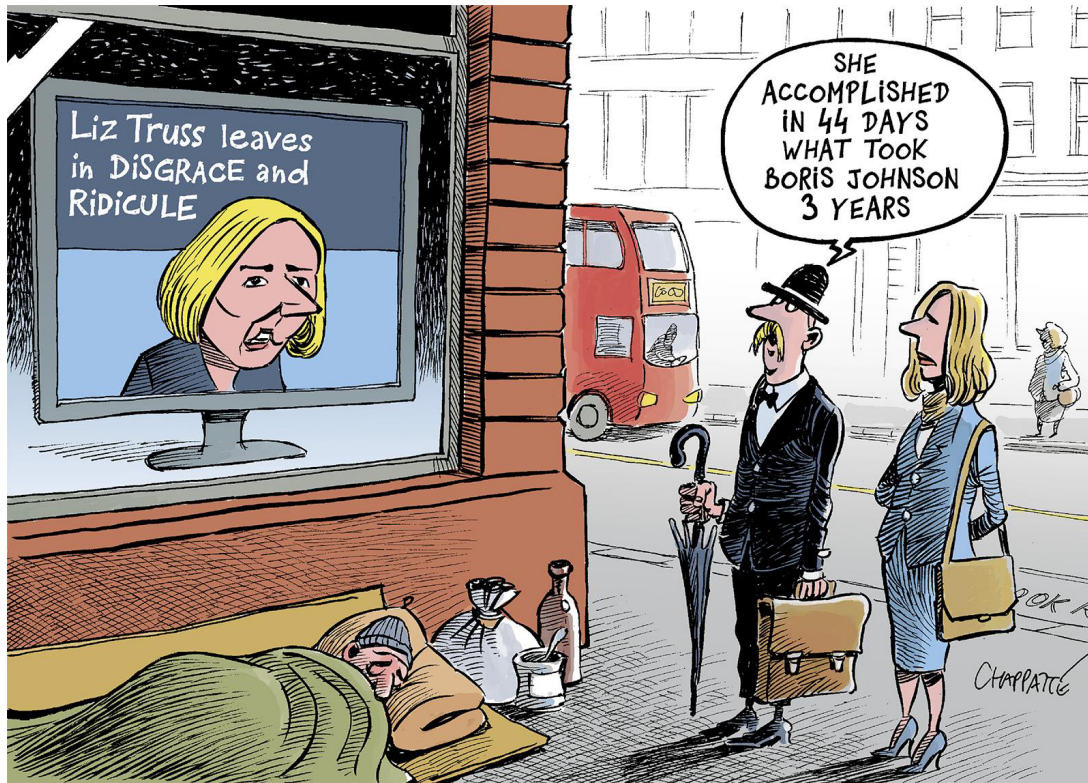


## Document 1

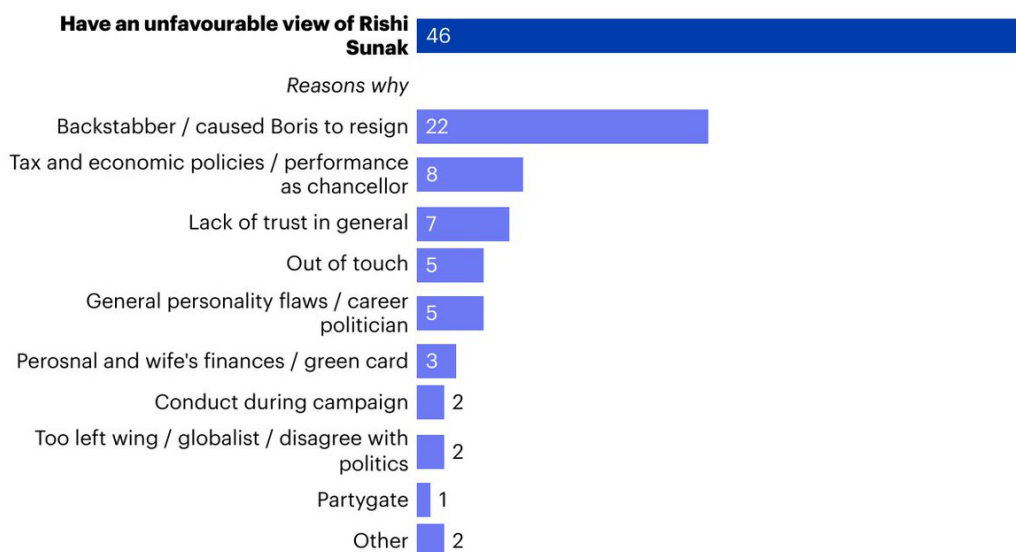


A British Debacle, October 21, 2022

## Document 2

### One in five Tory members hold a grudge against Rishi Sunak for helping to bring down Boris Johnson

You said you had an unfavourable opinion of Rishi Sunak, why is that? Results shown as a % of all Conservative party members. Respondents answered in their own words, which YouGov has sorted into the categories below



## **Document 3 – UK crisis: a beginner’s guide to the political turmoil as Liz Truss quits**

*The Guardian*, by Martin Belam, October 20, 2022

The UK is heading for its third prime minister in eight weeks. In the 45 days that Liz Truss has been in power, the country has been rocked by the death of Queen Elizabeth II and suffered an economic crisis exacerbated by the PM’s first moves, with a series of senior ministers appointed then sacked. If you have been watching UK politics only distantly, here is a catch-up on what has been happening.

Why did Liz Truss resign after only 45 days?

Truss became prime minister on 6 September after a summer campaigning to win the leadership of her Conservative party on a low-tax, high-growth policy platform. Within a couple of days of Truss taking office, the Queen died and politics paused for nearly two weeks of official mourning.

When it resumed, Truss’s then chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, announced a package of tax changes including abolishing the highest rate of income tax for the rich. Unusually for the UK, it did not come with a corresponding analysis from the independent Office for Budget Responsibility. That, along with the tax cuts being funded by a huge rise in borrowing, spooked the markets. The pound crashed, the UK’s cost of borrowing rose, and mortgage interest rates rose amid already soaring inflation. The Bank of England had to spend billions to stabilise the pensions market.

After days of Truss insisting her budget was the right course, she made a U-turn on business taxes, and Kwarteng flew back early from an International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington to find himself sacked on arrival. Truss called a press conference to explain her decisions and ... didn’t. The televised appearance lasted barely eight minutes, and she took only four questions before abruptly departing. She essentially said: I still agree with my policies, but I’ve sacked my finance minister because he announced them, and the market didn’t like them.

Truss then appointed Jeremy Hunt, who had previously endured heavy criticism for a stint as health secretary (with oversight of the NHS), as the new finance minister. On Monday he announced that almost every single aspect of Truss’s financial programme was to be ripped up, while she sat mutely in parliament beside him, leading people to call him the “de facto prime minister”, and say that she was “in office, but not in power”.

Before his announcement, the opposition Labour party had tabled a question for Truss to explain sacking Kwarteng. Bizarrely, she sent a deputy, Penny Mordaunt – a leadership rival and a possibility for the new PM – to answer on her behalf. Mordaunt said there were very good reasons why Truss could not be there to answer in person – only for Truss to then arrive, but let Mordaunt carry on speaking on her behalf. By now a national newspaper was running a live YouTube video stream asking what would last longer, Truss as PM, or a supermarket lettuce.

Truss tried to rectify this with a TV interview in which she admitted there had been mistakes, but she had fixed them. This was news to everybody facing the prospect of higher mortgages.

With her authority draining away, Truss put up a better than expected performance in the weekly prime minister's questions in parliament on Wednesday, but then in a bombshell development her home secretary, Suella Braverman, the equivalent of an interior minister, was sacked for sharing a secret government document on a private phone.

Braverman had run for leader against Truss, and had already been publicly criticising the government she was part of. On Tuesday she had launched a widely mocked rant against protesters as "tofu-eating wokerati". Her Wednesday letter of departure was explosive, admitting she made a mistake, but laying down a gauntlet to Truss to resign over her own mistakes.

Then on Wednesday night there was a vote in parliament with the opposition party trying to ban fracking. The Conservatives had themselves promised not to reintroduce fracking in their last election manifesto, but Truss had wanted to relax the restriction. So her MPs were effectively instructed to vote in favour of fracking, as a matter of confidence in the government, partially just to stop the opposition claiming a victory in parliamentary procedure. That led to ugly scenes in parliament as some witnesses claimed MPs were seen being bullied into voting. Party discipline had almost entirely collapsed, with MPs giving emotional and angry interviews on TV about the state the party was in and calling on Truss to quit.

We have not even touched upon the minister sacked over allegations of inappropriate behaviour at the party conference, an emerging lobbying scandal around Truss's chief of staff, Mark Fullbrook, who was also questioned as a witness as part of an FBI inquiry and had to U-turn on being paid as a private contractor, and the adviser suspended for briefing out to the media that one of Truss's rivals was "shit".

So now there will be a general election, right?

Not so fast. Their poll numbers are so bad that Conservatives know if they called an election now they would be facing a Canada-style Conservative wipeout. Instead they will just pick a new leader.

This process normally takes weeks but the party is trying to condense it into the space of a few days. Those running to be leader need to get the backing of at least 100 MPs, meaning there can be three candidates at most. Once that is whittled down to two, party members will get an online vote and a new PM should be in place by 28 October. If only one candidate reaches the 100 threshold they will automatically become the new leader and prime minister.

How did the Conservatives get to this point?

Although they have been in power since 2010, their government has been characterised by instability since the 2015 election. After winning it, the then prime minister, David Cameron, held a referendum on the UK leaving the EU in 2016, mostly to try to silence the Eurosceptic wing of his party. However, leave won, Cameron resigned, and the party turned to Theresa May as a boring but "strong and stable" pair of hands to steer the UK through Brexit. Her government ended up paralysed by party infighting about what type of Brexit to pursue, and she did not have enough of a majority in parliament to force through her vision. Her solution? Call a "back me or sack

me election” in 2017, which delivered her even less of a mandate, and she ultimately stepped down in favour of Boris Johnson.

Johnson got his Brexit deal over the line – even though the party has subsequently tried to disavow elements of it, such as how the trade border with Ireland works. Johnson was then beset by the Covid pandemic, and his well-known laissez-faire attitude to following rules led to a series of scandals, including being fined for breaking his own Covid rules, before eventually two senior ministers resigned in short succession and triggered the collapse of Johnson’s authority and the leadership contest that delivered ... Truss.

What is the mood in the country?

Bleak. Truss’s approval rating had already fallen lower than Johnson’s had been, there has been widespread industrial action over offers of below-inflation pay rises, and this week one of the country’s largest food bank charities, the Trussell Trust, launched its first ever national appeal as the prospect of a poverty-stricken winter looms. The BBC is even planning scripts in case of power blackouts.

There seems little prospect a new PM can unite the Conservative party, and seemingly no likelihood of an election being called soon. Truss’s seven weeks in power have left the country with higher mortgages and a weaker currency, and seemingly hostage to about 350 Conservative MPs who have burned through four prime ministers in seven years.

In the 2015 election, Cameron said Britain “faced a simple and inescapable choice – stability and strong government with me, or chaos with Ed Miliband”, the opposition leader at the time. Given developments since then, a lot of British people can be forgiven for wondering just how bad the chaos option could have been.

#### **Document 4 – The death of Queen Elizabeth II: A major political crisis for British imperialism**

*Wsws.org*, by Chris Marsden, September 9, 2022

Queen Elizabeth II has passed away aged 96, after seven decades on the throne as head of the United Kingdom. Her death occurs at a time of acute economic, social and political crisis for British imperialism, including the deepest collapse of living standards since the Great Depression, a NATO proxy war against Russia waged on mainland Europe, and a rising wave of class struggle that threatens to erupt into a general strike.

The ruling class now faces this perfect storm without its popular representative of state on which it has relied to project the myth of national unity and suppress social conflict.

In her role as head of state, the queen officially welcomed and held weekly discussions with an extraordinary total of 15 prime ministers. Her final act of service to the bourgeoisie, just two days before her death, was to appoint Liz Truss as prime minister, bestowing her authority on an illegitimate and despised government tasked with waging war on the working class.

The Telegraph acknowledged the importance of the Queen's role, writing, "the Crown can help secure smooth and peaceful handovers of political power... as we have seen only this week. The Queen's final public duty was to oversee a trouble-free transition of executive power that in other countries might have engendered a political and constitutional crisis. How many other nations can seamlessly change their head of state and leader of government in a week without tumult?... the country's stability has owed a great deal to the Queen's presence at its heart."

With her death, the crown falls onto the head of her son, Charles III. At 73, he is the oldest person to ever become king and has no popular support. His accession leaves little with which to conceal the deepening and irreconcilable social and political divisions that are the reality of life in Britain and throughout the world.

Amid the inevitable ritualistic fawning of the British media, the scale of the difficulties facing the ruling elite is acknowledged.

Martin Kettle wrote in the Guardian, "Do not underestimate the upheaval in British life that this dynastic moment will trigger. Elizabeth II spent 70 years as a low-key but extremely effective unifying force in a nation that is visibly pulling itself apart. Her passing will remove that force, which her heirs cannot assume they will be able to replicate. In its way, this succession will be one of the biggest tests to face modern Britain."

The Financial Times stated, "The kingdom the Queen leaves behind confronts much larger questions than her own institution. Britain has lost its own strength and stay just as it is groping to define its place in the world for the decades ahead. Many other institutions of state appear outdated or tarnished and the survival of the 315-year-old United Kingdom itself is not necessarily assured."

As monarch, Elizabeth played an essential role in preserving social and political stability, especially at times of heightened crisis for British imperialism. She was placed in line to the throne as a result of the abdication of her uncle, Edward VIII in 1936, whose Nazi sympathies and those of his lover Wallis Simpson threatened to discredit the monarchy and provoke social and political conflict.

Her coronation in 1953 took place amid the protracted decline of British imperialism, just three years before the Suez crisis. She helped manage Britain's eclipse by the United States and the retreat from empire as head of the Commonwealth—a civilised veneer behind which Britain was fully prepared to respond with utmost brutality when its vital global interests were threatened. From the savage repression of Kenya's Mau Mau Rebellion when she first took office, the bloody occupation of Northern Ireland, Margaret Thatcher's war for control of the Falklands/Malvinas and numerous criminal wars in the Middle East and North Africa, Britain's Armed Forces have shrouded their crimes in the Union Jack while playing "God Save the Queen".

As deference towards the monarchy faded, she led a political recasting that downplayed the Royal family's fabulous wealth while investing as much dignity as she could muster in the archaic pomp and ceremony employed to lend bourgeois rule an air of timeless permanence and legitimise a system of hereditary privilege. This role as

a symbol of national unity was never more important than at times of intensified class struggle.

However, from the 1980s on, the younger royals found it impossible to restrain themselves from public displays of wealth and privilege, as first Diana, then others were feted by the global super-rich and disgraced themselves in the process. In the last years before she died, the queen was forced to endure a bitter public rift with Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, as they sought greener pastures as international celebrities, and then the revelations of Prince Andrew's involvement in billionaire Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking operations.

Today, the earnest hope of the ruling class is that Charles' time on the throne is short so that the carefully groomed and prepared Prince William can have a chance to restore a much-reduced monarchy's public standing.

To facilitate this transition, events following the queen's death have been meticulously planned. Operation London Bridge covers 12 days of official mourning, including her state funeral. This will be used once again to buttress the state apparatus and bury the class struggle beneath a torrent of patriotism, nationalist nostalgia and mawkish sentimentality.

Calls for national unity at a time of shared grief are already being used as a weapon against a growing strike wave.

The key role in these plans is being played by the trade unions and the Labour Party. Within an hour of the official announcement of the queen's death, the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) had suspended Friday's postal strike and rail strikes planned for September 15 and 17. RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch fawned, "RMT joins the whole nation in paying its respects to Queen Elizabeth."

On Friday morning it was announced that the annual Trades Union Congress, scheduled to begin Sunday, has been postponed.

The trade union leaders will be joined in their own Operation London Bridge by the Labour Party leaders, whether nominally right or left.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer seized on the queen's death to proclaim Labour's commitment to national unity and class peace, writing, "Above the clashes of politics, she stood not for what the nation fought over, but what it agreed upon." He pledged on behalf of his rotten party: "So as our great Elizabethan era comes to an end, we will honour the late Queen's memory by keeping alive the values of public service she embodied."

Jeremy Corbyn maintained his own record of acting only in the "national interest", tweeting, "My thoughts are with the Queen's family as they come to terms with their personal loss, as well as those here and around the world who will mourn her death. I enjoyed discussing our families, gardens and jam-making with her. May she rest in peace."

Notwithstanding her personal characteristics, however, the ability of the late queen to act as a symbol of national unity depended on the broader ability of the bourgeoisie to prevent social tensions from reaching the point of explosion.

The “Second Elizabethan Age” first proclaimed by Winston Churchill spanned decades following World War II in which capitalism was able to provide rising living standards for the working class and the reformist nostrums of the Labour Party and the trade unions appeared able to at least partially satisfy the demands of workers for a living wage, education, housing, health care and other essentials.

The precipitous decline of the monarchy beginning in the 1990s is only one expression of how all the political instruments of bourgeois rule, above all the trade unions and the Labour Party, now confront workers as the defenders of a system that is plunging them ever deeper into unbearable hardship and threatening their very survival as the war against Russia rages out of control. Whatever the immediate impact of the queen’s death, a decisive conflict between the working class and British imperialism is developing inexorably.

### **Document 5 – UK voters warm to new leader Sunak, but not to his party**

*Apnews.com*, by Jill Lawless, November 25, 2022

Rishi Sunak has been Britain’s prime minister for a month. In the tumultuous world of U.K. politics in 2022, that’s an achievement.

Sunak, who took office a month ago Friday on Oct. 25, has steadied the nation after the brief term of predecessor Liz Truss. Britain’s first prime minister of color, Sunak has stabilized the economy, reassured allies from Washington to Kyiv and even soothed the European Union after years of sparring between Britain and the bloc.

But Sunak’s challenges are just beginning. He is facing a slowing economy, a cost-of-living crisis — and a governing Conservative Party that is fractious and increasingly unpopular after 12 years in power.

#### **PARTIAL POPULARITY**

Opinion polls have good news and bad news for Sunak. The public quite likes the 42-year-old former investment banker, but his party is another matter.

In a survey by pollster Ipsos, 47% of respondents said they liked the prime minister, while 41% disliked him.

“That’s definitely better than Boris Johnson was getting earlier this year,” said Gideon Skinner, Ipsos’ head of political research. But he said Sunak’s popularity “is not showing signs of rubbing off onto the Conservative Party brand.”

In the same survey the Conservative Party was liked by just 26%, and disliked by 62% — the worst figures for the party in 15 years. The Ipsos phone survey of 1,004 adults is considered accurate to within plus or minus four percentage points.

Many voters welcome Sunak as a change from Truss and her predecessor Johnson, who quit in July after three scandal-plagued years in office. But the party has been in power since 2010, making it hard for Conservatives to avoid blame for the country's financial woes.

Lingering allegations of misconduct also are tarnishing its image. On Wednesday Sunak appointed a senior lawyer to investigate allegations of bullying against his deputy prime minister, Dominic Raab.

It's not impossible for the Conservatives to rebuild their popularity before the next election, due by the end of 2024. But it won't be easy. Current polls suggest the Labour Party would win handily.

## AILING ECONOMY

At the height of the coronavirus pandemic Sunak, then Britain's treasury chief, gained popularity by spending billions to support shuttered businesses and pay the salaries of furloughed workers.

Now he has to deliver bitter medicine. Britain's economy is being weighed down by the pandemic, by Brexit and especially by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has driven global energy prices sky-high.

Millions of people in Britain have seen energy bills soar, though a government-imposed cap has prevented even higher prices. Pandemic-related backlogs and staff shortages have caused record waiting times for health care in Britain's National Health Service.

The situation was made worse by Truss' ill-advised September package of unfunded tax cuts, which torpedoed the U.K.'s reputation for economic prudence, weakened the pound, drove up the cost of borrowing and triggered emergency central bank intervention. Truss resigned last month after less than two months in the job.

"I fully appreciate how hard things are," Sunak said in his first address to the nation on Oct. 25, warning of "difficult decisions to come."

An emergency budget last week helped buoy the pound and calm markets — at the cost of 25 billion pounds (\$30 billion) in tax hikes and the prospect of public spending cuts down the road.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development forecast this week that the U.K. economy will shrink by 0.4% in 2023 and grow by just 0.2% in 2024, the worst outlook among Group of Seven industrialized countries.

## WAR IN EUROPE



Boris Johnson's departure caused concern in Kyiv, where his staunch support for Ukraine's resistance to Russian invasion won admiration and respect.

Britain has given Ukraine 2.3 billion pounds (\$2.8 billion) in military aid since the start of the war, more than any country except the United States, and has lobbied allies to do more to help Kyiv.

Sunak traveled to Kyiv last week to reassure President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Britain's policy would not change under his leadership. "I am proud of how the U.K. stood with you from the very beginning," Sunak told Zelenskyy. "And I am here today to say the United Kingdom will continue to stand with Ukraine."

London is keeping up its flow of support, announcing in the past week that it will deliver anti-aircraft guns, anti-drone technology and three Sea King helicopters to Ukraine.

But while support for Ukraine is secure, defense spending could face a squeeze. Sunak has dropped a commitment made by Truss to increase defense spending to 3% of gross domestic product by 2030.

## BREXIT HEADACHES

Britain's relations with its closest neighbors and biggest trading partners have been tense since it left the now 27-nation European Union in 2020. Johnson and Truss both seemed to delight in riling the bloc to placate the powerful euroskeptic wing of the Conservative Party.

Sunak has been more emollient, making warm calls to European leaders in the days after taking office. Achieving concrete change is more difficult, given the power that ardent Brexiteers hold within the Conservatives.

Britain's departure from the EU in 2020 brought customs checks and other barriers for businesses trading with the bloc, sparked a political crisis in Northern Ireland and ended the free flow of EU nationals into Britain to fill vacant jobs.

Britain could ease trade friction if it agreed to align with EU rules in some areas, such as veterinary or food standards. But after reports that the government was seeking closer ties riled euroskeptics, Sunak said this week that he would not accept "alignment with EU laws."

David Henig, a trade expert at the European Centre for International Political Economy, said that backlash "has revealed just how deep the Europe problem is for Rishi Sunak and for the Conservative Party."

He said Sunak is a long-time Brexit supporter, but also a pragmatist who "just wants a relationship that works — and it quite clearly doesn't at the moment."

"I think the problem is that he has no great fresh ideas as to how to make that work, and a lot of internal opposition," Henig said. \_\_\_\_