

The New York Times: -Labour Won in a Landslide but...- [C2]

I laburisti sono tornati al governo dopo 14 anni con un'ampia maggioranza, dovuta in gran parte al sistema elettorale. Ma né il sostegno popolare è consistente né il compito sarà facile.

Britain's voters [handed](#) the Labour Party a landslide election victory, but one [laden](#) with asterisks. Prime Minister Keir Starmer [took office](#) with a [commanding](#) majority in the British Parliament, yet in terms of the total number of [ballots cast](#), his party won only one-third of the vote, less than what it got in 2017 when it lost to the Conservatives. Labour [made inroads](#) across Britain, yet its wins were often eclipsed by the Tory losses, including that of Liz Truss, the unpopular former prime minister who was [evicted](#) from her [seat](#). The [thundering mutiny](#) of the voters may have been the biggest message of Britain's election. It has [ushered](#) in a new era of Labour government, left the Conservatives [to nurse](#) the worst defeat in their history and stands as a warning to [incumbents](#) everywhere of the [hazards](#) of failing [to deliver on your promises](#). But Labour's triumph was only one of several [crosscurrents](#) that revealed the extraordinary volatility of the modern British electorate: the rise of Reform UK, an insurgent anti-immigration party, which won more than four million votes; the [plummeting](#) vote share of the major parties; the lowest [voter turnout](#) in decades (60 per cent); and the [flare-up](#) of the Israel-Hamas war as a campaign issue that [stung](#) Labour candidates, even Starmer. Although he comfortably held his own [seat](#) in London, Starmer won 17,000 fewer votes than in 2019, thanks in part to a challenge by an independent who channeled anger on the left over Labour's [stance](#) on Israel and the war in the [Gaza Strip](#). It all added up to a complex election that defies easy categorization: a landslide, but not a [straightforward](#) realignment of the political map; a [pivot](#) to the center-left, but one that gave the populist right a valuable [foothold](#); a [thumping](#) Labour win, but without the euphoria that [suffused](#) Tony Blair's [runaway](#) victory in 1997. "A [loveless](#) landslide," a commentator said Friday morning. "We wanted change," said Anand Menon, a professor of European politics at King's College London, summing up the complicated state of British politics, "but we aren't inspired

by Labour.” At one level, Britain’s embrace of a center-left party sets it apart from the right-wing wave that is rising across Europe and possibly in the United States. When Starmer travels to Washington next week for a NATO summit, he will be a fresh presence amid a depleted group of centrist leaders: U.S. President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Yet some analysts said the election should not be interpreted as an embrace of left-wing policies. The magnitude of Labour’s victory is partly a function of Britain’s winner-take-all electoral system, which tends to favor major [parties](#) over smaller ones. It also reflected the depth of the Conservative collapse, which was magnified by the capacity of Reform UK to [siphon off](#) right-wing voters. “It’s not a big shift to the left,” said Tony Travers, a professor of politics at the London School of Economics. “Labour has massively moderated under Keir Starmer.” On Friday, Starmer signaled that he knew he had no time to waste acting on his party’s [lopsided](#) majority: 412 [seats](#), almost matching the number received by Blair in 1997. And he reached out to voters who had not backed Labour. “You have given us a clear mandate, and we will use it to deliver change,” Starmer told cheering supporters after arriving at No. 10 Downing St. “To restore service and respect to politics. End the era of noisy performance. [Tread more lightly](#) on your lives. And unite our country.” Hours after travelling to Buckingham Palace, where King Charles III invited him to form a government, Starmer installed his top team, including Rachel Reeves as [Chancellor of the Exchequer](#), the first woman to hold that post. Starmer, analysts said, will have to act quickly to satisfy an impatient public. He has promised to [jump-start](#) the economy by [overhauling](#) planning regulations and [to shore up](#) the [overburdened](#) National Health Service. But with Britain’s [ballooning](#) public debt, he will have limited tools to begin what he has proclaimed a decade of national renewal. Moreover, the emergence of Reform UK — which won 14.3 per cent of the vote, compared with 23.7 per cent for the Conservatives and 33.8 per cent for Labour — suggested to some that Britain is still vulnerable to the kind of hard-right populism that is on the march in France, particularly if the new government does not score some wins quickly. Nigel Farage, a populist [firebrand](#) who leads Reform UK and was an early champion of Brexit, appeared to be trying to reinvent himself for that purpose. “There is a massive gap on the center-right of

British politics," a jubilant Farage said to cheering supporters in the town of Clacton-on-Sea after he had won a [seat](#) in Parliament for the first time in eight attempts. "My job is to fill it, and that's exactly what I'm going to do." Reform UK won only five [seats](#), which will limit its voice within the House of Commons. But analysts say Farage could use his platform to torment the Conservatives at a moment when they are divided, dispirited and open to the [lure](#) of the far right. The centrist Liberal Democrats were another big winner Thursday night, winning 12 per cent of the vote and increasing their number of [seats](#) to 71 from eight. They inflicted significant damage on the Conservatives in their [heartland](#) in England's south and southwest. Among the priorities of the party, which was virulently against Brexit, is to forge closer [ties](#) to the European Union. Reform UK and the Liberal Democrats [underscored](#) the rapid fragmentation of British politics. Together, Labour and the Conservatives won just 57.5 per cent of the vote, their lowest combined share in the post-World War II period. In 2019, the two parties won 75.7 per cent; in 2017, 82.4 per cent. Published in The New York Times on 5 July, 2024. Reprinted with permission.

Glossary

- **took office** = ottenere il mandato
- **hazards** = rischi
- **crosscurrents** = controcorrente
- **suffused** = pervadere
- **ballooning** = hinchada
- **heartland** = zona centrale
- **handed** = consegnare
- **ushered** = dare inizio a
- **flare-up** = scoppio
- **jump-start** = avviare con i cavi
- **mutiny** = ammutinamento, ribellione
- **to nurse** = subire, sentire
- **to deliver on your promises** = mantenere le proprie promesse
- **plummeting** = che crolla
- **commanding** = maestosa, imponente
- **made inroads** = prendere piede
- **evicted** = sfrattare
- **seat** = seggio
- **firebrand** = agitatore
- **lure** = attrattiva, seduzione
- **voter turnout** = affluenza alle urne
- **straightforward** = diretto
- **to shore up** = sostenere, rinforzare
- **overburdened** = sovraccarico
- **laden** = carica
- **incumbents** = in carica
- **Tread more lightly** = procedere con più cautela
- **underscored** = sottolineare
- **pivot** = svolta
- **Chancellor of the Exchequer** = ministro economia e finanze
- **overhauling** = rivedere
- **cast** = votare
- **runaway** = improvvisa, rapida

- **loveless** = senza amore
- **siphon off** = trasferire
- **lopsided** = irregolare
- **ties** = legami
- **ballots** = voti
- **thundering** = fragoroso
- **Gaza Strip** = Striscia di Gaza
- **thumping** = eclatante
- **stung** = colpire
- **stance** = posizione
- **foothold** = punto d'appoggio