fox, two veteran Outers.

Appointing Boris was an excellent idea: he believes in Brexit but is pro-European; he wants additional controls on migration but is pro-immigrant. His appointment will help cement Brexit as a liberal, pro-globalisation project.

It also doesn't matter that our new Prime Minister is not especially ideological; in fact, in the present circumstances this may well help her.

A radical, disruptive, previously unthinkable belief structure – to quit the EU – has been chosen for her and imposed upon her. It's an immense, awe-inspiring task; what we now need is managerial ability. Lady Thatcher had to find her mission; May has been handed hers.

Her honeymoon won't last long. It is vital, therefore, that she has a firm 100-day plan, and sticks to it. She has started superbly, delivering a powerful, uplifting speech targeted at that category of hard-working, aspirational, lowish-income working people who are "just managing".

[She is framing her non-Brexit vision as "unionist"](#), as in the Conservative and Unionist party; to her, it means that we are all united as citizens and that our economy must work for everybody.

These principles – opportunity for all, a colour-blind society, meritocracy, no discrimination, improving state schools – are profoundly Tory. They have little to do with "modernisation" or "centrism"; they are at the heart of what all successful Tories have always believed in.

The devil, of course, is in their implementation: it can be through harnessing conservative and free-market principles, or via Left-wing means. We should hope and expect that it will be the former.

We now have a better understanding of May's social agenda. She must outline, quickly, what she means by Brexit. Does she want full control over immigration? Does she want to remain in the single market, or does she simply want to have access? Is a Norway-style arrangement, with restrictions on migration, her starting point, or is it something more radical?

She cannot give away her negotiating tactics but the electorate deserves clarity and business craves it. We will need to know, by the end of her first 100 days, when she intends to invoke Article 50, or when and how she intends to repeal our membership of the EU. The date must not be allowed to slip.

She must also add to her remarks last night by telling us more about her vision for the economy. This must come from her, not her new Chancellor.

Her leitmotif needs to be about empowering the poor by unleashing enterprise, not hobbling the rich; [this will require more housebuilding](#), the re-creation of an ownership society, far better schooling and adult education, led hopefully by private sector involvement, and a deregulatory and supply-side revolution to encourage investment and the creation of even more small businesses.

The next steps will all have to happen in parallel. First, she and her Chancellor will have to work on an emergency Budget, to be held no later than August.

She needs either to abolish existing fiscal rules, or find better targets, such as public spending or tax as a share of national income. She needs to show that she won't allow the national debt to spiral out of control, but that she's comfortable temporarily relaxing fiscal policy.

There must be short-term, substantial tax cuts to boost growth, business investment and housing transactions. She could choose this moment to shake up the Bank of England's mission – from targeting consumer price index inflation to aiming for a steady growth rate in nominal GDP. She should launch a far-reaching and speedy inquiry into the tax system, with the aim of drastically simplifying it.

An Airports Bill should also be pushed through, backing either Heathrow or Gatwick: this would send the strongest possible sign that Britain remains open for business. We need a new housing Act to promote housebuilding; if she wants to take on vested interests, she should defy Nimbies.

At the same time, she will have to turbocharge her Brexit department. She needs to move hundreds of civil servants into it, and order the mandarins to make this their number one priority; trade negotiators must be recruited.

[The new Trade Secretary, Liam Fox](#), needs to launch a world trade tour to begin striking free-trade agreements and build confidence in the future. It would be a wonderful symbol were we to flesh out our first draft trade deal during her first 100 days, even if only with a small economy.

There is no time for a holiday. May must meet Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, before the end of August, and start building a close rapport with her. She must meet or speak to all other possible allies within the EU to create a pro free-trade coalition. She needs to spend a huge amount of her own time on all Brexit-related matters.

The new Prime Minister has started well. Her job is immense, both at home and abroad. She deserves the support of her party.