

Down to two:

The leadership battle of the U.K. Conservatives is now between contrasting candidates

The leadership race in the U.K.'s ruling Conservative party has been whittled down to two candidates with contrasting personal styles and political stances. The current Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, is a moderate and will face off against his predecessor, the flamboyant and controversial Boris Johnson. Over 100,000 overwhelmingly pro-Brexit party members will, in mid-July, choose Prime Minister Theresa May's successor via a postal ballot. One option to see through their project of a life-time is to elect Mr. Hunt, a one-time advocate of remaining in the European Union (like Ms. May), and risk not realising the end goal. The other alternative is to choose the hardliner Mr. Johnson, who famously, and erroneously, claimed during the 2016 referendum that London was sending £350 million a week to Brussels. His xenophobic remark about Turkish immigrants flooding the U.K. was said to be among the factors that tilted the 2016 outcome. The principal architect of the leave campaign assured partymen before the current contest that Britain will exit by the October 31 deadline, deal or no deal. Mr. Johnson, a two-time London Mayor, has emerged a clear favourite, polling the highest in all the elimination rounds among Conservative MPs over the past days. Mr. Hunt, on the other hand, is seen as a heavyweight whose vast experience in promoting business ventures could refresh the party's market-friendly image. As Health Secretary he had secured additional funding for the NHS. Mr. Hunt has warned of the dangers of leaving the EU without an agreement, including another general election that could damage the Conservatives' prospects.

ALSO READ

Conservative Party leadership candidate Boris Johnson leaves his home in London, Britain June 20, 2019.

Boris Johnson, Jeremy Hunt to fight for U.K. leadership

The contest is above all else really about picking a leader who can steer the party through Britain's next general election and ensure its future relevance. That means somebody who can stop Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader, from entering 10 Downing Street. After a dismal showing in the May polls to the EU Parliament, the Conservatives also fear support among the rank and file haemorrhaging to Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. Delivering on the 2016 referendum result, in whatever form and at any price, is seen in Conservative strongholds as the ultimate route to resurrection. Meanwhile, there are not many who seriously believe that Britain can realistically renegotiate before the end of October the withdrawal agreement Ms. May signed with the EU last year. Brussels has repeatedly stressed its unwillingness to reopen the deal, still less the contentious Irish backstop. The Prime Minister's election in July would be followed by Parliament's summer recess, allowing MPs little time for legislative business. Short of a spectacular turnaround, the outcome of the Conservative contest looks fairly predictable. Conversely, the course of Brexit is anything but certain, irrespective of whether Mr. Johnson or Mr. Hunt wins the battle of the ballot.

Words

Contrast

Whittle down

Kind

Meaning

difference, disparity, distinction

reduce, cut down, cut back, prince

Stance	attitude
Face off	confront
Predecessor	forerunner, precursor, antecedent
Flam boy ant	Ostentatious, exuberant, confident, lively, colourful
Controversial	Contentious, cantankerous, disputed
Hardliner	tough, strict, extreme
Erroneous	wrong, incorrect, mistaken, untrue
Xenophobic	Jingoistic, chauvinistic, nationalistic
Immigrant	New comer, settler, emigrant
Outcome	result, aftermath, upshot, consequences
Tilt	slope, lean, slant, incline
Venture	Enterprise, undertaking, project
Eliminating	Remove, get rid of, do away with
Steer	Guide, direct, manoeuvre
Relevant	Pertinent, applicable, apposite
Dismal	gloomy, glum, sad, lugubrious, dejected
Rank and File	common people, Hoi polloi, the proletariat
Haemorrhage	bleeding
Resurrect	revive, restore, regenerate
Contentious	controversial, disputable, quarrelsome
Back stop	withdrawal, agreement
Predictable	Foreseeable, anticipated, foreseen, unsurprising.

A war of masks between Iran and the U.S.

Both governments are trying to avoid a war and yet win a game of appearances

On June 20, Iran and the United States came dangerously close to a direct armed conflict, with U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly ordering and then cancelling air strikes against Iran, after it shot down a high-tech U.S. drone over the Strait of Hormuz. A closer look at tensions between the two countries would make it seem as if the Iranian authorities were the ones attempting to escalate a regional crisis while avoiding a full-blown war with the U.S. For the Trump administration, it has been about being careful not to be drawn into a West Asian conflict and having the loss of any U.S. service personnel on its conscience.

Many layers

Yet things are more complicated than what is appearing on news channels. On one side, the Ayatollahs and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) want to save their necks by convincing

the U.S.'s allies in Europe, West Asia and Asia to pressure Washington into easing the devastating economic and financial sanctions that have affected the Iranian economy. On the other side, the hawks in Washington, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton, have an ardent desire to restore U.S. deterrence by striking Iranian military infrastructure and nuclear installations. In the middle of this there are a number of state and non-state actors such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which would be the prime targets for Iranian attacks, or which would get militarily engaged on the side of Iran and go after U.S. targets.

ALSO READ

Clouds of war: on U.S.'s 'maximum pressure' tactics with Iran

Once in war with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the U.S. would have to contend with proxies backed by Tehran spreading across the region, armed with missiles, drones and as suicide bombers. There is virtually no way for Saudi Arabia and the UAE to protect themselves from Iranian proxy attacks. Let us take the example of Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who have fought a coalition led by Saudi Arabia to a stalemate on the battlefield since 2015 and have succeeded in launching missiles and rockets into Saudi territory. In Lebanon and Iraq, the Iranian regime's proxies have killed hundreds of American soldiers since the early 1980s. In 1983, a group linked to the Iranian-backed Shiite militia, Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for lethal bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and a U.S. Marine barracks.

Nearly a month ago, in a meeting with Iran-linked Iraqi militias in Baghdad, Major General Qassim Suleimani, the chief of Iran's Quds Force, which is a unit of the IRGC, asked them to prepare for a proxy war with the U.S. Strangely, Iran's campaign of proxy war and sabotage will be designed to inflict some suffering on regional and international actors that have chosen to be with America in this conflict, while dissuading Mr. Trump and his advisers from taking military action against Iranian interests.

Giving peace a chance

Given that "maximum pressure" sanctions have achieved their goal and the Iranian authorities are desperate to find a way out of this crisis, the role of potential mediators will be crucial. The government of President Hassan Rouhani is quietly trying out all possibilities to find a diplomatic pathway out of the crisis. But a dialogue between Arab leaders and the Iran could begin with more concrete help from Oman and Kuwait in order to de-escalate the war in Yemen and ensure maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz.

ALSO READ

U.S. President Donald Trump displays an executive order imposing fresh sanctions on Iran in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, U.S., June 24, 2019.

Donald Trump says signing 'hard-hitting sanctions' on Iran's supreme leader

Therefore, while Iran and the U.S. are on the edge of the abyss, global diplomacy behind closed doors has been working to find a way out. The removal of Russian missiles from Cuba was former U.S. President J.F. Kennedy grandest success. However, during the Cuban missile crisis, he had two dangerous situations to deal with simultaneously — missile emplacements and impeachment. In the same way, Mr. Trump is trying to find a way out of the tensions while trying not to damage his chances of a second term in the White House. America's military and technological resources to break down the Islamic regime of Iran are limitless. The only matter to decide is whether it is intellectually wise and politically pragmatic to use all that might.

Both Iran and the U.S. are trying to avoid this war while winning a game of appearances. This game reminds us of the theatrical concept of persona, which gives both Iran and the U.S. a source of

political agency and a stable public role to present themselves as being intransigent, inflexible and uncompromising. Consequently, both countries are trying to keep their masks on in order to inscribe themselves on the hearts of humanity. But as Nathaniel Hawthorne writes in *The Scarlet Letter*: “No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true.”

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<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Strait		channel, sound, inlet
Bewilder		baffle, mystify, bemuse, perplex, puzzle, confuse
Escalate		increase rapidly, soar, shoot up, mount
Conscience		sense of right and wrong, moral sense, inner voice
Inscribe		carve, write, engrave
Ease		relieve, alleviate, mitigate, soothe
Devastate		destroy, lay waste, pull down, wipe out
Hawk		peddle, sell, tout, vend
Ardent		passionate, fervent, zealous, whole hearted
Deterrence		Discouragement, restraint, disincentive
Contend with		cope with, face, grapple with
Stalemate		Deadlock, impasse, standoff
Lethal		Fatal, deadly, mortal, noxious, venomous
Sabotage		Vandalism, wrecking, destruction
Inflict		impose, exact, wreak, mete out
Dissuade		discourage, deter, provent
Desperate		despairing, hopeless, anguished, desolate
Abyss		chasm, ravine, canyon, void
Pragmatic		practical, sensible, down to earth
Transient		A person willing to compromise