

Does the next Tory leader matter?

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Today we will know who the two candidates that Tory party members will have to choose between to be their new leader might be.

One of those two looks likely to be James Cleverly. He has 39 MPs supporting him, and requires 41 to be in the final member ballot.

Which of Robert Jenrick and Kemi Badenoch might he face? I have not a clue right now, and I am sure that neither of them do either. It seems no one knows where the 20 votes previously offered to Tom Tugendhat (the most popular candidate in the country) might go. There is also a real possibility that some current supporters of each candidate might still swap who they vote for.

What, however, seems likely is that Cleverly might oppose someone who could, quite unbelievably, be quite a lot further to the right than he is.

If, as we usually assume, the Tory membership is at the very least detached from reality, the likelihood that they will vote for the further right candidate, whether Badenoch or Jenrick, is high. In other words, Cleverly might come across as the relative moderate, but that is of absolutely no benefit to him.

Of Jenrick and Badenoch which is better for the Tories and the country, or Labour come to that?

Badenoch exudes all the madness Liz Truss had to offer two years ago when the membership selected her. Given she's highly unlikely to make it to prime minister (public opinion suggests they have already worked her out) that means she's bad for the Tories and good for Labour, but also, with regret, for the movement of the Overton to the right.

Jenrick is almost as bad.

The selection of either does nothing for the Tories and this country. Labour is, anyway,

defeating itself right now. The Tories have almost no influence on Labour's fate. They can destroy their own credibility without any assistance, it seems.

So, what else to say? Three things.

First, there is the chance that the Tory membership will only have a choice between people of colour in this election. I think that significant.

Second, note that the Tories have precisely no faith in first-past-the-post electoral system when it comes to choosing a leader. It is time they gave up faith in it for general elections.

Third, who cares about the outcome ? In reality, what chance have the Tories got of ever dealing with the challenges coming at them from four directions now (Reform, Labour, LibDems and SNP - and even, possibly, the Greens)? The skill in messaging that will require is going to well beyond the capabilities of any of these potential leaders. They have not a hope of avoiding the pincer attacks coming their way in the future in that case, or of countering them. The likelihood of Tory revival is slim as a consequence, whatever they might like to think.

But what does that say about the future of British democracy? I wish I knew.