
UPDATE - Ex-UK Lawmaker Dubs Johnson, Corbyn 'Dull, Boring and Quite Untrustworthy' After TV Debate

(Adds expert opinion of Anthony Webber in paras 7-11, background information in paras 12-13) LONDON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The debate between UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the Conservative party and opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour party before the upcoming parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom left voters disappointed and even more confused about both of them, Steven Woolfe, a former member of the European Parliament for North West England, told Sputnik on Wednesday. The first debate ahead of the elections was streamed on ITV. It had Johnson and Corbyn come up neck-and-neck, with 51 percent to 49 percent of support, respectively, according to a YouGov poll. Woolfe told Sputnik that he watched the debate in a room full of Northern and Welsh voters. "We have heard this all before, we do not believe any of them and they were both dull, boring and quite untrustworthy," Woolfe said. According to the former lawmaker, Johnson and Corbyn gave people little help in determining whom to vote for as they both sounded the same and made very generic, stereotypical statements. "I felt the whole debate last night was uninspiring, insipid and just lacked honesty and any feeling that politicians could reach out to the general public. And I felt that they were just going through the motions, and I am not surprised people are having trouble reaching a decision on who is better than the other as they just sounded the same," Woolfe continued. The debate left him with an impression that the United Kingdom "is not going to get a proper Brexit," with Johnson and Corbyn each insisting on their party's agenda - more freedom of people's movement post Brexit for the Labour and a customs union through a free trade agreement for the Conservative. That the gap between the Conservative and Labour leaders could diminish after the debate was an opinion voiced by Anthony Webber, an independent political analyst and former member of the Guernsey parliament, in a conversation with Sputnik on Tuesday. At the time, Johnson's party was still ahead by a comfortable 13

percentage points, according to polls. Webber claimed that Johnson might be in danger given his allegedly growing reputation for failing to follow through on his promises. "Certainly the Conservatives picked Boris Johnson as he is a good public orator, a debater, but I think some people are realizing a lot of what he says he does not actually stick to. That is not a good situation to be in," Webber opined. Johnson arguably took a significant hit recently when he was forced to obtain an extension to Brexit till January 2020. Success or failure therefore would depend on how the public warm to his sense of commitment, with Corbyn's chances being dependent on deflecting on his arguably ambiguous Brexit position and fixating on domestic policies. "Going back to the polls, the Conservatives are doing pretty well, much better than under [former UK Prime Minister] Theresa May, but the question when people go to vote will be how much they believe in Conservative commitment. If you look at the domestic agenda, it certainly seems that the Labour party are coming up with new ideas. So it is a question as to whether they can get those ideas into the minds of the electorate to get them to vote for Labour," Webber continued. According to the expert, Corbyn's tactics is to distract the voters' attention from Brexit to make them vote on domestic issues. When Johnson insisted on delivering Brexit by the previous deadline of October 31 "with or without a deal," he met an exceptionally strong opposition to a no-deal scenario among other lawmakers. In an entangled political confrontation, Johnson first suspended the parliament for several weeks for which opposition lawmakers then took him to court, which eventually recognized his actions illegal. On October 19, the parliament passed an amendment mandating Johnson to request another extension to Brexit from Brussels. The clock is set on January 31 now. Additionally, the parliament voted several days later to hold a snap general election, something that Johnson has repeatedly asked for in a bid to overcome the Brexit deadlock. The vote will be held on December 12 and determine the future of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.