

UK: Deputy Conservative leader Damian Green forced to resign by manufactured sex scandal

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Prime Minister Theresa May was plunged deeper into crisis with the forced resignation of her closest political ally, First Secretary of State Damian Green.

Green is a decades-long confidant of May, going back to their days as students at Oxford University. On becoming prime minister last year, after the resignation of David Cameron, she promoted him to the number-two position in the party—as First Secretary of State and Minister for the Cabinet Office. Green is a staunch pro-European, who like May voted Remain in the referendum on European Union (EU) membership.

As the de facto deputy prime minister, Green sat on some 20 cabinet committees, chairing many. The *Financial Times* commented that Green's resignation "removes one of the most avowedly pro-EU members of her top team." It noted that he was "one of the most senior Remainers with direct influence over the Brexit process."

Green's departure leaves May, Home Secretary Amber Rudd and Chancellor Philip Hammond as the only senior figures favouring a "soft-Brexit" in the cabinet.

His is the latest resignation of three cabinet ministers forced to stand down in the last few weeks, including another pro-EU figure, former defence minister Sir Michael Fallon.

Like Green, Fallon's resignation was the culmination of a manufactured sex scandal.

These events confirm that the hysterical utilisation of various allegations of sexual impropriety—as with similar scandals throughout the ages—is a cynical mechanism through which political engineering is being carried out.

In addition to the resignation of two senior Tory

cabinet ministers, it has caused the suicide of a leading Welsh Labourite, Carl Sargeant, and the sudden and unexpected death of a Labour Party staffer—also believed to be a suicide. The charges against at least one prominent Labour MP, Clive Lewis, were found to be untrue by an internal inquiry, though no account has been given as to the motivations of his accuser.

In the case of the Conservative Party, it is becoming ever clearer that careers are being ruined in furtherance of a raging faction fight over Brexit.

It is hardly coincidental that the letter from May to Green accepting his resignation was released at 9 p.m. Wednesday as the European Union Withdrawal Bill—the first stage of legislation required to exit the EU—was passing through its final hearing in Parliament. The government was able to avoid another defeat at the hands of the Remain faction of the Tories only after May allowed a compromise amendment by Tory Oliver Letwin to its own amendment setting a Brexit date of March 29, 2019. The Letwin amendment, acceptable to pro-EU MPs, keeps the date but also gives MPs the power to push it back in the event of longer-than-expected negotiations providing that the EU agrees.

In addition, just nine minutes after Downing Street announced Green's resignation, Labour's own Remain faction succeed in winning its largest support yet in a rebellion against party leader Jeremy Corbyn—when 62 predominantly Blairite MPs led by Chuka Umunna and Heidi Alexander voted in support of an amendment aimed at keeping the UK within the EU's Customs Union.

May is now isolated by the "hard Brexit" wing around Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Brexit Secretary David Davis, not just in Cabinet but in the

wider party. Just prior to Green's dismissal, this isolation led a number of senior Tory MPs to approach May urging a formal cross-party alliance with the Labour Party to ensure a soft-Brexit.

The campaign to remove Green began in November with allegations by Kate Maltby, a Tory activist and journalist. She claimed to the *Times*—owned by the pro-Brexit oligarch Rupert Murdoch—that Green had placed “a fleeting hand against my knee—so brief, it was almost deniable” in 2015. One year later, she said Green had sent her a “suggestive” text message after she appeared dressed in a corset in the *Times*.

Green's text read, “Long time no see. But having admired you in a corset in my favourite tabloid I feel impelled to ask if you are free for a drink anytime?” Maltby, despite her now-declared outrage, later wrote to Green congratulating him on his appointment to high cabinet office.

Green denied that he had made any sexual advances to Maltby, the daughter of a family friend, describing the assertions as “untrue,” “a complete shock” and “deeply hurtful.”

An internal party inquiry into Maltby's accusations was launched November 1. Four days later, the *Sunday Times* published a statement by Bob Quick, a former assistant commissioner at the Metropolitan police, alleging that “extreme” pornographic material was discovered on one of Green's parliamentary computers in 2008 during an inquiry into government leaks.

Quick was asked to give evidence to the inquiry into Green by Sue Gray, Whitehall's head of propriety and ethics.

Green tweeted that the allegations were “false, disreputable political smears from a discredited police officer acting in flagrant breach of his duty to keep the details of police investigations confidential, and amount to little more than an unscrupulous character assassination.”

Later, another retired officer, Neil Lewis, backed Quick in insisting that the Internet history on the device identified Green as having viewed pornography.

The Metropolitan Police was forced to issue a statement that “Confidential information gathered during a police inquiry should not be made public.” It is not illegal to download or view pornography in the UK and, amid a tide of innuendo, the media reported that it “didn't feature sexual images of children.”

The Cabinet Office reached what can best be described as a fudged verdict, declaring that it had arrived at no “defined conclusion” regarding Maltby's allegations, though they were “plausible.”

This left just the pornography allegations from nearly a decade ago. The cabinet investigation concluded only that Green had not been truthful when he stated, in the course of his denial, that the police had never told him about the existence of pornography on his computer after they had originally searched it in 2008.

In his resignation letter, Green stated, “I accept that I should have been clear in my press statements that police lawyers talked to my lawyers in 2008 about the pornography on the computers, and the police raised it with me in a subsequent phone call in 2013”—that is, five years later and four years before the latest concocted scandal.

The last thing that the campaign over supposedly predatory sexual behaviour in Westminster, like its counterparts in Hollywood and the US Congress, has anything to do with is women's rights. Outrage over sex is used as a vehicle for undeclared and hidden motivations—some of which have yet to fully emerge, but which are strongly suggested by the forces baying most loudly for punishment to be meted out.

The feminists and liberals whose embrace of this reactionary campaign is made clear by the *Guardian* are—at best—dupes of the political right and—at worst—conscious participants in a witch-hunt that has grave implications for democratic rights.

May has now said that she wants the release of private Met information about Damian Green to be investigated. She shares the concerns about the comments made by Quick as a former Met officer and expects those concerns to be properly dealt with.



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