

## Weekly Commentary 31

### *The three political leaders who committed hara-kiri*

Over the last month, three western leaders decided to do themselves in and commit political suicide. It was quite amazing to watch.

First, Macron suffered an unexpected loss in the European parliamentary elections to National Rally's Marine LePen. This is a man who knows no humility. He decided that he has to demonstrate he was still the leader of France, and called a domestic election, ostensibly to rally his troops and that he still had political support. He did not need to do it at time he did, as his presidency was good for another three years until 2027. And his cabinet and political allies in government were caught by surprise, and literally displeased with Macron's decision.

They were right; he was wrong. This was an election that did not need to be called, but it is obvious that Macron was all hubris, and wanted to demonstrate he still has got it. He was wrong. Now he is totally screwed.

The parliamentary elections were called last week, at the end of June. And in the first round, Macron's party, predictably, crashed and burned. Every political pundit worth his salt predicted it. (We covered that two weeks ago.) Which was also why the insiders, the French cabinet, found it stupid to expose themselves to what was clearly a trend as indicated in the EU elections. I mean what was so difficult for Macron to understand? Why would Macron want to commit suicide when it was not necessary to do so. Now all of them are likely to be out of their jobs. What for? Macron's lack of touch did him in – he did not even know that he was immensely unpopular and that he would lose....

Then there were the Brits—particularly the Tories. They too called elections early although it was due only at the end of this year. Sunak called for polls on July 4, and the extent of the resulting Tories implosion is historic. Never in the history of human endeavour, to cite another British PM, where so much was screwed up for the conservatives by a short-sighted few. As it turned out, calling early elections does not guarantee victory.

It thus turned out that the politics of the established democratic world in Great Britain, where a political party that has ruled the UK for 14 years went from kingpins to a force that is existentially spent. The Conservative Party in the UK is finished, never to be significant in British politics for a very long time, if ever. Finito...forever. And the former prime minister which was totally responsible for this, Liz Truss, in office back then for just 28 days, did not even get to keep her parliamentary seat.

It was that bad...

**“General Election 2024: Liz Truss walks out on live BBC interview after election humiliation**

It's been a historically bad night for the Conservative Party, who have suffered major losses of senior MPs including Britain's shortest serving Prime Minister Liz Truss

Former Tory leader **Liz Truss** has walked out during a live interview with the **BBC**, moments after a **humiliating defeat** in which she saw her 26,000-strong majority overturned by **Labour**.

Truss did not speak on stage after the loss, which saw her vote share drop by an astonishing 43.4 percent as **Labour's** Terry Jermy enjoyed a narrow victory of 630 votes. One of the architects of the now-infamous September 2022 '**mini-budget**' - which caused a significant drop in **Tory** support in the polls - saw her share haemorrhage to **Reform UK**, following a UK-wide trend." (And she ate the bitter pill, given her rebuff, and any chance of a political comeback, she walked out on TV.)

The BBC's Ros Atkins managed to tie Britain's shortest-serving Prime Minister down for a brief interview after the shock result. But it didn't quite go to plan, as a humiliated Truss turned her back on Atkins in the middle of the interview and began to walk away from the camera.

Humiliated? It was the ultimate slap in the face. Two years ago, when Truss was still PM, we had commented and correctly predicted her demise at the end of that week. Yes, she was that stupid...And that obvious. As for Sunak, the fact that he could not read all the signals on the ground when all the pundits already predicted 18 months ago that Labour would win by a landslide just shows that he is not a politician. Very soon, he will have to go back to his Wall Street career and live amongst the clouds.

And then, there is Joe Biden.

If you did not know that Sleepy Joe has blown up in his debate with Donald Trump a week before America's Independence Day, you must have been living on another planet. It is all over the news, 24x7. Every day. The disaster was so horrendous that the entire Democratic party wanted to change candidate at this last minute. This scheduling of the presidential debate in June (rather than Sep, closer to the elections) was done by the Biden campaign because they had feared the directions the polls were indicating that Trump was marginally ahead, whatever lawfare the Democrats had thrown at the man.

They wanted Biden to just show that he "was not too old" or "losing cognitive ability" and perhaps during the debate would muster the undecideds to vote for the man. Why they had this false confidence is beyond anyone, because the old man just demonstrated to 50 million American viewers that he was exactly what his numerous gaffes in the past year has been showing – that he should be in a retirement home. As one astute commentator said, Biden offered voters a choice between a cadaver and corpse. Sorry that is not a choice for a country now fighting in three wars and multiple geopolitical contests. And it took just 10 minutes of debate time to destroy Biden's presidency, when he mumbled and fumbled against the Donald. There is no possibility that he will win against Trump, now.

What the f..k? Three men who did not understand the politics in their own country and speeded up their own demise. It only shows that all of them were in elevated positions of authority, totally out of touch with the people who were shouting their complaints to these three leaders. All of them were blind. And when they did the stupid things that did NOT need to be done to hasten their fall, it was hara-kiri.

It would be useful to see what the press in each of their countries say of these leaders.

*The French Election:*

### **French snap elections: Foreign press acknowledges 'the end of the Macron era'**

*The international media fear that the far-right's accession to the premiership will destabilize France and erode its credit rating, and also that the turbulent aftershocks will weaken the European Union.*

By [Benjamin Barthe](#) Le Monde

July 1, 2024, (Paris)

The foreign press has reacted with concern to the results of the first round of the French snap parliamentary elections, which have put the far right at the doorstep of power. Often cruel to Emmanuel Macron, as the architect of a dissolution that has backfired, the editorials published across Europe, the US, Africa and the Arab world, on Monday, July 1, also expressed fears of the destabilization of France, the erosion of its prestige coupled with a crisis of governance, and apprehension as to the impact these possible upheavals would have on the international scene.

"French democracy speaks and it is frightening," wrote the Swiss daily newspaper *Le Temps* in its front-page editorial, pointing out that with the breakthrough of the far-right party, France is moving away from republican principles. For the newspaper, the Rassemblement National's victory "is the dizziness of a democracy that leads to what some democrats fear most." For the German-language Swiss daily newspaper *Blick*, "France has just democratically, but enduringly, settled into a period of turbulence and uncertainty that is hardly conducive to its recovery."

The Belgian press was no less harsh. Describing the elections as a "bazooka vote," the daily newspaper *Le Soir* wrote that "in a total reversal of values and ideals, young people, workers, graduates, women and men alike have decided that hope, today in France, is embodied by a racist party. (...) This discredit bears the face of Emmanuel Macron, a president who, far from protecting his country against the far right for good, has legitimized it by abandoning the ballot box to it." The same diagnosis can be found in *La Libre Belgique*, whose headline referred to a "vertical plummet into the unknown" and called out the president's responsibility, the man who "dreamed of an upsurge" and "became a stepping stone for the far right."

'The republic looks wounded'

The British press headlines were divided between Jude Bellingham's acrobatic overhead kick against Slovakia, which saved their national team from elimination from the Euro football tournament, and the triumph of France's far-right Rassemblement National (RN) party. For the center-right newspaper *The Times*, the "French right humiliates Macron." *The Daily Telegraph* was even more radical, quoting RN leader Marine Le Pen as claiming to have "wiped out Macron." The BBC,

which had relocated its studios to a Parisian café for the occasion, meanwhile referred to the RN "turning French politics on its head."

## **‘End of reign’: Macron faces ungovernable France after shock immigration loss**

French president’s lost majority hits him with a vengeance.  
DECEMBER 12, 2023 6:57 PM CET

BY [CLEA CAULCUTT](#) Le Monde

PARIS — President Emmanuel Macron has been stopped dead in his tracks over the failure of a flagship immigration bill that shows how hard it will now be to run France without an absolute majority in the National Assembly.

On Monday, the National Assembly rejected his flagship immigration bill in a dramatic vote that took the government by surprise. The defeat was made more humiliating by the fact that lawmakers didn’t even debate the text, but rejected it in a preliminary vote.

The upset sent shockwaves through the political establishment and raised questions about whether France has become ungovernable.

“It could mean we are reaching the end of his mandate faster than expected, that we are entering Emmanuel Macron’s end of reign. He’s running out of steam, and will find it harder and harder to keep his MPs in check,” said political analyst Chloé Morin.

Doubts about Macron’s ability to govern France have been swirling since he lost the parliamentary elections last year. While his centrist coalition remained the largest group in the National Assembly, he no longer had an absolute majority to pass legislation.

After initially floating the idea that France would learn the arts of coalition politics, the president settled on a policy of muddling through with ad hoc deals with the opposition conservative Les Républicains.

The government has been able to reach compromises in some consensual areas including [legislation to boost buying power](#) and [fighting unemployment](#).

And when that hasn’t worked, Macron has reached for the bazooka, using a controversial constitutional maneuver that allows him to bypass parliament, for example to pass his [contentious pensions reform](#).

But the spectacular debacle over the immigration bill has blown up Macron’s method for governing.

“The government is reaching the limit of its ‘at the same time’ method,” said Olivier Marleix, president of the Les Républicains group in the National Assembly. “The government must choose its team” he added in an interview with [TV channel LCI](#), whether for hardening or softening the immigration bill.

The repercussions of Monday's vote will be felt far and wide, with [opposition parties](#) already calling for the resignation of Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin and fresh elections.

### ***A defeat a long time coming***

The government's defeat Monday was a particular shock because it has been painstakingly preparing the immigration bill for months. In the wake of the parliamentary defeat last year, it was postponed several times, on each occasion raising the stakes for Macron's government.

It was hoped the legislation, which aims to speed up the deportation of foreigners who have committed crimes on French soil and includes measures to legalize undocumented workers in some cases, would get the backing of conservatives and left-leaning centrists.

But the initial stages of debate on the immigration bill were chaotic. The legislation was hardened in its first reading at the Senate which is dominated by the center-right, and then softened when it reached the parliamentary committee stage of the National Assembly.

Still, defeat came as a surprise. The government hoped the conservatives would be forced to vote for a bill on one of their core issues: immigration. In the run-up to the vote, Darmanin press-ganged the conservatives into voting for the bill. "Imagine if you rejected this legislation," he warned last week, "and then a foreign delinquent committed a crime. The responsibility of the [Les Républicains] would be enormous."

The government also hoped that the far-left France Unbowed and the far-right National Rally would refuse to unite their votes against Macron's coalition. But on Monday, their divide-and-rule tactics failed.

The vote "shows that, given the make-up of the National Assembly, it's impossible to reach a consensus on a topic as divisive as immigration ... there's a very important political faultline," Morin said.

### **Lame duck Macron**

For the French president, the defeat is a rude awakening and a miserable return to domestic politics from international high diplomacy. In an attempt to shield himself from the upset of governing without a clear majority, he had mostly delegated the daily toil of running the government to his Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne.

But the current crisis isn't one he can ignore.

Former Presidents Charles de Gaulle and François Mitterrand both chose to hold fresh elections when faced with hostile or ungovernable parliaments during their mandates.

But on Tuesday, Macron told ministers the vote did not show there was "a substitute majority" that could emerge, according to a government adviser quoted by AFP. The truth is that with the rise of the far-right National Rally in recent months, neither

Macron's Renaissance party, the conservatives nor the left want to face a fresh drubbing in the polls.

The French president is now desperately seeking a way to break the deadlock on his draft immigration legislation. A joint parliamentary committee made up of senators and MPs has been tasked with finding a compromise. It's unclear how more time for negotiations will yield better results.

But the pressure is rising on Macron to react.

"It's hard to imagine General de Gaulle [would] suffer such a defeat and do nothing," Morin said.

### ***Further, as reported in Politico Europe:***

Jupiter has fallen out of orbit. For the first time perhaps, French President Emmanuel Macron was left speechless. Reeling from a stunning defeat in the parliamentary election, France's golden boy, who prided himself on having an answer to every question, remained silent for days (as of press time, he hadn't been heard from since Sunday).

But the reverberations of his loss have echoed throughout the political system. Newly appointed ministers will have to resign, party big shots have been stripped of their power, and the weekly government meeting held on Tuesdays has been cancelled following Macron's failure to secure an outright majority in the runoff vote.

Though his coalition secured 245 seats and became the largest group in the National Assembly, he was deprived of a ruling majority — a rare occurrence in the history of France's Fifth Republic. He also faces two forces in opposition: the far-left alliance NUPES with 131 seats and the far right with 89 seats. France's parliament looks set to be paralyzed for the next five years, with Macron's centrist troops likely to endure political sniper fire from both sides of the aisle.

For Macron, who theorized a "Jupiterian" approach to the French presidency — governing not through political horse-trading and arm-twisting, but through symbolic gestures setting the terms of the debate — the fall has been hard and sudden. The first sitting president to be re-elected since Jacques Chirac in 2002, Macron was expected to have a free hand to do whatever he wanted in his second and final term. Instead, his ambitions for reform have been dashed.

Just weeks earlier, some wondered what Macron's second term would be like — perhaps he would set aside re-election concerns and focus on a legacy-building second term. Turns out, Macron 2.0 will be defined by the end of Macronism. His vertical, top-down style of running the country has met with rejection at the polls. His party lost 103 seats in five years, and political extremes exploded under his watch — with the far right posting historic gains.

"It's clear that he has lost momentum," said Olivier Rozenberg, a professor of European studies at Paris' Sciences Po university. "We now see the limits of 'Macron,

the clever centrist,' who always manages to pull through. Left-wing voters in particular feel that he is no longer able to protect them.”

The sudden and spectacular upset in the French president's fortunes has left many wondering whether the political novice who rose to power against all odds has at last lost both his flair and his luck. In recent weeks, Macron has accumulated mistakes and made miscalculations that led to Sunday's disaster at the polling booth: a lackluster, defensive presidential campaign, an ill-timed visit to Ukraine just ahead of the runoff vote, the appointment of a technocratic and uninspiring government, and the running of a near non-campaign for the parliamentary election.

“At the beginning, there was a real vision,” said Philippe Zaouati, an early supporter of Macron and former party official. “[Macronism] was new, it offered a political renewal beyond the right and the left... But the vision collided with the real world, the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and yes, recently we have lacked vision.”

The full scale of repercussions following the defeat has yet to fully unfold — both for Macron, and the country he is tasked to lead. The newly appointed Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has flopped before she has even started the job. The far-left alliance led by firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon plans to table a no-confidence vote as early as next month, which the government could very likely lose. And parliament is expected to be nothing short of pandemonium.

### ***Not just a rough patch***

**The setbacks have not only exposed the weaknesses of Macron's approach to politics, they also put into question its very survival.**

Like former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Macron straddled the left-right divide, coming from the left, but embracing liberal economy. And for a time, the formula delivered on its promise. Macronism was all about efficiency — it offered a new political template, ditched outdated ideological divides in an effort to get things done.

Macron notched a couple of achievements in his first term. He liberalized France's employment laws, brought the country's stubbornly high unemployment rate down to a 14-year low and is seen as having competently managed the COVID-19 pandemic.

But in doing so, Macron marginalized France's political heavy-hitters, favoring loyalty over political heft, and found himself ill-equipped to face the challenges ahead. **(In other words, his politicking was not up to par...)** His current government is a roll call of technocrats who lack the political clout needed to protect them and him.

It was not always so. When he came to power in 2017, Macron included some heavyweights from across the spectrum in his government, such as the conservative Edouard Philippe, the former minister François Bayrou and the socialist Jean-Yves Le Drian.

Macron now needs new allies. But his vertical approach to power, best illustrated by his management of the COVID-19 crisis behind closed doors, has left him isolated and exposed.

It's a problem that's hardly unique to Macron. He's not the first president to adopt a top-down approach in France, where presidents are often referred to as "Republican monarchs." Coalition building and compromise aren't part of the DNA that made up France's recent presidential regimes. (Macron has been nicknamed "little Napoleon, imperious and out of touch.)

But there's something about the current occupant of the Elysée Palace that makes the impression particularly acute. There are the accusations of arrogance, the sense he patronizes those less fortunate in life, which makes it difficult for him to morph into a team player or convince others he is ready to make concessions to unite the country.

"There's a lot of hatred against Macron," said former French Ambassador Gérard Araud, speaking before the election. "In some parts of the population, particularly among those who supported the Yellow Vests protest movement, there is a gut hatred against him.

"It's a political failure for him. His party En Marche was a new political movement. And yet, his style of governing was completely solitary. The great debates he organized [after the Yellow Vest protests] were an example of pure political narcissism. He felt the crisis was coming, and didn't know how to answer it," Araud said.

The French president came to power without following the traditional playbook — he had never been elected to office — and so he doesn't have all the infrastructure that comes with having a traditional party to fall back on to buffer the difficulties ahead (In other words, he did not have grassroots organizations).

"The image of the president has been tarnished," said political analyst Jérôme Sainte-Marie. "The advantage of parties of the right and the left is that crises can ultimately be overcome. When the political power is concentrated in one person, who has failed to build a party in recent [local] elections, it leads to situations where the president can get elected but not the MPs behind him."

The lack of a strong party is not just an issue of manpower, it's also about ideas and having an ideology that people can rally behind when the going gets tough.

Macronism was loosely defined as progressive, pro-European and pro-business; hardly a political vision, more a pick-and-mix of positions.

"Why was Macronism useful?" said Sainte-Marie. "It was a way of imposing solutions, backed by France's elites, a way of building an efficient majority to push through reforms that were supported on the left and the right. It was a propelling force for reforms, and it's that model that is in crisis."

Macron's opponents in the National Assembly on the other hand have bucketfuls of ideology. Marine Le Pen's National Rally touts a return to the nation state (like Trump in the US and Farage in the UK), while Mélenchon's leftwing alliance wants a new brand of socialism that will bring equality and beat climate change.



“The situation now is that the reformers are totally isolated and have built a wall against them, and nothing can be agreed on,” said Sainte-Marie.

### ***From revolution to reinvention***

The president’s lieutenants have tried to strike a bullish note in the wake of Sunday’s defeat, vowing to reinvent themselves in light of the results.

“Today we open a new chapter,” wrote Europe Minister Clément Beaune, who barely scraped past to save his seat on Sunday, on Twitter. “The French have voted. They have delivered us a flat pack without instructions. It means we’ll have to negotiate, do differently, move forwards.”

The malleability of Macronism — it is often defined as simply what Macron wants — (or in English, **bullshit your way through as we saw with his flipflopping about sending French troops to Ukraine to fight the Russians**) might be a trump card he can use to pull through his post-electoral crisis. On Tuesday, leaders of the opposition parties were called to the Elysée to discuss the creation of new groups in the National Assembly.

If Macron is willing to redefine his ambitions, could France ultimately become more like Germany and learn the art of compromise?

In sketching out his vision for the Jupiterian presidency in 2016, Macron said France could not operate like Germany because it lacked that country’s “constitutional patriotism.” Sciences Po politics lecturer Olivier Rozenberg also thinks it’s unlikely because of France’s winner-takes-all election system.

“If parties and government are incapable of testing coalitions, it’s not just because of the political culture in France, it’s also because the two-round voting system encourages politicians to become more polarized, to stand out,” he said, adding that Macron’s potential allies the conservatives from Les Républicains fear “being gobbled up” by the stronger party.

That doesn’t mean Macron doesn’t have room to maneuver. Macron may put a gun to the conservatives’ heads and threaten to call an early election if they fail to back bills that have the support of their voters, such as pensions reform.

**If that fails, he can focus on foreign policy, a preserve of the presidency. (Oh ya? Look at his performance in the Sahel and more in Ukraine...it’s a bloody mess...)** But without the credibility that comes with popularity and real power at home, even that might be a herculean effort. There is little doubt that the weekend’s drubbing at the polls has left Macron a weakened figure in the EU sphere — as a leader, he lacks the bipartisan support Italy’s Mario Draghi enjoys or the relatively stable coalition that underpins German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s term.

As a disruptor who swept into the Elysée in 2017 on the back of a nontraditional playbook, destroying his country’s political establishment along the way, this won’t be Macron’s first rodeo with fearsome beasts to tame. He could yet deliver a surprise yet. But first Jupiter will have to get used to his new life among mortals.

## ***The British Elections: The End of the Tories, the party of Margaret Thatcher***

JULY 1, 2024

### **The End of the Tories**

*The Conservative Party's hopeless, hapless campaign signals the conclusion of a misbegotten era.*

### **Landslide win for U.K.'s Labour ends 14 years of Conservative rule**

The end of the Conservative government marks a huge reversal for Britain's top parties.

By [William Booth](#) and [Karla Adam](#) The Washington Post

July 4, 2024 at 10:15 p.m.

LONDON — Keir Starmer and his renewed Labour Party won a landslide election in Britain on Thursday, according to the exit poll, ending 14 years of Conservative Party rule and moving toward a new government dominated by the center left.

This was an election that was more about mood than policy, and voters conveyed their frustration with the incumbent Tories and a willingness to take a chance on a “changed Labour Party,” as Starmer calls it, purged of its hard-left elements and socialist rhetoric.

### **London reacts to Labour Party's historic win**

There were mixed reactions in London on July 5 to the Labour Party's U.K. election victory after 14 years of Conservative rule.

The sophisticated exit poll, sponsored by Britain's top broadcasters, found that Labour was on track to win 410 seats in the 650-seat Parliament. The Conservatives were projected to take (**ONLY**) 131 seats — which would be the party's worst result since its founding.

The Liberal Democrats came in third with 61 seats, according to the model. **One of the surprises was how well Nigel Farage's new right-wing Reform UK party was doing.** Official results will follow, with most coming in the early morning hours in Britain. The end of the Conservative government — and the resurrection of what appears to be a more disciplined, centrist “establishment Labour” — marks a huge reversal for Britain's top parties.

BBC announcers and their guests were tripping over themselves to pronounce the results seismic, landmark, huge — and gobsmacking.

Speaking from his London constituency after the announcement that he had retained his own parliamentary seat, Starmer said voters across the country had sent a message that it was time to end “the politics of performance” and “return to politics as public service.”

## ***2024 U.K. election***

Britain's Labour Party will return to government after a landslide win in the general election, and consequently, a historic defeat for the ruling Conservatives after 14 years in power and countless scandals. Friday will be a day of transition, with Keir Starmer set to become the U.K.'s next prime minister.

Today's Labour leaders bill themselves not as socialist firebrands but sensible managers. They don't read *Das Kapital*. They read the *Financial Times*.

Starmer, who edited a Trotskyite magazine in his youth, has promised to put "wealth creation" at the center of all the new government does, to rouse a sleepy economy, help young families buy affordable homes and bolster the beloved but overextended National Health Service.

Starmer and his team have vowed to be sober-minded guardians of the treasury — and they will have to be. Public finances are stretched. Government debt has soared to its highest level since the 1960s. Many assume taxes will rise.

The Labour Party has won the July 4th election and party leader Keir Starmer will become Britain's new prime minister.

The mood in Britain right now can be described as somewhere between fairly dubious and highly skeptical of politicians and their promises. Like their American cousins across the pond, British voters are feeling sour. The vibe is gloomy. The chances of disappointment are high.

Starmer ran under the banner of "change," but his manifesto was as vague as it could be. He is liked but not loved. When he enters Downing Street, his supporters will be relieved — but maybe not euphoric.

As a lawyer — first a human rights defender, then a top government prosecutor — Starmer was known to build his cases piece by piece. He is a detail man. He is often described as a dull orator. He's no Boris Johnson, no Tony Blair — for better or worse.

As the *Times* of London newspaper put it, "Labour has bored its way to power."

Keir Starmer, Britain's Labour leader and incoming prime minister, hailed his party's landslide victory at a celebratory event in London on July 5.

In interviews with *The Washington Post* over the past six weeks of election campaigning, voters have repeatedly said they want a better deal. They want to tone down the chaos — and they are sick of self-dealing by politicians who assume it is one deal for the public and another, better deal for them.

Specifically, they want salaries that beat inflation and lower mortgage rates as well as better public services.

Unlike his predecessor, the hard-left Jeremy Corbyn, Starmer has been careful not to promise a bunch of freebies. This election, Labour wasn't selling a super fabulous future, but rather the competent management of slightly improved days to come.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak didn't need to call an election before the end of the year, but he decided to gamble, hoping that the polls would narrow — or perhaps that rebels in his party wouldn't eat him alive.

It was a grim election night for the Tories. (Another act of political suicide as in the case of Macron)

Tim Bale, a professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London, said it was “difficult to spin this as anything other than a disaster” for the Conservatives — but not an existential one (not the pundits I read who think that the Tories are done for, forever). He noted that the British electorate is a “volatile” lot and that the Tories were capable of coming back “but it might take a few elections.” (about half a century??)

The reversal in fortunes is stunning. After Boris Johnson won an 80-seat majority in 2019, giddy Tories began to talk about holding power into the 2030s. Johnson and his successors blew it — first with Johnson's prevarications over boozy parties during pandemic lockdowns and then with the 49-day premiership of Liz Truss whose economic plans led to a run on the British pound and nearly crashed the economy. (And she — an idiot who likened herself to Thatcher but who did not even understand basic economics or her geography -has suffered the ultimate indignity of losing her seat in the Commons two days ago).

Sunak's 18 months have been less turbulent. But voters tell pollsters that they no longer trust Conservatives to handle the economy. That had been one of the party's traditional strong points.

Wes Streeting, a Labour leader, said on the BBC that the reason the Tory party was swept out was “it's a clown car.”

Freddie Bennett Brookes, 22, who just graduated from a university, voted for Labour. She said she cared mostly about the high costs of rent.

On Starmer, she said, “I think he will be sensible. We have had quite a few not sensible ones, and I think a lot of people say he's quite boring, but maybe that's something we need to have. Maybe that's necessary, even if it's not exciting.”

More than 60 countries representing half the world's population are voting in elections this year. Britain is one of the few expected to shift left.

The contrast is especially stark with neighbor France, where President Emmanuel Macron's centrist movement and a coalition of leftist parties are expected to lose to Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally in legislative elections Sunday.

Sara Hobolt, a professor of politics at the London School of Economics, said the same anti-incumbent sentiment was being felt on both sides of the English Channel. The difference, she said, had to do with what people were voting for or against, as well as Britain's first-past-the-post voting system in which smaller parties are at a disadvantage.

“There’s nothing to suggest that Brits are more left wing, or less populist or love immigrants more; they are very similar” to voters on the European continent, she said.

Farage’s right-wing populist party, Reform UK, was projected to take 13 seats — far more than previous polls suggested.

The trend toward the far right in Britain is “more muted or less easy to see” than in France, or in a different way in the United States, said Tony Travers, a politics professor at the London School of Economics.

“Nigel Farage comes and goes as its leader. It doesn’t have many members. It’s rather chaotic in many ways. It’s not a long-term movement, and that could make it hard for it to build to the equivalent scale of National Rally in France or indeed [Donald] Trump’s Republicans,” Travers said. Still, the upstart party was besting Conservatives in some constituencies.

In the election, hardly anyone was talking about the drain hole of Brexit. The public is exhausted by the subject.

The highflying visions of Johnson’s “global Britain,” with lucrative trade deals around the world and busy factories at home, never came to pass. (**Boris Johnson was the biggest bullshitter around.**)

Many people think a Labour-led government would seek a closer relationship with the European Union. But when asked by reporters whether he could foresee any circumstances under which Britain would rejoin the single market or customs union within his lifetime, Starmer replied: “No.”

When it comes to Britain’s foreign policy and its special relationship with the United States, there is not a lot of difference between Labour and Conservatives — at least on paper.

Expect no major moves by Starmer. He will be steadfast on NATO and continue to support and help arm Ukraine. On the Israel-Gaza war, he may press harder for peace deal.

It is an open question, however, if Starmer’s vision “includes reestablishing Britain’s place in the world, or whether their concerns are so overwhelmingly domestic that foreign policy comes a bit more down the line,” said Bronwen Maddox, director of the Chatham House think tank.

There is one issue on which the two parties are clearly at odds: deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda. Starmer has called the policy “gesture politics” and said Labour would instead introduce a new border security unit.

After former president Donald Trump’s criminal conviction in May, Starmer [told](#) reporters, “Ultimately, whether he’s elected president will be a matter for the American people and, obviously, if we’re privileged to come in to serve, we would work with whoever they choose as their president.”

He added: “But there’s no getting away from the fact this is a wholly unprecedented situation.”

Democracies are no better than other forms of government at avoiding catastrophic mistakes. But they are much more effective at rectifying them. While the 2024 British general election might have seemed a long time coming, as the country meandered from one failure to the next, the utter scale of defeat for the Conservatives is testament to the ability of a democratic system to reject, reverse and renew.

It also places a singular challenge on the desk of the new prime minister, Keir Starmer. He will be judged by his ability to restore probity to government and address the damage suffered by the country.

It is easy to see this election in the tradition of other big defeats like 1997 or 1979 or 1964. A powerful theme of “time for a change” was at play and the governing party seemed to have run out of steam. It can even be interpreted as sending a powerful message to Rishi Sunak’s Conservative party that voters wanted to inflict punishment for incompetence, economic mismanagement and sleaze.

**But this one is more than that.**

**The now former governing party, returned with a majority of 80 in 2019, has been beaten to within an inch of its life. A generation of politicians long criticised for treating public life with contempt, have been ejected from office and parliament.**

Step back, and this election can be seen as democracy rectifying the catalogue of its own glaring mistakes. **Since the calamitous Brexit referendum eight years ago, Britain has suffered economic decay and a cost of living crisis (briefly exacerbated by Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng’s disastrous so-called “mini-budget”).**

It has endured a government with a lengthy record of rule breaking reflected in the UK falling to its lowest ever ranking in the Global Corruption Index. It has seen dodgy pandemic procurement contracts handed out, party donors appointed to the House of Lords and a sustained attack on its constitution, institutions, and rule of law. Tiresome culture war crusades have divided communities and polluted public life.

Denigration of public services from education to the NHS to the armed forces, crises in housing, the climate and inequality have been left unchallenged. Damage has been done to the country’s international reputation and relations strained with the UK’s closest allies in Europe.

**What these errors have in common is that each one sits firmly at the door of 10 Downing Street and its four most recent inhabitants. This election emphatically draws a line under them.**

### ***Parties can fall***

For so long in opposition and even during this campaign, Starmer’s party has danced to the populist tune of the government and its media cheerleaders. The challenge for his new administration as it takes power is to recognise that this election is a

watershed, a rejection of this catalogue of mistakes, and an expectation of political renewal.

The more existential question is whether this election is also a watershed moment that will permanently change the shape of British politics. Could we be witnessing the demise of the Conservative party and the end of its hegemonic position at the centre of public life?

It happened to the previously dominant Liberal party a century ago when it split down the middle and was replaced by a new emerging Labour party. Such a shift is rare, of course, and requires some sort of major disruption.

In the years following the first world war, Labour's rise was fuelled by an extension in the franchise so significant that it makes the proposed votes for today's 16 and 17-year-olds appear trifling. Indeed the Representation of the People acts more than doubled the electorate by giving the vote to women and the 40% of (working-class) men who were also previously disenfranchised.

There is nothing quite so seismic heading Westminster's way today (though plans for automatic registration could add millions of voters). But the potential for comparison should not be dismissed.

### ***Post-Brexit realignment, realigned***

Party identification in the electorate, which has been in decline since the 1960s was turned on its head in 2019 when Boris Johnson's Tories won a swathe of red wall seats in the Midlands and the north of England. For the first time, Labour voters were wealthier than Conservative. Labour, of course, went down to its worst defeat since 1935. There was talk of a new political cleavage, where class divisions had been replaced by leavers and remainers.

That this has all been reversed in the space of one parliament demonstrates the incredible fluidity in the electorate today. The more than 70 seats that have gone to the Liberal Democrats show the determination of the electorate to vote tactically to remove Conservatives in spite of an electoral system that has historically kept them in office.

And then there is Reform. Nigel Farage's rag bag of a party has proved to be the ultimate protest vote for disenchanted Tory voters, attracted to the open acknowledgement that few if any seats could be won but the higher the vote, the harder the beating for the Conservatives.

As it happens, millions more voted Reform than was reflected in their seat share. While there are some leading Tories who would still welcome him into the fold, Farage perhaps overplayed his hand during the campaign making the Conservatives defensive of a rival, hell bent on their destruction. Time will tell if the Conservatives can resist the onslaught but for now the psychodrama of the right will be a political sideshow to the main event: an innocent new government and a refreshed parliament.

Britain's parliamentary democracy facilitated this catalogue of mistakes which have proved so damaging to the country over recent years. But in this election it has also proved highly effective at beginning the work to rectification. If Starmer gets a moment to catch his breath, he might reflect upon this as the key reason he has been handed such a decisive majority.

### ***The Upcoming US Election***

***Here are some headlines from a whole week of the media's attention on the debate:***

**Joe Biden talks with senior Democrats as crisis deepens : Financial Times,**

-

**Trump Expands Lead Over Biden as Age Worries Grow : The Wall Stree Journal**

**Biden-step-aside-editorial-board-pundits-withdrawal-Axios**

**Democrats Roll Out a Post-Debate Playbook to Help Biden Recover NYTimes**

**Nothing to See Here? White House Portrays Biden's Debate Performance as a Blip NY Times**

**To Serve His Country, President Biden Should Leave the Race : NY Times**

***(As can be seen, the western media is flipflopping between dropping Biden and continuing to support his candidacy.)***

### **These Voters Supported Biden in 2020. Now They Want a Plan B.**

Dozens of voters in four swing states expressed fear, frustration and anger. And they want a new option — whatever (and whoever) that is.

**By Jack Healy, Mitch Smith, Eduardo Medina and Robert Chiarito**

Jacky Healy reported from Phoenix, Mitch Smith from Traverse City, Mich.; Eduardo Medina from Raleigh and Durham, N.C.; and Robert Chiarito from Wauwatosa, Wis.

July 5, 2024 Updated 3:12 p.m. ET

Jeanne Winograd, 72, a Democrat in Phoenix, is such a ride-or-die fan of President Biden that, on Valentine's Day, she mailed him a card to say his vigor, not his age,



would shape the presidential election. But after a week of panic attacks after his dismal debate performance, she felt compelled to send him another card.

This one said: Thanks for everything, but **it's time to go.**

"I just love Biden, but he's frail," Ms. Winograd said. "**Pass the baton.**"

As Mr. Biden and his allies have scrambled to fix the damage from the debate last week, and to insist he will not bow out of the race, dozens of Democratic voters have said they no longer believe he can accomplish the one thing they urgently want — a defeat of former President Donald J. Trump. They are desperate for the party to find a Plan B.

In 80 interviews at Independence Day parades, pie-eating contests and political events this holiday in the political battlegrounds of Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin and North Carolina, **more than half of voters who had supported Mr. Biden in 2020 now said he should drop out of the race.** About a quarter said he should stay in. The rest were unsure.

The turmoil engulfing the Democratic Party had left them sleep-deprived and divided about a path forward, with some saying it would be pragmatic to dump Mr. Biden and others arguing that he was Democrats' best — or only? — option in November.

Several voters said Vice President Kamala Harris was the smartest replacement for Mr. Biden. But others worried she could not match Mr. Trump (**in my humble opinion, no Democrat will be a match for Trump**) and mentioned that the Democratic governors of Michigan or Pennsylvania might be a smarter choice. What about one of the Castro brothers from Texas, one voter suggested? Another asked, What about Michelle Obama?

Every voter but one said they would still vote for Mr. Biden if he remained in the race. They said they viewed Mr. Trump as a greater threat to democracy, women's rights and the future of the world than Mr. Biden, who would be 86 at the end of second term. They also said that they believed that Mr. Trump, 78, was not mentally equipped to serve another four years.

"He should exit the race," Gerry Ford, a 72-year-old engineer from Wauwatosa, Wis., said of Mr. Biden. The sooner the better."

Some also worried about the risks of abruptly replacing a presidential candidate four months before an election, and the growing sense that the party did not know what to do.

**"We can't agree on a way ahead, we can't agree on what to do about the current situation,"** said Raja Seshadri, 46, who works at the National Institutes of Health in Raleigh, N.C. **"We're going to lose."**

The willingness of Democratic voters to publicly contemplate cutting Mr. Biden loose stands in sharp contrast to what they are hearing from their own leaders.

While three sitting congressional Democrats have called for Mr. Biden to step aside, a vast majority of Democratic elected officials rallied to support him this week, even as

a new poll by The New York Times and Siena College showed Mr. Trump opening a six-point lead over Mr. Biden among likely voters.

Some voters said they felt frustrated and betrayed by their party's efforts to short-circuit any discussion about whether Mr. Biden should step aside. They said Mr. Biden's meandering answers during the debate could not be explained away as a bad night, or the product of jet lag or a cold, and that they were not reassured by his appearances at events afterward.

"It is disgraceful they've allowed him to get here and all of us to be here," Elaine Becherer, a 48-year-old who works in university planning in Phoenix, said as she and other Biden voters in Arizona discussed his candidacy on a video call this week.

### ***2024 Election: Live Updates***

July 5, 2024, 10:39 p.m. ET 39 minutes ago

"Our 'Dear Leader,' " Cristina Ospina, a 56-year-old neurologist in Phoenix who studies movement disorders, chimed in sarcastically, referring to North Korea's adulatory description of its leader, Kim Jong Un.

Frustrated, some Democratic voters have begun airing their concerns in the open.

Some said they wrote letters to the White House and reached out to local elected officials. In Traverse City, Mich., Greg Holmes, 71, a retired psychologist and a loyal Democratic voter, showed up to a campaign appearance by the first lady, Jill Biden, holding a sign that said, "Step Aside Joe!"

"If Biden says and does what I call the right thing, or courageous thing, and passes the baton, I will be ecstatic and fired up for the next person," Mr. Holmes said. "Because I think Trump really represents a terrible, terrible threat to our democracy."

Mr. Holmes said he did not believe Mr. Biden was fit to serve as president, and that he did not believe the Democratic Party and the Biden campaign had been honest with voters. At this point, he said, the best course of action would be for Mr. Biden to release his delegates to the Democratic National Convention and let them settle on a new nominee.

In the heavily Democratic Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa, the Biden campaign's troubles were not far from many voters' minds as they watched bagpipers and high-school dance teams march in the city's annual Independence Day parade.

"He should exit the race," said Gerry Ford, a 72-year-old engineer (and not the 38th president of the United States). "The sooner the better. He doesn't meet the criteria for having the most important job in the world." (Or even of a Walmart greeter...)

Mr. Ford also said the White House and **the Biden campaign had not been transparent after the debate.**

“It fulfills all of our suspicions about politicians that they can’t be straight with voters,” he said. “It’s embarrassing for the country.”

Down the street, Sophia Artus and Emma Due, who are both 18, said they did not feel enthusiastic about either presidential candidate in the first votes of their lives. They had been so dispirited by the debate that they turned it off halfway through. They said they would likely vote for Mr. Biden, but only because he was not Mr. Trump.

“Kamala Harris would carry the torch, and she’s better than Trump,” Ms. Due said. “There’s a lot of new ideas that younger people express, but it’s not reflected in our candidates.”

Other Democrats have decided to swallow their concerns and stick with Mr. Biden.

Melissa Wicksel, 21, of Raleigh, N.C., said that defeating Mr. Trump was so imperative that Democrats needed to rally around Mr. Biden and highlight his policy achievements. She said her Democratic friends had also expressed their support for Mr. Biden.

“With the money they’ve raised, and the organizing power that the coordinated campaign is doing, our smoothest road toward a Democratic victory feels to me like it runs through a Biden campaign,” Ms. Purvis said.

She added that “it feels like the infighting is not forward momentum, and what we need is forward momentum.”

In Tempe, Ariz., Michael John, 35, said he had decided to cast his first vote this November after starting his own small business, Navajo Mike’s, making fry-bread mix and barbecue sauce. He realized how deeply politics was intertwined with his life, family and success. Mr. John, a Navajo citizen, said that Mr. Biden has been supporting Native-owned businesses like his with loan guarantees and help with marketing and business development. But he also said he thought Mr. Biden should ease out of the race to avoid a loss to Mr. Trump.

“It would be ideal to have someone more coherent and involved, and there,” he said, adding that President Biden should “go do something, cool, fun. You don’t need the weight of the world on you.”

### ***Varying Treatment of Biden and Trump Puts Their Parties in Stark Relief***

*Republicans and Democrats live in radically different universes, interpreting the same set of facts through radically different lenses.*

**By [Peter Baker](#)**

July 5, 2024, 5:03 a.m. ET

One of America's political parties has a presidential candidate who is really old and showing it. The other has a presidential candidate who is a convicted felon, adjudicated sexual abuser, business fraudster and self-described aspiring dictator for a day. And also really old.

One of the parties is up in arms about its nominee and trying to figure out how to replace him at the last minute. The other is not.

The spectacle of the week since the nationally televised debate between President Biden and former President Donald J. Trump has thrown into sharp relief two political parties that agreed to be led by flawed putative nominees whose vulnerabilities have become even more painfully apparent just months before the election.

But the distinction of recent weeks has been striking. After Mr. Trump was found guilty of 34 felonies by a Manhattan jury in May — a verdict that came after civil judgments against him for personal and professional misdeeds — there was no significant groundswell within the Republican Party to force him out of the race in favor of a less-tainted candidate. Even though many Republican officeholders and strategists privately loathe him, they fell in line and made clear they would stick with him no matter how many scandals piled up.

A post-debate poll by The New York Times and Siena College found that 74 percent of voters said Mr. Biden was too old for the job and that 42 percent said Mr. Trump was. Credit...Kenny Holston/The New York Times

Until last week, Democrats had also resigned themselves to a candidate many considered far from ideal. Mr. Biden and his allies had effectively squelched any internal dissent, forcing Democrats to stay quiet despite fears that his age would ultimately undercut his campaign. After last week's debate showcased concerns about his mental sharpness, however, the conspiracy of silence was broken. Suddenly, a wide swath of Democrats concluded that he was no longer viable and mounted an effort to pressure him to step aside for a younger candidate.

"While Biden had the worst debate performance in all of presidential history, Trump's was likely the second-worst," said Jeffrey A. Engel, director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University. "Yet we hear crickets from Republicans after their presumptive nominee was incoherent, rambling and utterly divorced from the truth. Oh, and also a convicted felon."

The disparity says something important about the two major parties 248 years into the American experiment. Mr. Trump has come to thoroughly dominate his party in a way that no president has done in modern times, crushing internal opposition, punishing dissenters and enforcing loyalty even among those who have publicly declared him to be a danger.

Rather than be defensive over his many political liabilities, Mr. Trump has gone on offense, forcing his fellow Republicans to go along with his version of reality in which every accusation against him, even those proven in court, are all part of a wide-

ranging conspiracy of persecution. He has turned shortcomings into power, at least among his own partisans.

“Republicans don’t see Trump’s convictions, his rhetoric nor his threats of retribution as moral or political infirmities,” said David Jolly, a former Republican congressman from Florida who has broken with his party over Mr. Trump. “Many see them as strengths. So we won’t see a parallel family conversation among Republicans that we are currently seeing among Democrats regarding President Biden’s age and questions of his fitness.”

(As the Americans fret over the decision of whether they should cancel Joe Biden as the nominee of the Democratic party, on the matter of whether he is too old, Joe’s strategists organized a MSNBC interview to try to make him look like he is not as bad as we all saw during the debate one week ago. This interview cut no ice with me... If you ask me, it was never about the issues. It is still about whether Joe has the mental acuity to be the man who can decide if he makes a mistake and blows up the planet. And looking at the fact that he was half asleep throughout the interview with George Stephanopoulos, an objective observer would say, Joe is too far gone to be president for another four years.

And he gave the excuse that he had jetlag during the debate. Jetlag? Presumably from the trip to Europe for the G7 meeting and the June 6 D day commemoration? After 14 days? That’s the definition of too old, Joe!!!

Therefore, there is no question that Joe has to go if we have the best interests of the Democrats at heart. But if we consider that Biden is a war monger who will probably be likely to destroy the world as we know it, because world crises do not always happen between office hours between 10 to 4 when he is alert. If we want Joe out, then we should all root for Donald Trump because the worst that Trump can be is that he is anti free trade, which he and the Chinese can work out between themselves in peaceful negotiations without resorting to arms. Trump has no track record of starting a war. Between the two, Biden is the greater evil and if he stays the Democratic nominee, Trump will win and we will be rid of the problem of Biden war mongering.

In this regard, the destruction of Macronism, the Tories, and Biden as the leaders of the free world will mean that the conflict in Ukraine will end soon enough, as the Kyiv government is on the final legs of its ability to survive the Russian onslaught. It is good riddance to the clowns there and hopefully, the failure to defeat Russia will make the war mongers in America think twice about taking on China. To compete on trade is fine but there is no need to militarise conflict just because the US wants to remain as global hegemon. Fxxk that.

*Yeong, Wai-Cheong, CFA  
Fintech Entrepreneur, Money Manager and Blogger  
Un-Influencer in a World full of Hubris*

*We no longer distribute the weekly commentary by email. It will be posted on our website. However, if you wish to receive it delivered to you, please let Wai Cheong know and he will send it to you by What'sApp. His What'sApp is 96873181.*