

# Government and Politics

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LA14 – Lecture 3

# Government and Politics

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## Parliament and Government

House of Commons  
House of Lords  
Government

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## Parties and Elections

A Two-Party System?  
Parties  
General Elections  
Shadow Cabinet

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## Politics since 1945: An Overview

Post-War Consensus  
Margaret Thatcher  
Tony Blair and New Labour  
Coalition  
Post-Brexit Governments

# 1

## Parliament and Government

House of Commons  
House of Lords  
Government

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# Palace of Westminster

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# The House of Commons



Representative (elected) assembly



650 Members of Parliament (MPs)



Supreme legislative body

- Makes laws
- Votes the budget
- Controls the government's work



MPs of the largest party

Front bench

Speaker of the House

Opposition

Opposition's  
front bench

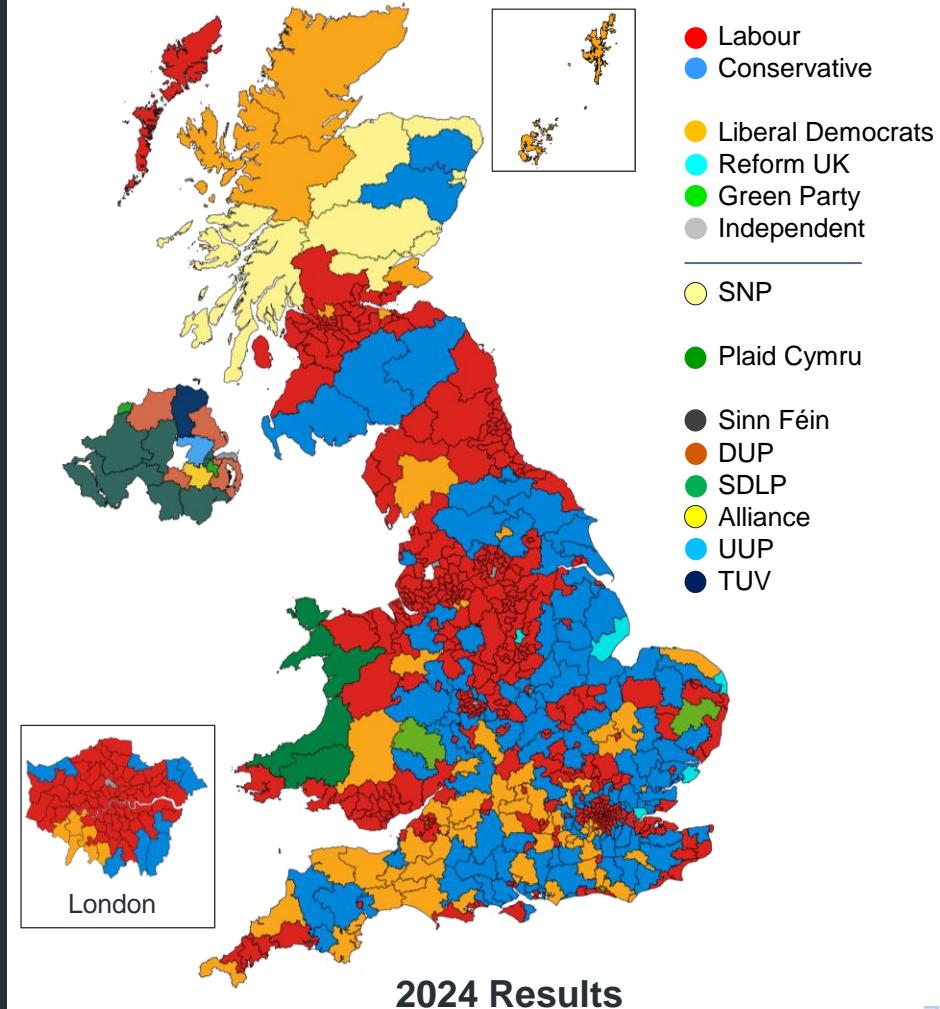
# Constituencies



650 constituencies  
→ 1 constituency = 1 MP



Average size: 76,000 voters



# The House of Lords

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Non-representative assembly (828)



85 Hereditary Peers (normally 92)  
→ Old aristocracy



720 Life Peers (appointed by government)



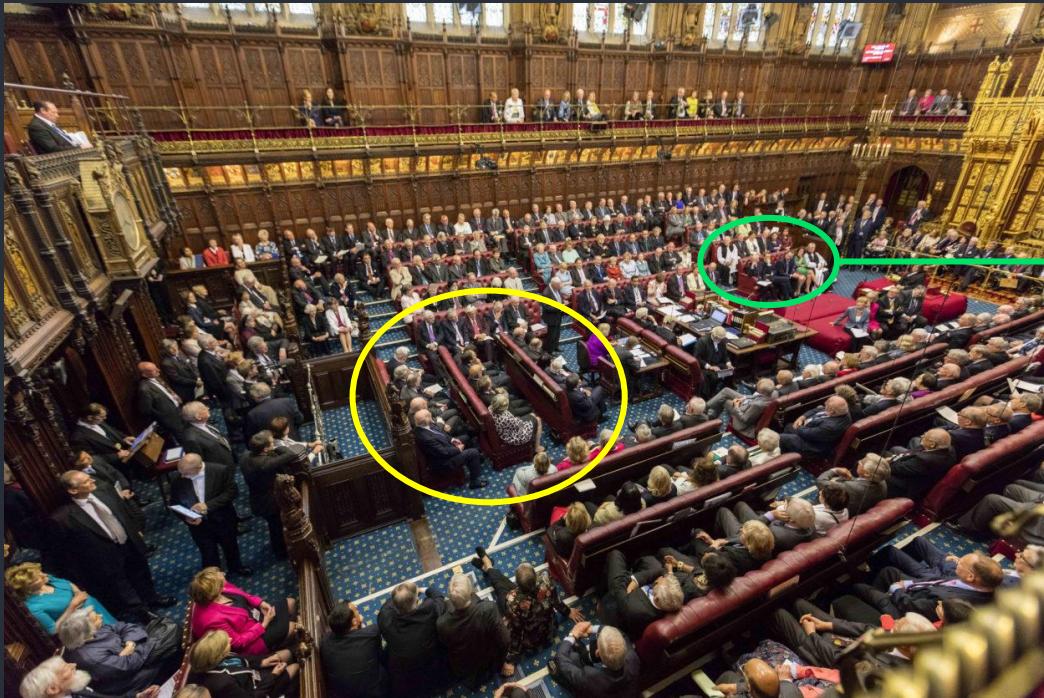
23 Lords Spiritual (normally 26)  
→ Senior bishops and archbishops



The Lord Speaker

# British Lords

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# The Lords Today: A ‘Revising Chamber’

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Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 → Supremacy of the House of Commons



Lords' role now extremely reduced:

- Make amendments
- Can delay legislation (up to one year) but cannot block a bill
- Advisory role to the government



House of Lords Act 1999 → Only 92 Hereditary Peers left



Bills in 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016 to further limit or even abolish the House → All dropped...

# Government



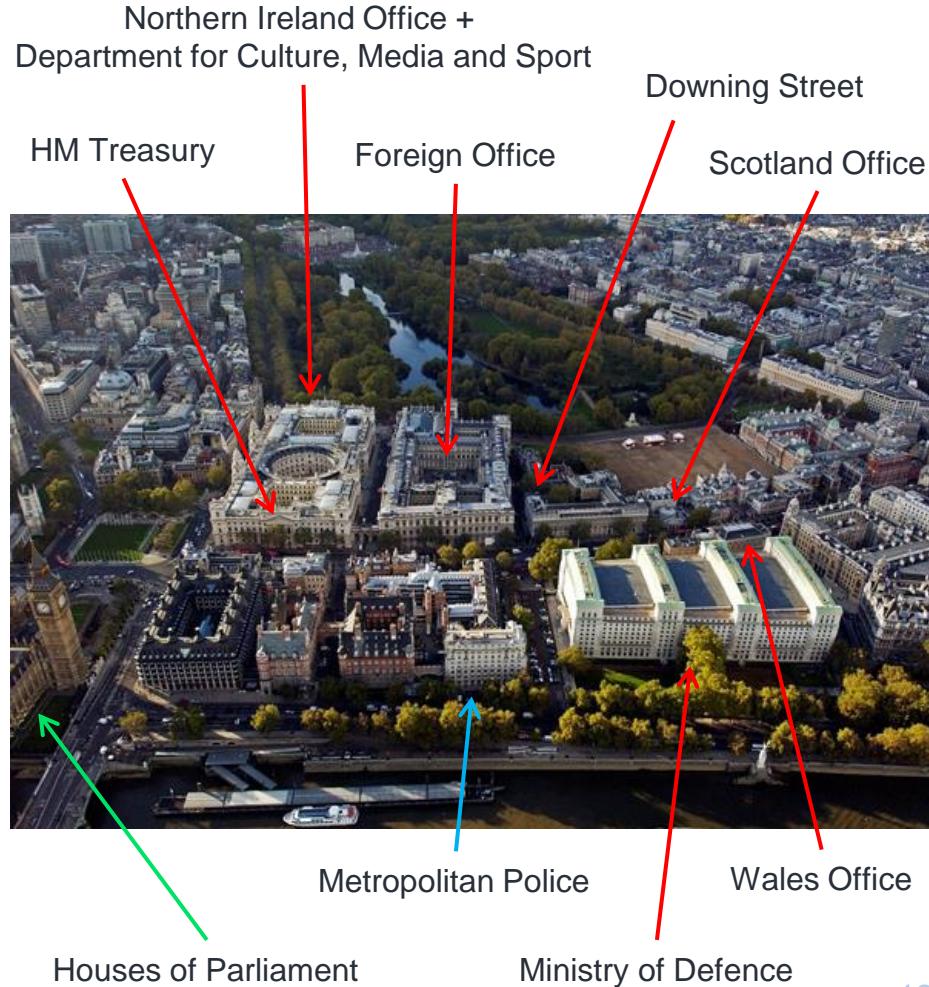
Seat of Government in Whitehall, London  
→ Main departments and ministries



'Whitehall' = metonym for Government



Government emanates from Parliament  
→ Falls without the support of enough MPs



# Prime Minister



Larry

Chief Mouser to the Cabinet Office



The PM inside Number 10



## Powerful Prime Minister

- Head of Government
- Main political leader ( $\neq$  neutral monarch)



## 10 Downing Street

- Official residence of the PM since 1735
- ...and of Larry the Cat



## Metonyms for the PM

- ‘Number 10’
- ‘Downing Street’

# 10 Downing Street vs the Elysée Palace

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# 10 Downing Street

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# 2

## Parties and Elections

A Two-Party System?  
Parties  
General Elections  
The Shadow Cabinet

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# Parties

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## A two-party system?



Conservative Party / 'The Tories' (right wing)



Labour Party (originally a socialist party, now more left-of-centre)



Other smaller parties:

- Liberal Democrats (centre, in government once)
- Reform UK, Green Party... (never in government)



'Nationalist' Parties: the SNP, Plaid Cymru, Sinn Féin, the DUP

# Conservatives vs Labour

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## Conservatives

Committed to free enterprise

'Small' state and deregulated economy

Privatisation of public services/companies

Traditional values: authority and order, family

Party of the Establishment

Divided on the EU (majority of Eurosceptics)

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## Labour

Also committed to free enterprise

Moderate state intervention to create a 'fairer society'

Investment in public services and public-private partnerships

Progressive values / minority rights

Divided on the EU

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# Liberal Democrats ('Lib-Dems')

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-  Support free enterprise, but also social justice and public services
-  Civil liberties (e.g. against national ID cards)
-  Progressive ideas
  - LGBTQ, 'green' values, etc...
  - Support constitutional and electoral reform
-  The most pro-EU party
-  Hype in the 2000s, collapse since 2010... and a surprise return in 2024

# Liberal Democrats ('Lib-Dems')

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Ed Davey's attention-grabbing antics during the 2024 elections

Trivialising an important moment for the country?

Or a necessity for a smaller party trying to showcase its policies?

# UKIP and Reform UK

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Right-wing, populist parties with similar ideas

- Anti-immigration
- Europhobic and pro-Brexit
- Conservative
  - Against same-sex marriage
  - Climate-sceptic...



A central figure: Nigel Farage → Decline of UKIP and rise of Reform UK

- UKIP: no MPs ever elected (but very successful in European elections)
- Reform UK: surprisingly popular in 2024 elections



# General Elections

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Only 1 national election: the ‘general election’



Voters elect MPs (not the Prime Minister)



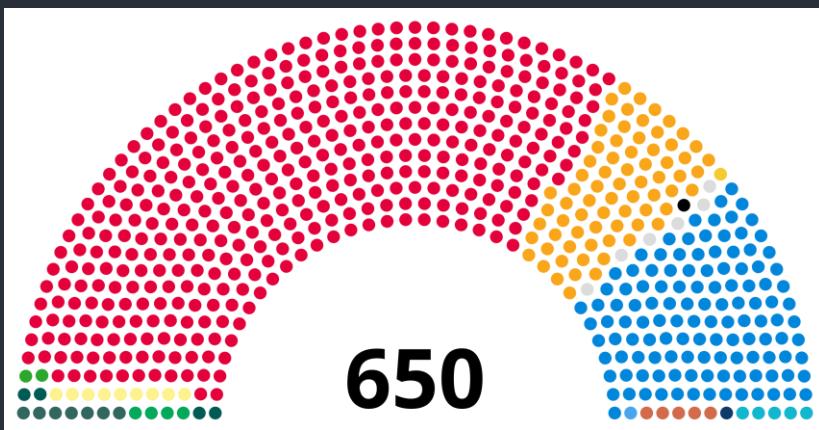
First Past the Post (FPTP) system

→ Favours big parties



Under-representation of small parties

# First Past the Post (FPTP)



Example of constituency: Cambridge

- Winner: Labour candidate
- But 22,486 people did not vote Labour

		Votes	Share	Share change
	Labour Daniel Zeichner	19,614	46.6%	-0.8
	Liberal Democrat Cheney Payne	8,536	20.3%	-10.9
	Green Sarah Nicmanis	6,842	16.3%	+12.1
	Conservative Shane Manning	5,073	12.0%	-2.8
	Workers Party of Britain Khalid Abu-Tayyem	951	2.3%	+2.3
	Independent David Carmona	819	1.9%	+1.9
	Rebooting Democracy Keith Garrett	265	0.6%	+0.5

# After the General Election

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Sir Keir Starmer

Prime Minister since 5 July 2024



Parliament elected for 5 years maximum

- Automatic dissolution after 5 years
- Or royal prerogative power to dissolve it



Leader of the largest party invited to form  
a government by the monarch



Current PM: **Labour** Keir Starmer



Elections were called in May 2024

# The Shadow Cabinet

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Alternative government formed by the main opposition party



Ready to take office



Well-prepared ministers



Current **Tory** Leader of the Opposition:  
Kemi Badenoch



Kemi Badenoch

Leader of the Opposition since 2 November 2024

# 3

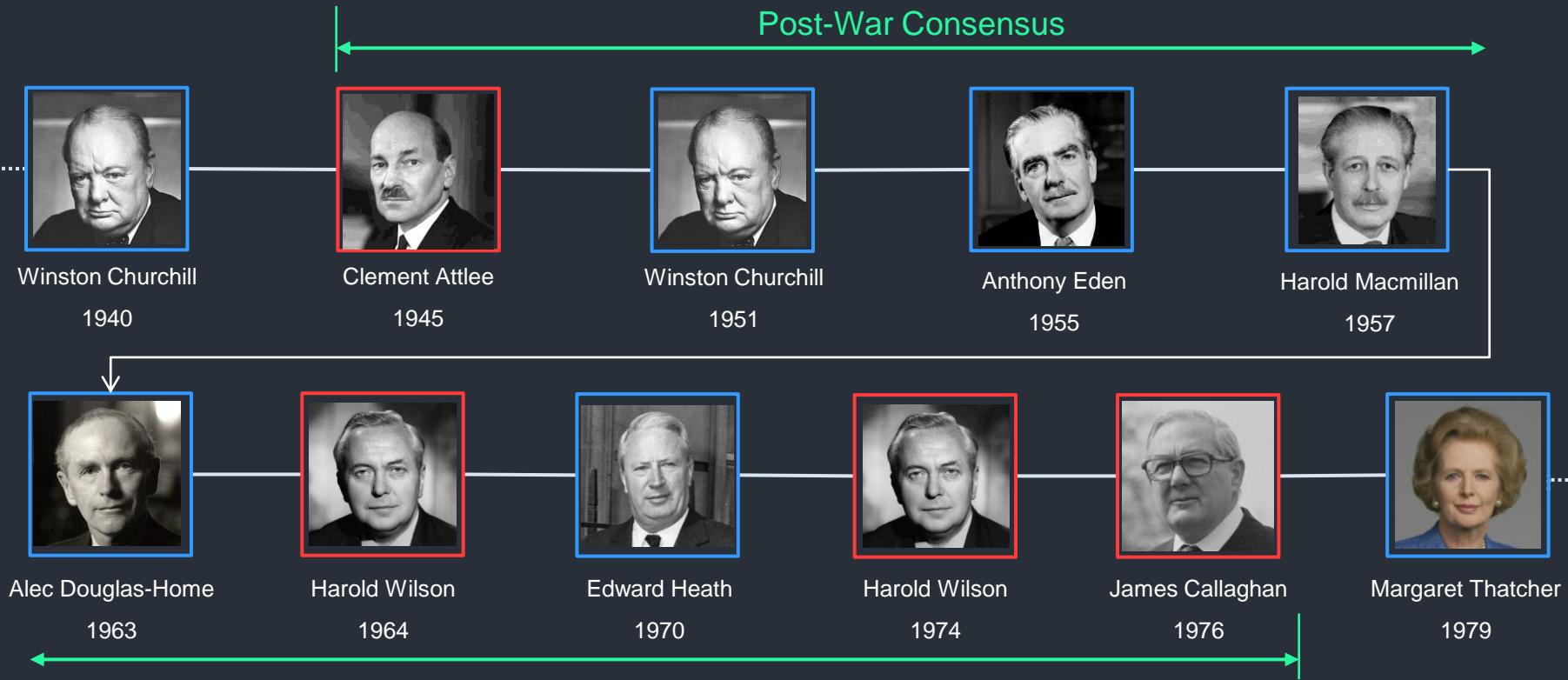
## Politics since 1945

Post-War Consensus  
Margaret Thatcher  
Tony Blair and New Labour  
Coalition  
Post-Brexit Governments

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# Politics since 1945



# Politics since 1945



- Economic expansion
- Consensus on the Welfare State
- Mixed economy (20% of UK economy nationalised, powerful unions)

- Ultra-conservative:
- State intervention reduced
  - Cuts in public spending
  - Deregulation of the economy

# The Thatcher Years

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## Pro-Thatcher

Culture of enterprise revived

Economy freed and revitalised

Low inflation, global prosperity  
and rise in living standards

Trade union power curbed

## Anti-Thatcher

High levels of unemployment  
(No government help for ailing industries)

Increase in poverty

Growing difficulties in public services (the NHS)

Autocratic style of government: the 'Iron Lady'

Anti-European policies

# John Major

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Chess piece icon: Thatcher forced out of office by Tory party in 1990 (after winning 3 elections)

Chess piece icon: Conservative PM (1990-1997)

- More moderate Conservative
- Less Eurosceptic

Chess piece icon: Global recession and economic problems



# From Socialism to ‘New Labour’

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- ➲ 1994 Tony Blair became Labour party leader
- ➲ Modernisation of party to attract middle-class vote (socialism discarded)
- ➲ The ‘Third Way’
- ➲ 1997
  - Labour won general election
  - Blair became PM



# The Blair Years

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## Pro-Blair

Constitutional reform (House of Lords)

Devolution (more powers to the Home Nations)

Peace in Northern Ireland

A dynamic economy

Europhile British Prime Minister

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## Anti-Blair

Poverty not eradicated (despite progress)

Persisting problems in the health sector  
(despite progress)

Public transport (road congestion, train crashes)

Iraq War (2003) → Terrorism on British soil

Restriction of civil liberties to fight crime

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# The Blair Years

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All in all...

A rather positive balance sheet

♞ Successes on domestic front

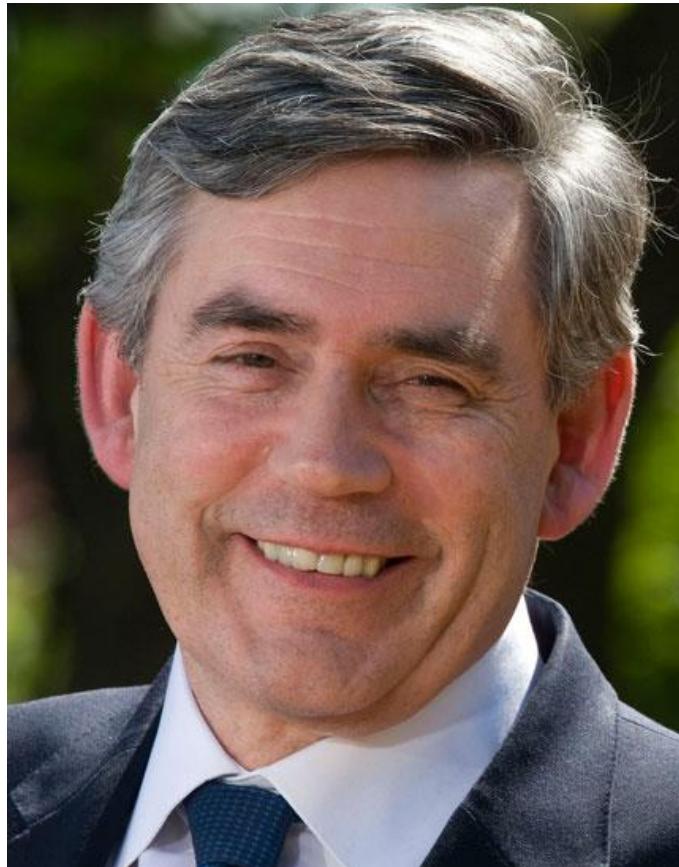
♞ Major failure in foreign policies

♞ Forced out of office by his party in 2007

# Labour's Failure in 2010

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- 💡 Iraq War (2003)
- 💡 Wear and tear of power (12 years in office)
- 💡 Blair replaced by Gordon Brown in 2007  
(Unpopular leader)
- 💡 Financial crisis and recession (2007-2008)
- 💡 Labour lost the 2010 general election

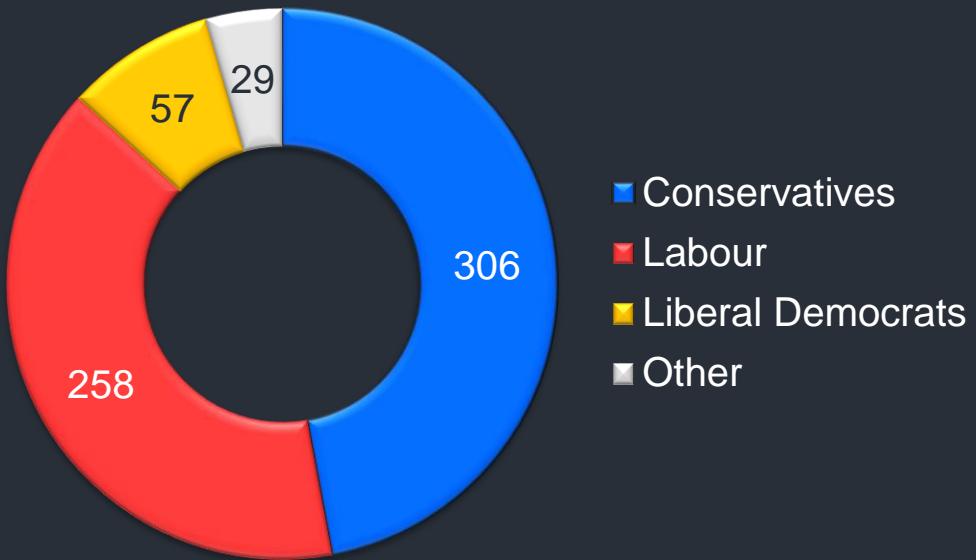


Gordon Brown

# 2010 General Election

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Other =	
8	DUP
6	SNP
5	Sinn Féin
3	Plaid Cymru
3	SDLP
1	Alliance Party
1	Green Party
1	Independent
1	Speaker of the House



Reminder: majority = 326 MPs

# Coalition Government in May 2010

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Tory PM

David Cameron

LibDem Deputy PM

Nick Clegg

# Main Policies of Coalition Government (2010-2015)

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-  Reduction of budget deficit after 2007-2008 financial crisis and recession
  -  Austerity: drastic cuts in public spending (public services, welfare in particular)
  -  Tax breaks for companies (lower corporate tax)
  -  600,000 public sector jobs axed
  -  1.3 million new private sector jobs created (mostly low-paid, precarious jobs)
  -  Major health reform
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**Economic recovery  
but increase in poverty**

# 2015 General Election

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David Cameron

-  Conservatives won overall majority
-  100% Tory government
-  More radical policies than under coalition
-  EU referendum in June 2016 (Brexit)
-  Cameron replaced by Theresa May  
(July 2016)

# 2017 General Election

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Theresa May



Boris Johnson



‘Snap election’ to give May legitimacy in Brexit talks



Not successful → Alliance with the DUP



Difficult negotiations with the EU  
(British government not prepared)



Cabinet divided between hard and soft Brexiteers



New PM in July 2019: Boris Johnson

# 2019, the ‘Brexit Election’

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**Get Brexit done.**

# Liz Truss

6 September – 25 October 2022



‘She had seven days in control.

That is roughly the shelf-life of a lettuce.’

(*The Economist*, 11 October 2022)



Johnson’s series of scandals and issues

- ‘Partygate’ (2020-2021)
- Vote of no confidence (June 2022)
- Sexual misconduct scandal (July 2022)
  - Resignation of Boris Johnson



Conservative leadership election (5 September)

- New PM: Liz Truss

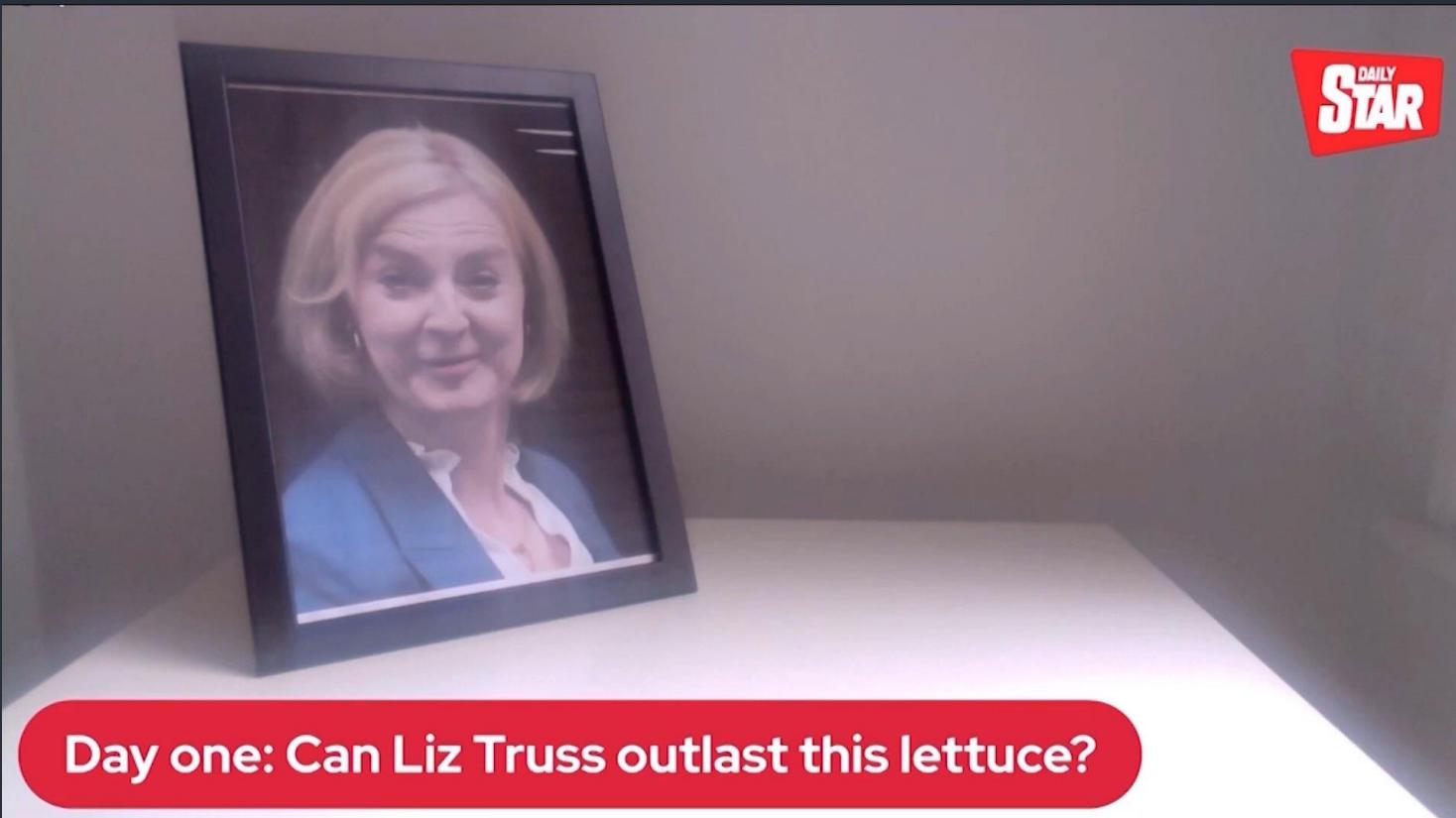


Financial crisis triggered by her budget plan

- Shortest-serving PM in history

# 'Lizzy Lettuce'

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# Rishi Sunak

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❶ Seen as weak, incompetent, and out of touch

❷ A negative legacy

- Failing the NHS
- Rwanda plan
- Austerity policies and growing destitution
- U-turn on environmental policies

❸ Lost the 2024 general election  
→ Worst Tory result in history (-252 seats)



‘Drowning Street’: Sunak announces general elections in the rain (22 May 2024)

# Thanks!

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Any questions?

