

Themes and Issues in British Politics since 1945  
(PO52010)

Lecture 1

## The Legacy of the Inter-war Years

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### Politics in 1918

- Representation of the People Act, 1918:  
all men over 21 and women over 30 vote
- Liberal Party divided:  
H.H. Asquith      David Lloyd George



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### 1918 General Election

- 335 Coalition Unionist
- 133 Coalition Liberal
- 10 Coalition Labour  
(478 Coalition)
- 23 Conservative
- 25 Irish Unionist
- 28 Liberal
- 63 Labour
- 7 Irish Nationalist
- 73 Sinn Fein
- 10 Others

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## Party Ideology in 1918

### Unionists (Conservatives)

- Union of GB & Ireland
- Tariff reform – imperial development and social reform

### Liberals

- Free trade (united against tariffs)
- Divisions over social reform

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## Party Ideology in 1918

### Labour

- Socialist party – ‘common ownership of the means of production’
- Parliamentary democracy
- Representation of working class

*Expanded role of government in WW1 affects all parties*

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## Governments of 1920s

### Lloyd George Coalition 1918-22

- Fail to deliver “land fit for heroes”
- Irish Free State
- 2m unemployed in 1920
- Carlton Club 1922

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## 1922 General Election

- 345 Conservative
- 62 National Liberal
- 54 Liberal
- 142 Labour
- 12 Others

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## Governments of 1920s

### Conservatives 1922-24

- Andrew Bonar Law 1922-23
- Stanley Baldwin 1923-24



- Tariff reform gamble fails

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## 1923 General Election

- 258 Conservative
- 159 Liberal
- 191 Labour
- 7 Others

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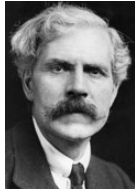
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## Governments of 1920s

### Labour 1924

- Ramsay MacDonald
- No majority
- Conventional economics



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## 1924 General Election

- 419 Conservative
- 40 Liberal
- 151 Labour
- 1 Communist
- 4 Others

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## Governments of 1920s

### Conservatives (Baldwin) 1924-29

- General strike
- No tariff reform
- Gradual social reform
- Locarno Treaties 1925
- 'Safety First' in 1929

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## 1929 General Election

- 260 Conservatives
- 59 Liberal
- 288 Labour
- 8 Others

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## Main points 1918-29

### 1918-22

- Attitudes to coalition
- Rise of Labour
- Settlement of Irish Question

### 1923-29

- Continued growth of Labour
- Polarisation of politics

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## Decline of Liberal Party

- Accidental factors – e.g. leadership disputes
- Liberal ideology and war
- Social change due to war, including franchise reform
- Debates on different local experiences pre-1914

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## The Depression

- Unemployment 1.1m in June 1929, rising to 2.8m in Sept 1931
- May Committee
- Labour splits in August 1931 – MacDonald and Philip Snowden form National Government with Conservatives and Liberals
- Sept 1931 election: 473 Conservatives and 52 Labour (on 30% of vote)

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## Challenges to the Economic Consensus

### Oswald Mosley

- Conservative MP in 1918, then Independent, joined Labour in 1924.
- Keynesian public works programme rejected in 1929-31
- New Party 1931
- British Union of Fascists 1932



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## Challenges to the Economic Consensus

### The Left

- National Unemployed Workers' Movement
- Communist Party of Great Britain

### Lloyd George

- *Yellow Book* 1929
- 59 seats in 1929



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### Themes in 1930s Economic Policy

- Crisis measures to rein in public spending
- Devaluation of £
- Protection – 1932 Import Duties Bill
- Unemployment 2.5m in Jan 1933, but 1.6m in July 1936
- Structural unemployment

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### Mid to Late 1930s Politics

- Ramsay MacDonald PM until 1935.
- Stanley Baldwin then takes over.
- National Government dominated by Conservatives.
- Neville Chamberlain PM in 1937



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### Mid to Late 1930s Politics

#### Labour

- George Lansbury 1931-35



- Clement Attlee 1935-55



- Labour recovery in 1935 – 154 seats and 37.9% of vote.

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## Mid to Late 1930s Politics

### Foreign affairs

- 1936 Rhineland
- Sept 1938 Munich Agreement
- March 1939 Czechoslovakia
- Sept 1939 Poland – war begins

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## Conclusions

- Two party politics.
- Dominance of economic orthodoxy.
- Keynesian policies not tried.
- Social reforms gradual and piecemeal.
- Unemployment had bitten hard.
- Sense of failure by Conservative politicians regarding outbreak of war.

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## British Politics since 1945

Clement Attlee



Tony Blair



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## British Politics since 1945

Winston Churchill



David Cameron



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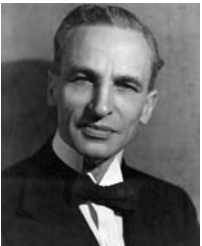
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## British Politics since 1945

Archibald Sinclair



Menzies Campbell



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1945



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1964



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1987



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1940s



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1964



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1976



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## Change in Britain since 1945

1998



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