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## The End of Male, Pale and Stale Politics?

Posted: 22/05/2015 11:25 BST | Updated: 0 minutes ago



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According to Harriet Harman, MP for Southwark and Camberwell, the 'fuchsia's bright' for the Labour party. Arguably, the same applies to the whole of the UK's political spectrum. As the results of the UK general election rolled in on the 8th of May, there was a clear victory for women in politics.

Almost 30% of newly elected MPs are female, compared with less than a quarter five years ago. There are now ten women attending Cabinet; from Theresa May, the formidable Home Secretary to Nicky Morgan, the appealing Education Secretary who proudly declared herself a feminist this year. They are some of Mr Cameron's most reliable performers. Amber Rudd is the new Energy and Climate Secretary, Tina Stowell was promoted to leader of the Lords and Lord Privy Seal and Priti Patel, who has become Minister of State for Employment.

On the Labour benches, 43% of MPs are women, and that means that the House of Commons will look very different. The new intake includes Labour's Naz Shah, who scored a memorable victory over George Galloway in Bradford West, and the SNP's Mhairi Black, a 20-year-old student from Glasgow University.

For a brief moment, something even more extraordinary happened. Women were running six of Britain's seven major political parties. Harriet Harman as (interim) Labour leader, Sal Brinton (acting) head of the Lib Dems, Nicola Sturgeon at the helm of the SNP, Leanne Wood of Plaid Cymru, Natalie Bennett as Green Party leader and Suzanne Evans hotly tipped for UKIP leader.

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## At a tipping point

A pivotal study on critical mass on corporate boards by Vicki Kramer, Alison Konrad and Sumuru Erkut showed that a critical mass of thirty per cent of women can cause a fundamental change in the boardroom.

Now the British cabinet has achieved this critical mass, the country should prosper that is, if research into the performance of businesses with a strong female influence is anything to go by. Studies have shown that strong stock market growth among European companies is most likely to occur where there is a higher proportion of women in senior management teams. Companies with more women on their boards were found to outperform their rivals with a 42% higher return in sales, 66% higher return on invested capital and 53% higher return on equity.

This is not just a gender numbers game. It is about the richness of parliament as a whole, the combined contribution of a group of people with different skills and perspectives to offer, different experiences, backgrounds and life styles, all of which make parliament a more accurate reflection of society. Together this rebalance makes for a parliament that is more able to consider issues in a rounded, holistic way, and offer an attention to detail which can't be achieved by a vastly male government who, it has been argued, often think the same way.

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