

# Battle of 'Iron Ladies' looms

Pragmatic, childless pastors' daughters with killer instincts who were long underestimated by their blustering male peers -- the parallels between new British Prime Minister Theresa May and Germany's Angela Merkel are striking at first glance.

But analysts warn that resemblance may mask more fundamental differences that will complicate talks on Britain's divorce from the EU, pitting its newest leader against its longest-serving.

May took office Wednesday as Britain's second woman to occupy 10 Downing Street after Margaret Thatcher, the "Iron Lady" with whom both she and Merkel have frequently been compared.

The Financial Times as early as 2014 wrote an admiring profile of May entitled "Britain's Angela Merkel?" which said each was a "non-ideological politician with a ruthless streak who gets on with the job".

Germany's top-selling daily Bild asked this week "How much Merkel is in Mrs. Brexit?" and noted the "surprising" number of similarities between the 61-year-old German leader and May, 59.

"Neither is yielding, let alone submissive, in negotiations -- both preachers' daughters are seen as strong-willed, almost to the point of stubborn."



However it noted that one crucial point of divergence was their stance on migrants, contrasting Merkel's "We will manage" mantra during last year's record refugee influx to Germany with May's "uncompromising" calls for stricter controls on new arrivals to Britain.

Bild, which has generally backed Merkel's liberal policy, said May had flirted with "crude right-wing populism" in touting a hardline immigration policy.

May has said immigration controls would have to be included in any deal for Britain to access the EU's single market.

"The key question is whether they can keep their cake and eat it -- in other words, single market access and immigration restrictions," Stelzenmueller said.

"It would be very, very difficult for Merkel to make that kind of concession. The risk of setting a bad example that then encourages and enables the fragmenting forces in Europe is more than Merkel can responsibly incur."

Daniela Schwarzer of the German Marshall Fund think tank said Merkel would play a "decisive" role in the upcoming negotiations once Britain has triggered Article 50 to exit the bloc.

Looking ahead, news weekly Der Spiegel said Merkel had "no illusions: (May's) pragmatism won't make the negotiations any easier", while Bild ran the headline "They must save whatever can be saved".

"In the end, the Brexit duo May and Merkel will be sitting across the table from each other during an EU summit night in Brussels, for a final that hopefully will have no losers."



Maori soldiers march in front of New Zealand's soldiers as they take part in the annual Bastille Day military parade on the Place de la Concorde in Paris yesterday. Every year, on 14 July, French people celebrate the storming of The Bastille. When the prison was first stormed in 1789, it was one of the first major acts of the French Revolution. It symbolised oppression by the ruling classes at a time when the poor were starving and the building was torn down in three days.

PHOTO: AFP

## BRITAIN'S BREXIT CABINET

**PHILIP HAMMOND** Remain campaigner  
He is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was foreign secretary under David Cameron from 2014 to 2016, having previously served as defence and transport secretaries. He replaces George Osborne. Hammond, 60, is seen at Westminster as the ultimate safe pair of hands. He now has the job of steering Britain's economy through the choppy post-Brexit waters.

**BORIS JOHNSON** Campaigned for Leave  
Boris Johnson succeeds Hammond at the Foreign Office. The former London mayor headed the campaign for the UK to leave the European Union. He did not previously have a ministerial appointment in Cameron's government but accepted an invitation to attend political cabinet.

**AMBER RUDD** Remain campaigner  
Amber Rudd has been made home secretary, filling the vacancy left by May. Rudd was formerly energy and climate change secretary, a position she held for just one year. During the campaign for Remain in the EU referendum, she warned in a TV debate that she would not trust the new Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson to drive her home at the end of a night out.

**MICHAEL FALLON** Remain campaigner  
Michael Fallon has kept his job at the Ministry of Defence - a position the 64-year-old has held since 2014. A former Conservative Party deputy chairman, he has previously served as energy and business minister, and before that secretary of state for business and enterprise. Seen as a safe pair of hands in Westminster, he described himself as a "pretty reluctant Remainer" after the EU referendum.

**DAVID DAVIS** Leave campaigner  
David Davis has been appointed to the new cabinet position of secretary of state for exiting the European Union - or "Brexit secretary". A veteran Eurosceptic, he has previously held the positions of Conservative party chairman and shadow deputy prime minister. Between 2003 and 2008, he was the shadow home secretary under both Michael Howard and David Cameron.

**LIZ TRUSS** Remain campaigner  
Liz Truss moves from her role as secretary for environment, food and rural affairs to replace Michael Gove as justice secretary. A qualified management accountant, she became MP for South West Norfolk in 2010 and was appointed education minister in 2012.

**JUSTINE GREENING** Remain campaigner  
Justine Greening is the new education secretary, taking over from Nicky Morgan. She was also appointed minister for women and equalities. Greening leaves her international development secretary post, which she was promoted to in October 2011 at the age of 42.

**LIAM FOX** Leave campaigner  
Liam Fox, 54, has taken on another newly created position as secretary of state for international trade. Like Davis he is a Eurosceptic who voted to leave the EU and he also stood unsuccessfully for the Conservative Party leadership in 2005.

## KEY MINISTERS WHO LEFT

**GEORGE OSBORNE** Remain campaigner  
George Osborne has been fired as chancellor. He had been in the Treasury since 2010 - throughout David Cameron's tenure in Downing Street. He had also been first secretary of state since May 2015.

**MICHAEL GOVE** Leave campaigner  
Michael Gove has been fired as justice secretary. The former Times journalist also served under David Cameron as education secretary in the coalition government, and as chief whip. He successfully campaigned for Brexit alongside Boris Johnson - but later withdrew his support for his colleague to be Conservative leader and prime minister, instead standing himself. He was eliminated in the second round of voting.

## Britain to leave single market

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Philip Hammond has said Britain will come out of the single market as part of its decision to leave the EU, but will negotiate access to the bloc.

"We will come out of the single market as a result of our decision to leave the European Union," the Chancellor told LBC.

"The question is how we negotiate with the European Union, not from the point of view of being members of it but from the point of view of being close neighbours and trade partners of it."

In his first interview after being appointed Chancellor, Mr Hammond said there will be no emergency budget following the EU referendum vote.

During the EU referendum campaign, the former Chancellor George Osborne joined forces with Alistair Darling, also a former Chancellor, to warn of an emergency budget in the event of a Brexit vote.

## May gets down to work amid Brexit pressure

Announces new cabinet; EU not pleased

AGENCIES

British Prime Minister Theresa May completed a major overhaul of the government yesterday, promoting leading Brexit campaigners and stunning observers by picking gaffe-prone Boris Johnson as her top diplomat.

After six years as interior minister under David Cameron, May took office on Wednesday signalling her intention to start with a clean slate -- before ruthlessly ejecting some of her former colleagues.

Finance minister George Osborne was replaced by foreign minister Philip Hammond, while two eurosceptics were brought in to take control of Britain's exit from the European Union.

Justice secretary Michael Gove, a leading Brexit supporter and her rival in the Tory leadership race, was sent packing along with Osborne, and the education and culture ministers.

However she kept defence minister Michael Fallon and health minister Jeremy Hunt in their posts.

EU leaders have lined up to congratulate May, whose appointment brings some stability three tumultuous weeks after the June 23 referendum, but urged her to move quickly in implementing the vote to leave.

But European Parliament chief Martin Schulz yesterday took aim at Theresa May's new cabinet, saying it continued a "dangerously vicious cycle" that will hurt Britain

and Europe. Schulz said the cabinet, like the one run by May's predecessor David Cameron, is based on solving internal splits in the ruling centre-right Conservative Party rather than promoting the national interest.

The result has sparked turmoil on financial markets and sent shockwaves throughout British and European politics, including forcing Cameron to step down.

May had personally campaigned to stay in the EU but confirmed that "Brexit means Brexit" by appointing two arch eurosceptics to her cabinet.

David Davis has been put in charge of exit negotiations as new Brexit minister, while Liam Fox has responsibility for negotiating new trade agreements outside the bloc.

EU leaders, still reeling from Britain's decision to become the first country to leave the bloc in its 60-year history, pressed May for a quick divorce.

May's first calls after taking over late Wednesday were to Europe's top two power-brokers, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande.

May's spokesman said she had emphasised in her calls, which also included Irish premier Enda Kenny, that she would implement the referendum decision.

But she "explained that we would need some time to prepare for these negotiations".

## Trump picks Indiana Gov Pence for running mate

AFP, Washington

Republican Donald Trump yesterday told Republican officials he has picked Indiana Governor Mike Pence as his vice presidential running mate, a Republican source said, choosing a conservative with the potential to unify divided Republicans.

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee is to announce his choice on Friday at 11 am in Manhattan.

Trump told national Republican officials that he had settled on Pence, according to the Republican source, who is familiar with the campaign's operations. Sources had told Reuters earlier that Trump had been leaning toward Pence but cautioned that he could still change his mind.

Trump is to be formally nominated as the party's candidate for the Nov 8 election at the Republican National Convention next week in Cleveland. Traditionally, the vice presidential choice is used to

build enthusiasm among party loyalists. Trump's choice of running mate is seen as critical because his defeat of 16 rivals in the Republican primary race left the party divided and some party leaders are still uneasy about some of his campaign positions, and his style.

Roll Call, which first reported the news, said Trump was reportedly impressed with Pence's calm demeanor, his experience on Capitol Hill and as a governor, and Pence's potential to assist in governing if Trump wins in November. Trump, a New York businessman, has never held elected office.

Trump had also considered former House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich, 73, and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, 53, as finalists.

Pence, 57, a former congressman, is seen as a safe choice, not too flashy but popular among conservatives, with Midwestern appeal and the ability to rally more party faithful behind Trump.

## Green tea to 'purify' Trump!

PTI, Washington

An Indian tea company has delivered a huge consignment containing 6,000 bags of famous Assam green tea to Donald Trump with a message to the presumptive Republican presidential nominee that it is never too late to "cleanse yourself".

"Dear Mr Trump, namaste from India, we are sending you lots and lots of natural green tea. It fights against harmful free radicals. It helps purify mind and body and regain a healthy balance. It has also proven to make people smarter. Please Mr Trump drink the tea. For your sake, for America's sake, for the world's sake," Kolkata-based Te-A-Me Teas said in a video explaining the idea of sending green tea to Trump.

"The message is simple: Mr Trump, it's never too late to cleanse yourself," the company said on Wednesday, a day after its representatives delivered a consignment of some 6,000 green tea bags to the Trump Towers in New York.

"Donald Trump has the whole world worried... we can't stop him, but maybe we can change him," the video said.

"We believe that green tea with all its goodness can help Mr Trump and in turn benefit his country and the world at large," said an official of the company, adding that the consignment of tea bags is based on the presumption that the real estate tycoon would drink three cups a day.

"If he needs more, we'll be happy to provide. Green tea has been proven to fight against harmful free radicals and cleanse the mind and bodies, helping one regain a healthy balance," he said, adding that these green teas can help change Trump for the better.



## IS 'caliphate' collapsing

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Even as it launches waves of terrorist attacks around the globe, IS is quietly preparing its followers for the eventual collapse of the caliphate it proclaimed with great fanfare two years ago.

In public messages and in recent actions in Syria, the group's leaders are acknowledging the terrorist organization's declining fortunes on the battlefield while bracing for the possibility that its remaining strongholds could fall.

At the same time, the group is vowing to press on with its recent campaign of violence, even if the terrorists themselves are driven underground. US counterterrorism experts believe the masscasualty attacks in Istanbul, Baghdad and elsewhere in the past month were largely a response to military reversals in Iraq and Syria.

Such terrorist acts are likely to continue and even intensify, at least initially, analysts say, as the group evolves from a quasi-state with territorial holdings to a shadowy and diffuse network with branches and cells on at least three continents.

Indeed, while the loss of a physical sanctuary would constitute a major blow to IS -- severely limiting, for example, its ability to raise money, train recruits or plan complex terrorist operations -- the group's highly decentralized nature ensures that it will remain dangerous for some time to come, according to current and former US officials and terrorism experts.

IS officials, in public statements and in interviews, insist that the group's "caliphate" project remains viable while also acknowledging that military setbacks have forced a change in strategy.

Signs of desperation are mounting weekly inside the caliphate, which shrank by another 12 percent in the first six months of 2016, according to a report last week by IHS Inc., an analysis and consulting firm.

More signals of a coming downfall are contained in statements issued by IS officials over the past six weeks, a period that saw the group's fighters retreating across multiple fronts, from Fallujah in central Iraq to the Syrian-Turkish border.

A remarkable editorial last month in al-Naba,

Isis's weekly Arabic newsletter, offered a gloomy assessment of the caliphate's prospects, acknowledging the possibility that all its territorial holdings could ultimately be lost.

The editorial, titled, "The Crusaders' Illusions in the Age of the Caliphate," sought to rally the group's followers by insisting that IS would continue to survive, even if all its cities fell to the advancing "crusaders" -- the separate Western and Russian-backed forces arrayed against them.

The editorial asserts that the "whole world... has changed" with the creation of a theocratic enclave that has "shown all of mankind what the true Islamic State is like."

The same themes were repeated in an otherwise upbeat sermon by IS's official spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, marking the start of Ramadan observances. Adnani's missive attracted international attention because of its call for a global terrorism campaign during the Muslim holy month. But Adnani also appeared to be preparing his followers for heavy losses.

At one point he evoked one of the darkest chapters in Isis's history, when the group -- then known as the Islamic State of Iraq -- was all but destroyed in 2008 by a combination of forces, including the U.S. troop surge and the "Anbar Awakening," a revolt against the Islamists by Sunni Arab tribes.

"Were we defeated when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land? And would we be defeated and you be victorious if you were to take Mosul, Sirte or Raqqa, or even take all the cities?" asked Adnani, referring to IS's primary strongholds in Iraq, Libya and Syria. "Certainly not!"

The group's near-defeat in 2008 also has been cited multiple times in recent weeks in social-media accounts, suggesting to some analysts that its leaders are trying to limit the inevitable damage to IS's reputation among jihadists as an unstoppable military and moral force.

"The successful attacks abroad are an indication of deep worry at home," said Will McCants, a Brookings Institution researcher. "But they're really trying to prepare their followers to cope with a 'caliphate' that is no longer a caliphate."

## France to end state of emergency

BBC ONLINE

France will not extend the state of emergency imposed after last year's Islamist militant attacks in Paris in November beyond 26 July, President Francois Hollande has announced.

France has twice extended the state of emergency since it was first imposed.

The last extension was granted to cover the Euro 2016 soccer tournament and the end of the Tour de France cycling race.

The state of emergency was enforced after 13 November, when 130 people died in co-ordinated gun and bomb attacks on a concert hall, restaurants and the Stade de France, where an international football match was taking place.

## US to offer Russia anti-terror pact in Syria

Says report as Kerry arrives in Moscow for talks

AFP, Paris

The United States is to offer to cooperate with Russia in joint military action against the Al-Nusra Front and Islamic State extremist groups in Syria, the Washington Post reported yesterday.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, who was on his way to Moscow for talks with President Vladimir Putin, did not deny the report, but refused to discuss the proposal in detail until he had been to the Kremlin.

According to the Post, which cited sections of what it said was a draft agreement, US and Russian commanders would set up a joint command and control centre to direct intensified air strikes against the jihadist groups.

Currently, Russian forces in Syria are operating in support of President Bashar al-Assad's regime against a variety of rebel factions while a US-led coalition focuses its fire on the Islamic State group.

Any deal between the great power rivals would be controversial, since for many it would amount to a tacit acceptance of Putin's efforts to shore up Assad's regime. According to the Post, Kerry was to propose to Putin that Russia and the United States set up a "Joint Implementation Group" or JIG to "enable extended coordination" between their militaries on the Syrian battlefields.

The report came as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad yesterday said he has never faced pressure from Russia to step aside.

Speaking to NBC News in Damascus, Assad insisted his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had never raised the issue of his departure or a political transition.

"Only the Syrian people define who's going to be the president, when to come, and when to go," he said.