

New British PM Minister Boris Johnson Faced with Two Major Challenges: Brexit and Iran

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The two most pressing issues on newly appointed UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's plate right now are Brexit and Iran. Will the UK leave the EU on October 31st regardless of whether they have a new deal, as he has stated previously? Will he choose diplomacy with Iran over increased sanctions and a military confrontation?

Brexit

On July 23rd it was announced that Boris Johnson was the winner of the Conservative Party leadership. Theresa May stepped down having failed to take Britain out of the European Union.

On July 24th Boris Johnson was formally appointed as the new Prime Minister of the UK, by Queen Elizabeth II in Buckingham Palace. Shortly after his Johnson began [appointing](#) his Senior Ministers: Finance Minister: Sajid Javid, Interior Minister Priti Patel, Foreign Minister Dominic Raab, Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay, and Defense Minister Ben Wallace.

In his first [speech](#) as PM on July 24th Boris Johnson has addressed the first issue, he said

"We are going to fulfill the repeated promises of parliament to the people and come out of the EU on October 31, no ifs or buts."

Johnson continued on to [say](#)

"We will do a new deal, a better deal that will maximize the opportunities of Brexit while allowing us to develop a new and exciting partnership with the rest of Europe based on free trade and mutual support. I have every confidence that in 99 days' time we will have cracked it. But you know what —we aren't going to wait 99 days because the British people have had enough of waiting. The time has come to act, to take decisions, to give strong leadership and to change this country for the better," he said.

Iran

Theresa May was more aligned with the views of Brussels, Berlin, and Paris when it came to the JCPOA or Iran Deal. Whereas some experts are saying that Johnson might shift and realign himself and the UK, with the United States and follow in their steps by imposing increased sanctions. So far it isn't clear what path he will take but if his recent statements are any indication it would appear that he prefers diplomacy over military confrontation.

On July 15th, while speaking at a leadership debate Johnson made [statements](#) that would indicate that the UK would not support US-led military strikes against Iran. Johnson also said that he didn't see going to war with Iran as a sensible option. He went on to say that "Diplomacy must be the best way forward". Jeremy Hunt UK Foreign secretary said he was on the same page as Johnson on the issue of Iran and warned of the risk of accidental war.

On July 22nd, 2019, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif spoke about the [United Kingdom doing the bidding of the Trump Administration](#), while at a press conference in the Nicaraguan capital of Managua.

Zarif stated

"The excuses that the United Kingdom and Gibraltar authorities provided for the confiscation of the ship that was carrying Iranian oil, it was not an Iranian ship, but it was a ship carrying Iranian oil, was clearly unfounded, the EU does not apply its rules to third parties, as a matter of principle and the United Kingdom on its way out of the EU is becoming holier than the pope, in doing things that the EU itself would not do and it has said publicly it would not do".

Zarif went on to say,

"It was clear from the very beginning that the United Kingdom was doing the bidding for the Trump administration, this is not the first time the United Kingdom started doing bidding for the United States administration, as soon as president Trump got elected and before he entered into office, the United Kingdom prevented implementation of agreements that we had reached with the previous government of the United States on behalf of President Trump and the Iranian people have not forgotten that."

In a [tweet](#) that Zarif made on July 23rd he congratulated Johnson on his PM victory while making it clear that although Iran does not want confrontation, they will protect their coastline. The tweet said

"The May governments seizure of Iranian oil at behest of the US is piracy, pure and simple. I congratulate my former counterpart, Boris Johnson on becoming UK Prime Minister. Iran does not seek confrontation. But we have 1,500 miles of Persian Gulf coastline. These are our waters and we will protect them."

JCPOA

On July 28th, five world powers will be [meeting](#) in Vienna to discuss increased tensions in the Persian Gulf and how they can try to save the JCPOA. The nations attending are France, Britain, Germany, Russia and Iran. Last year U.S. President Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal and implemented increased sanctions on Iran.

Harsh sanctions have not only crippled the private and public sectors in Iran but have directly impacted the most vulnerable members of Iranian society. Iran has referred to these sanctions as "[economic terrorism](#)". China has also used the same terminology when referring to the sanctions imposed by the United States against Iran. Three of the six members of the Iran Nuclear Deal have proposed a system to provide economic relief to Iran

through a complicated barter system but recent activity in the Strait of Hormuz has had an impact on that.

It will be very interesting to see what path Johnson takes after this meeting. Iran has made it clear that it does not seek confrontation but will protect its coastline.

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