

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7734>



Britain

Johnson – self pitying and delusional to the end

- IV Online magazine - 2022 - IV570 - July 2022 -

Publication date: Friday 8 July 2022

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

On 7 July after over 50 members of his government resigned in 48 hours and a delegation of ministers went to see Johnson to tell him to go, Boris Johnson stood down as leader of the Conservative party. This triggers an election process for a new leader who will then become Prime Minister.[IVP]

In the end, he must have left his fingernails on Number Ten's door as he was dragged screaming from his post. The resignation speech showed how delusional and self-pitying Johnson is. Like the spoilt, entitled rich kid he is, his removal was everyone's fault but his own.

He pointedly indicated that it was the parliamentary Tory party that did for him. He still believes that the Tory rank and file are really still rooting for him. Certainly, he probably has more support there than in parliament but many Tory members and more significantly, Tory voters, have deserted him. His reference to sledging was a dig at the media but the reality is that if he had had the same treatment Corbyn had received he would have been out on his ear months ago.

Then it was a 'herd instinct' that pushed him out. Those 60 ministers and government members who resigned in the last couple of days were somehow not acting rationally. True, they had shamefully accepted what they knew were Johnson's lies for years and only moved when they realised they were heading for an electoral disaster. All of his MPs' actions over the last week were defined as 'eccentric' by Johnson and would lead to a Labour Party government. He even had the gall to suggest the polls were not so unfavourable. He quoted the relative party scores and ignored the catastrophic levels of his own personal unpopularity. Of course, he also repeated the lies about how successful his management of the pandemic and Brexit has been.

The arrangement he seems to have reached with the 1922 Committee and senior party figures is that he will continue as a caretaker prime minister until the beginning of October. [1] Already there are many Tory voices raised against this idea. Lord Frost, his main Brexit negotiator, as well as Dominic Cummings (former adviser) and John Major (former Tory Prime Minister) have said this is a very bad idea. Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the SNP have all said they are for his immediate standing down. Labour has said it will put forward a confidence motion against him.

It is possible that some or all of the leadership contenders feel that allowing this arrangement will go down well with the more pro-Johnson Tory membership. Coming out against his caretaker role might damage your chances of winning votes among this electorate. The precedent of Theresa May playing this sort of role does not really hold. May lost over a big political issue, Brexit, not about her personal integrity. How can all those ministers who said they could not continue with such a flawed leader turn around and calmly accept him for a further 3 months?

Already Suella Braverman (Attorney General) has declared herself a candidate and has set the tone of the leadership debate. She is for a low tax, lightly regulated economy with less government spending. Braverman wants to 'fix' the migrant boats and continue the war on so-called 'woke' or 'cancel culture' rubbish. Adherence to European or indeed international human rights rules would also end.

There is clearly a tension within the party between a return to purer Thatcherite values and the levelling up demagoguery of Johnson's new Brexit coalition. At the same time, there is still a minority of Tory MPs who support a more consensual, one-nation approach – some of these are also critical of Brexit. However, it is unlikely that any winner will be critical of the Brexit process since the party and membership have moved massively into supporting the reactionary Brexit project. Given what has happened with Johnson, issues of personal integrity and competence

Johnson – self pitying and delusional to the end

will be taken into account much more. At the same time they want someone with some campaigning ability – so a Teresa May lookalike is ruled out.

Steve Baker, who was a key right wing Brexit leader, with his European Research Group is another very worrying candidate. As well as sharing Braverman's approach on the key issues he also is a climate change denier and wants the party to dump even its rather timid policy on green issues.

It appears that Sajid Javid has moved up the popularity charts among MPs because of his resignation statement in parliament which did not hold back in his criticism of the Johnson regime. [2] Ben Wallace the Defence Secretary has also been talked up as a serious contender even though he has not indicated he would be interested. His prominence on Ukraine has done him no harm among Tory MPs and the membership. He might tick the box of being quite opposite to the unstable charisma of Johnson. Liz Truss (Foreign Secretary) and Rishi Sunak are still among the front runners although revelations about the latter's wealth and tax affairs have damaged him. Truss has already been campaigning for some time but her failure to move against Johnson, unlike Sunak or Javid (or even Zahavi (newly-appointed finance minister) at the last minute), might have cost her some votes.

Tory leadership contests often ditch the favourites in favour of the outsiders. Someone like Penny Mordaunt (trade minister) might fit that profile as she appears to be outside the Johnson regime. Tom Tugendhat (chair of Foreign Affairs Committee) might be another.

Whoever wins there will be no change to the anti-working class policies of this Tory government. Indeed it is possible that even the increased state investment involved in the 'levelling up' agenda might be cut back on the altar of Thatcherite austerity. None of the candidates will be concerned about a programme to reverse the severe cuts to people's living standards. None are likely to reverse the racist, anti-migrant policies or the further limiting of democratic rights. All will continue to wage war on progressive culture, for example on trans rights.

Both the issue of Johnson continuing as PM in the interim and the leadership battle will heighten divisions in the Tory party and will increase the possibility of the Labour party winning the next election. So far Starmer has correctly attacked (finally!) the probity of Johnson and demanded his removal. But this is done in the name of the national interest and in protecting the sanctity of British democratic institutions. No links are made with the need for the Labour Party to support a coordinated response by the labour movement to defend working people's living standards in the face of wage cuts and price increases. Instead, shadow ministers are to be sanctioned if they go and show solidarity on rail workers' picket lines. Policies developed under Corbyn that could mobilise mass support like public ownership of the utilities or a £15 minimum wage are dumped in favour of platitudes about security, prosperity and respect (whatever they are supposed to mean).

One striking comment from Starmer was that Johnson 'was always unfit for office'. So why did he hold off his attacks on the PM during the Covid pandemic? There were barely some mumblings about competence. If he (and also Corbyn before him) had attacked Johnson's character a lot more it could have led to big poll leads for Labour much earlier.

We should never forget that the same mass media that today are proclaiming the inadequacies of Johnson did a great deal of work in building the cheeky chappie 'Boris' persona. How far did they try and really go after Johnson over scandals like the Arcuri deals when he helped public money go in the direction of the company run by the woman he was sleeping with? The media was more concerned with trashing Jeremy Corbyn by creating fake news about his 'anti-Semitism' and making sure that Johnson beat him in 2019.

Today the media and MPs are wringing their hands about what a bad egg dear Boris is. But remember all those

Johnson – self pitying and delusional to the end

people today vying to replace him have also spent their energies ensuring the rich get richer and that working people pay the costs of capitalist austerity. Sajid Javid likes to play up his backstory with his bus driver dad but he has spent decades in high finance and he organised tax deals in his favour.

Aditya Chakraborty sums up the nature of Johnson and these politicians pretty accurately in today's [Guardian](#):

These people are bad at government because they believe government is bad. For them, levelling up is a pretty slogan. Their real goal looks like self advancement. And when they finally leave, their only punishment is higher fees on the after-dinner circuit, a ludicrous book advance and their pick of City directorships.

7 July 2022

Source [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

[1] The 1922 committee, composed of the backbench Conservative MPS, organises the leader elections.

[2] Sajid David has been in key roles in Johnson's government since 2019, most recently for minister for health. He was one of the two senior ministers - the other was Rishi Sunak finance minister - whose resignation on Tuesday 6 July opened the floodgates to the others.