

Headlines:

- **Election Results 2019: Boris Johnson Returns to Power with Big Majority**
- **Afghanistan Papers Detail US Dysfunction: 'We Did Not Know What We Were Doing'**
- **What the Interim US-China Trade Deal Means -- And Doesn't**

Details:

Election Results 2019: Boris Johnson Returns to Power with Big Majority

Boris Johnson will return to Downing Street with a big majority after the Conservatives swept aside Labour in its traditional heartlands. With just a handful of seats left to declare in the general election, the BBC forecasts a Tory majority of 78. The prime minister said it would give him a mandate to "get Brexit done" and take the UK out of the EU next month. Jeremy Corbyn said Labour had a "very disappointing night" and he would not fight a future election. The BBC forecast suggests the Tories will get 364 MPs, Labour 203, the SNP 48, the Lib Dems 12, Plaid Cymru four, the Greens one, and the Brexit Party none. That means the Conservatives will have their biggest majority at Westminster since Margaret Thatcher's 1987 election victory. Labour, which has lost seats across the North, Midlands and Wales in places which backed Brexit in 2016, is facing its worst defeat since 1935. Mr Johnson has addressed cheering party workers at Conservative headquarters, telling them there has been a political earthquake, with the Tories winning a "stonking" mandate, from Kensington to Clwyd South. Speaking earlier at his count in Uxbridge, west London, where he was elected with a slightly higher majority, Mr Johnson said: "It does look as though this One Nation Conservative government has been given a powerful new mandate to get Brexit done." Mr Johnson became prime minister in July without a general election, after the Conservative Party elected him as leader to replace Theresa May. Speaking at his election count in Islington North, where he was re-elected with a reduced majority, Mr Corbyn said Labour had put forward a "manifesto of hope" but "Brexit has so polarised debate it has overridden so much of normal political debate". [Source: BBC]

It is obvious that the establishment had ganged up against Corbyn to ensure that voters would turn away from Labour. With Boris victorious and Corbyn out of the way, the establishment believes it can strike a good deal with the EU post Brexit.

Afghanistan Papers Detail US Dysfunction: 'We Did Not Know What We Were Doing'

In the midst of Barack Obama's much-vaunted military surge against the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2010, Hayam Mohammed, an elder from Panjwai near the Pakistani border confronted an officer from the US 101st Airborne who had come into his village. "You walk here during the day," the elder told the soldier bitterly as the Observer listened. "But at night [the Taliban] come bringing night letters" – threats targeting those collaborating with foreign forces. That surge, which like so many other initiatives in Afghanistan's long war was celebrated as a huge success, today serves only as a grim reminder of the deception and failure revealed in the explosive Afghanistan papers published by the Washington Post this week. Comprising more than 600 interviews with key insiders collected confidentially by the Office of Special Inspector General for Reconstruction in Afghanistan [Sigar], and published after a three-year court battle, the trove has been compared in significance to the Pentagon Papers, the secret Department of Defense history of the Vietnam war leaked in 1971. Like that secret history, the Afghanistan Papers' accumulated oral history depicts a war mired in failure – in sharp contrast to the "misleading" story told to the US and British publics by

officials in massaged figures and over-optimistic assessments. But even if that deception has been the main focus of reporting, the hundreds of interviews – with senior generals and Afghan governors, with ambassadors, aid officials and policy advisers – also tell another story: how successive presidents from Bush through Obama to Donald Trump, publicly rejected “nation-building” but created a violent, corrupt and dysfunctional state only barely propped up by US arms. They detail too how – like the Soviet Union before them – the US and its allies came so badly unstuck in Afghanistan through a combination of hubris and ignorance, and with a political leadership – both under Obama and Bush – more concerned with domestic politics than the impact of their decisions on Afghanistan. [Source: The Guardian]

Despite America’s obvious failings in Afghanistan, the Pakistani leadership remains enamored to serving American interests. Instead, it is easy to foresee Pakistan upending American hegemony, if only the country had a sincere leadership to exploit America’s weakness in Afghanistan.

What the Interim US-China Trade Deal Means -- And Doesn't

After a year-and-half of fraught negotiations that has slowed global growth and hurt American farmers and consumers, the United States and China have reached an interim trade deal bypassing an economic calamity -- for now. The two countries on Friday agreed to halt additional tariffs on nearly \$160 billion of Chinese consumer electronics and toys that were set to take effect on Sunday morning, reduce economic penalties on goods that were imposed in September by half and unveil new commitments by the Chinese to buy US farm and other products. But details of the agreement hailed by President Donald Trump as "phenomenal" still remains largely unknown, leaving close US-China watchers to describe it as "He said, Xi said," and others wondering what exactly is included in a limited agreement among the economic superpowers. "We don't have a document, and until we have a document, we don't know what's in the agreement," said Craig Allen, president of the US-China Business Council. "I wouldn't hold your breath. It might take a while." The rush to finalize a deal in the last two weeks comes as the President is confronting the prospect of impeachment, while seeking to boost his chances of re-election in 2020 with the help of farmers, a key constituency, who his trade war has hurt the most. "Rather than a comprehensive deal, he was settling for the one thing that he needed most to secure his re-election, which was a deal on agricultural exports that would boost US exports from farm country to a level higher than they had been before the trade war," said James Lucier, managing director at Capital Alpha Partners, in a note to clients. While retailers and business leaders immediately breathed a sigh of relief, acknowledging the preliminary offer as a "small step" in the "right direction," others dismissed the announcement as a smaller version of the deal the President announced prematurely in October. "A Phase One deal, while a step in the right direction, does little to alleviate the larger trade issues between the US and China that will no doubt continue to weigh on global markets well into 2020," said Lindsey Piegza, chief economist at Stifel. In the Oval Office, Trump boasted the trade pact would be "one of the greatest deals ever." Adding uncertainty to the initial agreement was the noted reluctance by Chinese officials to confirm any details offered by Trump, including on \$200 billion of purchases of American farm and other products by China. [Source: CNN]

It is difficult to see Trump fully exploiting the trade imbalance with China to hurt Beijing in a sustained manner. The upcoming US election means that Trump is likely to seek a temporary cease-fire in the trade war termed “Phase 1” and resume hostilities after his re-election. America views China as its principal rival and this is not going to change.