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UK politics

Who will succeed David Cameron?

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Fixed-term parliaments make it likely that David Cameron's successor will also be the next Prime Minister. So who will it be?

The long goodbye

When David Cameron revealed to the BBC's James Lansdale (www.tinyurl.com/joblxn3) that he did not intend to serve a third term as leader, it was unlikely to have been a verbal slip. Although some considered him presumptuous (the interview took place in March 2015, before he had won a second term), it served to reassure his party that he did not plan to go 'on and on', as Margaret Thatcher famously announced in 1987 (www.tinyurl.com/j7hqnmj). Thatcher's interview raised concerns among Conservatives that she was becoming a law unto herself, a view reinforced by her reckless pursuit of a Poll Tax that contributed to her downfall (www.tinyurl.com/jy55xjk). Similarly, Tony Blair was eventually pushed into promising his resignation in September 2006 (www.tinyurl.com/nof5o) after supporters of his rival, Gordon Brown, lost patience with his reluctance to hand over the reins of office.

Cameron, on the other hand, reassured potential rivals that 'there definitely comes a time where a fresh pair of eyes and fresh leadership would be good.' He even name-checked potential successors Boris Johnson, George Osborne and Theresa May. While he has refused to be drawn on the timing (www.tinyurl.com/z52c3m7), it would need to allow the new leader time to make his or her mark with the electorate before polling on 7 May 2020, so the summer of 2019 would seem to be the latest likely date. Internal or external pressure, or perhaps wanting to set the terms of his own departure, could bring that date forward to as early as 2017.

The X-factor

If there are three or more candidates that put themselves forward — as seems likely — then under current Conservative Party rules (www.tinyurl.com/htkhwms) there will be a ballot of its MPs, from which the two leading contenders will be put to the vote of the whole membership. Therefore prospective leaders will need to appeal both to the parliamentary party and to local party activists.

So what qualities will Conservative MPs and members be looking for in a future leader? Perceptions of what 'good leadership' means can vary with time. John Major (www.tinyurl.com/ht25jo5) was initially a popular successor to Margaret Thatcher (www.tinyurl.com/jgn3x62) precisely because his style was much more consensual than hers. Iain Duncan Smith (www.tinyurl.com/z9mwwpr, 2001–03), was the first to be elected by Conservative members rather than MPs, but was ousted in a vote of no confidence within 2 years.

In general, desirable characteristics would include:

- a popular policy agenda
- a persuasive speaking style (oratory)

- good rapport with/management of colleagues
- ministerial experience
- electability

Electability is the most elusive of these criteria. On some level, voters need to be able to envisage the person as a Prime Minister (some commentators explain Labour's loss in 2015 as due in part to Ed Miliband's lack of authority and personal charisma). In essence, it means the ability to move beyond appealing to the party's core support to potential floating voters who can determine an election. David Cameron and Tony Blair were both, in their own ways, elected by their parties on this basis (www.tinyurl.com/jtvr4s).

House of Cards

Student task: Use the following summaries and wider research to complete the candidate comparison cards below, then get into pairs. The dealer shuffles and deals the cards so you each have four. Turn only the top card up so that you (but not your partner) can see it. The non-dealer chooses a category and compares the value with their partner. The player with the higher value keeps both cards, places both cards on the bottom of their pile then chooses the category from their new top card. This process continues until one player has all eight cards and wins the game. When you finish, review the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and evaluate how useful the game was for identifying a future leader.

Notes on completing the cards: 'Age' and 'years as an MP' are obviously objective measures. For 'ministerial experience' you could just include the years as a minister, or you could give a mark out of 10 that considers the quality of that experience — e.g. whether or not it was in a key department. The remaining categories are all based on your subjective judgements, and should be marked on a scale of 0–10.

Extension: Research other potential Tory candidates and make cards for each, and/or include Tory candidates/leaders from previous elections. Once you have a few more cards (probably a minimum of 12) it is viable to play a multi-player game.

Table 1

Name	%	% +/-
George Osborne	23	-9
Boris Johnson	21	+7
Sajid Javid	17	0
Theresa May	16	+1
Liam Fox	12	0
Michael Gove	8	+2
Nicky Morgan	2	+1
Jeremy Hunt	1	-1

Source: Conservativehome Next Tory leader poll (www.tinyurl.com/gvboe9s, published 4 November 2015)

Note: This poll is a useful indicator of the views of Conservative members, but should be treated with caution as its respondents are self-selecting. It also does not reflect the views of Tory MPs, who would determine the run-off candidates

Candidate comparison cards to complete:

Boris Johnson	George Osborne	Sajid Javid
Age:	Age:	Age:
Years as an MP:	Years as an MP:	Years as an MP:
Ministerial experience:	Ministerial experience:	Ministerial experience:
Popular policies:	Popular policies:	Popular policies:
Oratory:	Oratory:	Oratory:
Relationship with colleagues:	Relationship with colleagues:	Relationship with colleagues:
Electability:	Electability:	Electability:

Theresa May	Liam Fox	Michael Gove
Age:	Age:	Age:
Years as an MP:	Years as an MP:	Years as an MP:
Ministerial experience:	Ministerial experience:	Ministerial experience:
Popular policies:	Popular policies:	Popular policies:
Oratory:	Oratory:	Oratory:
Relationship with colleagues:	Relationship with colleagues:	Relationship with colleagues:
Electability:	Electability:	Electability:

Nicky Morgan	Jeremy Hunt	
Age:	Age:	Age:
Years as an MP:	Years as an MP:	Years as an MP:
Ministerial experience:	Ministerial experience:	Ministerial experience:
Popular policies:	Popular policies:	Popular policies:
Oratory:	Oratory:	Oratory:
Relationship with colleagues:	Relationship with colleagues:	Relationship with colleagues:
Electability:	Electability:	Electability:

The Contenders

George Osborne

George Osborne (*b* 23 May 1971) has been the Chancellor of the Exchequer since the Coalition took power in 2010. After briefly working for the *Daily Telegraph* he became part of John Major's 1997 campaign team and a speech writer for Major's successor, William Hague. In 2001 Osborne became

the Conservatives' youngest MP (for Tatton). In 2005 he ran David Cameron's successful leadership bid, and they have been close allies ever since. After the 2015 election Osborne was given the additional title of First Secretary of State, effectively recognising him as Cameron's deputy.

As Chancellor he has focused on reducing the government's deficit through austerity measures. The necessity of this has become an article of faith in British politics, to the extent that even new left-wing Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell initially felt the need to accept Osborne's 'fiscal charter' (www.tinyurl.com/ptmfne9). Osborne's supporters (www.tinyurl.com/j9cca6y) would claim credit for decreases in unemployment and the economic recovery after the long recession that began in 2008. But his critics point out that he has missed numerous deficit reduction targets as expenditure cuts have pushed down the living standards of many and limited economic growth (www.tinyurl.com/gq8pqam). While an opinion poll for the *Independent on Sunday* in October 2015 suggested that he and Cameron have a strong lead (48% to 29%) in public confidence over Corbyn and McDonnell's ability to run the economy (www.tinyurl.com/gm65dta), this was shortly before the Lords landed a blow to Osborne's plans for £4 billion of tax credits cuts. Conservative MP Stephen McPartland has written that 'a majority of Tory MPs now agree with me that the chancellor must drop these proposals as they stand' (www.tinyurl.com/qdn3dnk).

Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson (*b* 19 June 1964) was elected London Mayor in 2008 and 2012. He previously served as MP for Henley between 2001 and 2008, and was elected to the safe Tory seat of Uxbridge and South Ruislip at the last election — a move widely seen as a springboard for his leadership challenge. He attends cabinet as a Minister without Portfolio — a modest appointment seen as a snub by some, but given his continuing role as London mayor surely a pragmatic choice (www.tinyurl.com/hteh9f). Prior to his campaign for London Mayor he spent a combined 2 years in the shadow cabinet as a Shadow Minister for the Arts and then Higher Education.

Johnson is widely seen as having 'the common touch' — his buffoonish persona differentiates him from most airbrushed career politicians. An October 2015 poll by Ipsos MORI (www.tinyurl.com/zd9fotp) gave him a clear lead among the general public as next Tory leader, with 27%. Yet he is anything but a commoner. Educated at Eton College and later a contemporary of Cameron at Oxford University, he became an influential Eurosceptic journalist for the *Daily Telegraph* and later as editor of the *Spectator*. Despite a series of politically incorrect statements (www.tinyurl.com/pjylwjh), he considers himself a One Nation Conservative, and his libertarian views make him more socially liberal than some of his colleagues.

Theresa May

Theresa May (*b* 1 October 1956) has been MP for Maidenhead since 1997. She served in a variety of shadow cabinet roles between 1999 and 2010, and was made Chairman of the Conservative Party in 2002. She assumed office as Home Secretary in 2010. Though in 2011 she got into a war of words with then Justice Secretary Ken Clarke, who said that she made 'laughable and child-like' claims about the Human Rights Act (www.tinyurl.com/6x7ov8b), it was a dispute that scored her points with the Eurosceptic majority in her party.

May has also sought to profit from hostility to immigrants, though a recent speech met with a mixed response. It pleased right-wing pressure group Migration Watch, but the Institute of Directors accused her of jeopardising Britain's economic recovery with 'irresponsible rhetoric and pandering to anti-immigration sentiment' (www.tinyurl.com/neya7jv). Ipsos MORI currently has May as second in the race, with 17%. Despite the Conservatives' ambivalent attitude to feminism, they remain the only one

of the major parties to have elected a female leader, and Thatcher remains an icon among many of the party faithful.

Sajid Javid

Sajid Javid (*b* 5 December 1969) became MP for Bromsgrove in 2010, a junior minister in 2012 and entered the cabinet in April 2014 as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Minister for Equalities. After the 2015 election he was promoted to Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. His main priority has been piloting the controversial Trade Union Bill (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34241810), which aims to increase further the restrictions on trade unions taking strike action. This has understandably angered the TUC (www.tuc.org.uk/tubill) but probably done him no harm with Conservative members, who tend to see these pressure groups as an obstacle to the workings of the free market.

Michael Gove

Michael Gove (*b* 26 August 1967) is like a famous yeast-based spread — you either love him or you loathe him. The education unions were in the latter camp in his 4 years as Education Secretary from 2010. They passed a succession of motions of no confidence in him, and undertook industrial action over cuts to pensions, pay freezes and workload. But many Tories appreciated his attacks on these so-called ‘enemies of promise’ (www.tinyurl.com/zvbuvcx), and his connections as a former journalist have generally ensured that he has received a good press. His reshuffle in 2015 to Chief Whip was not a resounding success, and started inauspiciously when he got stuck in a toilet on his first day (www.tinyurl.com/hafdyfu). Since his post-election appointment as Justice Minister he has sought to reduce the legal aid bill and replace the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights, both of which play well with the Tory right (www.tinyurl.com/pyldy39). Gove has been MP for Surrey Heath since 2005 and served for 3 years as a shadow minister before the Coalition came to power.

Liam Fox

Dr Liam Fox (*b* 22 September 1961) came third in the last leadership election. An MP for North Somerset since 1992, he was a junior minister for under a year in the days of John Major, before taking on 12 years of prestigious shadow ministerial posts, such as in Health and Education and latterly Defence, which he took on as a government minister in May 2010. In October 2011 he resigned from the cabinet after the Guardian exposed close links with a lobbyist that appeared to breach the ministerial code (www.tinyurl.com/jlubrwp). It would be quite an achievement to overcome that scandal, but his state education may play in his favour with the electorate and his traditionalist family values appeal to Tory members.

Nicky Morgan

Nicola Morgan (*b* 1 October 1972) has been MP for Loughborough since 2010, becoming a junior minister in 2013 and then getting cabinet posts as Education Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities in 2014. The latter appointment created some controversy, as she had recently voted against legalising gay marriage (www.tinyurl.com/ovcadln). She announced a major consultation over teacher workload, in an apparently less hostile approach than her predecessor Michael Gove, but has satisfied few with the outcomes (www.tinyurl.com/opx95g7).

Jeremy Hunt

Jeremy Hunt (*b* 1 September 1966) has been Health Minister since September 2012, following promotion from the post he held as Culture Secretary from 2010. This was a strong show of support from the Prime Minister, given that Hunt had faced vociferous calls to resign over his close links to the Murdoch empire exposed during the Leveson Inquiry (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18273297). He was

elected MP for South West Surrey in 2005 and received a shadow ministerial post within months. As Health Minister he has brought to fruition the increasing privatisation within the NHS begun by Andrew Lansley, and announced a crackdown on so-called 'health tourism' (www.tinyurl.com/hs7yuuk), thus pushing the buttons of both free market and tight borders supporting Conservatives.

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