

Johnson remains UK prime minister as Tories lurch to right and Labour offers a “stable” alternative

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8 July 2022

Conservative Party efforts to force Boris Johnson to give way immediately to a “caretaker” prime minister, likely his deputy Dominic Raab, are an attempt to placate public anger while a new and even more right-wing government is prepared.

This palace coup is being aided and abetted by Sir Keir Starmer and the Labour Party, functioning as a loyal opposition tasked with preventing any independent intervention by the working class.

The demand for Johnson’s immediate removal has receded in part because it became associated with Tory pro-Remainers such as party grandees John Major and Michael Heseltine, who explicitly linked Johnson’s immediate ouster to recalibrating Britain’s relationship with the European Union. But the decisive calculation among party leaders was that moving now might worsen governmental instability while a succession is fought out.

Speaking to the BBC’s *Today* programme, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, treasurer of the backbench 1922 Committee, said of a caretaker option, “that ship has sailed.” Johnson loyalist and new education secretary James Cleverly told Sky News, “If we can achieve [a leadership contest] within weeks rather than within months, then I think we have to focus on that.”

The prime minister’s representatives also promised he would not make any significant fiscal changes while acting in a de-facto “caretaker” role.

There could still be a shift, but the focus of top Tory MPs is on securing their own positions and preparing the party to take on the working class at home and to pursue NATO’s proxy war with Russia in Ukraine more aggressively.

The entire gamut of potential candidates is in favour of cutting taxes and government spending, which demands savage austerity, combined with support for greater

military spending to take on both Russia and China.

Former Chancellor Rishi Sunak, together with former education secretary Sajid Javid, precipitated Johnson’s downfall by resigning their cabinet posts.

Sunak embodies the Tories’ role as the party of the oligarchy. A multimillionaire, his wife is Akshata Murty, daughter of N. R. Narayana Murthy of Indian multinational IT company Infosys, and is worth an estimated £690 million, twice as much as the queen.

Sunak announced his leadership bid with a glossy video titled “Get ready for Rishi”, which blathers on about his supposedly humble origins and commitment to opportunities for everyone. But his self-proclaimed differences with Johnson are that his populist streak has prevented the necessary clampdown on social spending and wages.

Just how right-wing Johnson’s potential replacements are can be gleaned from Tom Tugendhat. The one-nation Tory announced his candidacy this morning with an op-ed in the *Telegraph* insisting that, “Taxes, bluntly, are too high and there is an emerging consensus across the party that they must come down.”

Tugendhat, chair of the Foreign affairs Committee, is one of several military figures standing for election who are among the most frothing in a party of warmongers. He wrote, “I have served before – in the military, and now in Parliament. Now I hope to answer the call once again as prime minister.” This military allusion is to his serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan, which he argued Britain should never have withdrawn from.

In February, Tugendhat said all Russians should be expelled from the UK, declaring, “We can freeze Russian assets in this country, all of them. We can expel Russian citizens, all of them... We can make a choice to defend our interests, to defend the British people, and to defend

our international partners.”

Just ahead of Sunak, the favourite to replace Johnson is Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, who became a captain in the Scots Guards after his patrol captured an IRA unit attempting to carry out a bomb attack against British troops.

As Defence Secretary, Wallace also criticised the US for forcing the UK to quit Afghanistan and presided over a comprehensive defence review designed to prepare the UK for war against Russia and China. He denounced negotiations with Russia over Ukraine as “appeasement,” warning President Vladimir Putin of “what could be a very, very bloody war.”

Last month, he stood alongside the new head of the British Army, General Sir Patrick Sanders, as he insisted that Britain faced its “1937 moment,” two years before the outbreak of world war, before insisting, “The British Army must be prepared to engage in warfare at its most violent” in a direct fight “for NATO territory.”

Austerity and war demands the ruthless repression of the working class. On Monday, even amid the chaos of a leadership contest, the government is pressing ahead with legislation allowing the use of agency workers as scabs, aimed at breaking strikes on the rail and in other key industries and services.

The Tories’ offensive will provoke mass opposition. The *Daily Telegraph* warned Friday that the “new prime minister’s in-tray will be fraught with danger... When Boris Johnson’s successor finally enters Number 10—which could be as late as September or October—they may find themselves facing a possible winter of discontent.”

It is in recognition of the threat posed by an escalation of the class struggle that Starmer has said he will table a motion of no confidence next week and that he is ready for a snap general election if one is called.

Starmer addressed the media today after being cleared by Durham Police of breaking lockdown rules when he and his deputy Angela Rayner had a beer and curry gathering with party activists during election campaigning on April 11, 2021. The police judged the gathering was “reasonably necessary for work.” Starmer boasted that their pledge to resign if fined showed the integrity needed to restore faith and “change people’s minds about politics.”

“Britain deserves that fresh start, that can only come with a change of government,” he said.

Asked whether he thought “the answer to the chaos and instability now is a general election,” he replied that

stability was his goal. The Tory Party was tearing itself apart, while the Labour Party is united and wants to “press on with a plan for Britain.” He would not, he stressed, form an alliance with the Scottish National Party, which “wants to break up the United Kingdom,” but did not rule out an alliance with the Liberal Democrats.

Both he and Rayner again said that Labour’s plan for a no confidence vote was to uphold the national interest, designed to encourage Johnson’s swift removal by the Tories who had a “duty” to “do the right thing.”

Starmer has spent months making clear what Labour’s plans for government would be, should efforts to keep a retooled Tory Party in office fail. Its economic policies would be near identical and its commitment to war unshakable.

Labour’s essential task would be to prevent the social explosion warned of by the *Telegraph*. Starmer, Lammy and other Labour leaders have denounced recent strikes against the Tories and Starmer has threatened to discipline any MP who attends a picket line.

The essential task facing workers is to wage the struggle against the Tory government as a politically conscious fight for socialism. This means defeating the efforts of the Labourites and their allies in the trade union bureaucracy to isolate and demobilise strikes and threatened industrial action by workers on the rail, NHS, post offices, BT, and among teachers, civil servants and council workers, raising the demand for a general strike to bring down the Tories.

To wage this fight means developing independent organisations of class struggle, rank-and-file committees in every workplace and neighbourhood, to coordinate united action to guarantee a living wage for all, defend social services and oppose NATO’s escalating war against Russia that is spiralling into a world war.



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