

# Politics was extraordinary in 2024

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2024 was a year when political certainties disappeared – and not just because of Trump. Politics, as we’ve known it for a long time, went into meltdown.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xc3hG\\_rZ-5Y?si=\\_V4UD\\_glHTbdVG8w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xc3hG_rZ-5Y?si=_V4UD_glHTbdVG8w)

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And this is the transcript:

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2024 was an extraordinary year in politics.

Just remember that a year ago, we were wondering whether Rishi Sunak would drag out the general election until January 2025. We might now be awaiting that election sometime in the next month. And that was his choice.

In retrospect, I suspect he very strongly regrets going in July because of the wipeout of his party that follows, but even more, I suspect that Labour regret that he went in July because look at what has happened to them since then - an absolute meltdown for a party that supposedly won a landslide victory, but on the shallowest base that you could have ever imagined.

The dire state of British politics was made clear during the year. The Tories literally, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist and have ended up with a leader who is unpopular already in her own ranks and is clearly failing to hit a target as weak as Keir Starmer.

Starmer himself has made an absolute mess of transitioning into government, as have almost all his ministers, who appear utterly clueless as to why they actually wanted to get power and certainly can't explain what they're going to do.

Wes Streeting was the poster boy of Starmer's government, we thought in advance.

Now we're seeing over this Christmas announcements from think tanks - Labour-leaning think tanks - who are saying that Wes Streeting's planned reforms for the NHS are so delayed that they're not going to have any chance of having an effect before the next general election. And I'm sure they're right. But that is just the clearest possible indication that for all his years in opposition, Streeting had no idea what he wanted from government.

And he's not alone, let's be clear. The Liberal Democrats ended up with 72 seats in Parliament at the election. And what have they done? Nothing, as far as I can see. There has been no noise, no effective opposition, no notice. My own MP is now a Liberal Democrat, and she sent me a Christmas card. But apart from that, did she do anything of great merit for my community? I genuinely don't know.

The Greens MPs have more MPs than they had before. But they don't have Caroline Lucas, and no other real star to replace her. And their policy-making process remains in disarray.

The SNP suffered a terrible general election but are now doing much better than they expected because Labour's popularity in Scotland has collapsed again, and popularity for independence is riding high.

The fact that the SNP and that popularity for independence now appear not to be associated with each other is in itself an interesting tale of what is happening in British politics.

And then there's Reform. Reform, the most reluctant parliamentarians that we've probably ever seen. They hardly want to turn up. Some of them clearly have no idea what to do. And Farage must occasionally pay respects to his constituency in Clacton but appears to be a lot more at home in Mar-a-Lago in Florida. This is a man who has clear visions of power but, again, has no idea what to do.

And this picture of British politics in disarray is replicated around the world.

We've seen the government in France collapse.

We've seen the government in Germany collapse.

We've seen the government in South Korea collapse into total disorder with the declaration of martial law by a president who's now been impeached, with his successor now having been impeached as well.

And then we reach the USA. I'll have a lot more to say about the USA in my look forward to 2025, but at the beginning of the year, did we really think that the Americans would be mad enough to vote Trump back in? In my heart of hearts, I didn't. But they did. They have. And we have to live with the consequences.

Everywhere, the message is the same. Neoliberalism is failing. It's failing so badly that there is opportunity for the far right to come in.

We have Trump, we have Farage, we have the AfD in Germany, we have Le Pen in France, and so on. All of these people, who are populists at the very least, or worse, are there to exploit mythical divisions within society to obtain power, but just as those centre-ground politicians don't know what they want, nor in reality do those on the far right because they might be trying to dismantle things, but they have nothing to put in its place.

So where are we at the end of all this? In a truly terrifying position, I would suggest.

This has been a year where neoliberalism's decay has become very obvious, and when the answers to known questions cannot be provided by any of the existing mainstream political parties when democracy is at risk.

And everywhere, the neoliberals are offering austerity as their answer to every known question, because throughout the developed world, in all the countries that have the power to do it, no politician is doing the one thing that is really necessary to transform the societies in which we live, which is to create the money that is necessary to deliver the programmes which would transform our well-being. Everywhere they run frightened from this single greatest power that they have. And as a consequence, politics is falling apart. We have politics without vision, and we have claims from the far right which have no substance to them.

This has been a dire year for politics. Of all the years that I have viewed politics over, and that is really since the 1970s, I don't think there's been any which has offered such little hope and so many causes for concern.

But I'm not despondent. I do think things will get worse, but in the wreckage of 2024, there has to be an opportunity.

There is the chance to rebuild. And in all of those things that I've mentioned, the one thing that to me is surprising and a sign of hope is that support for independence in Scotland. An idea which stretches beyond any one political party is capturing the

imagination of people even though the parties aren't.

In that one finding, and it's clutching at straws, maybe, I suggest to you there is the possibility that there may be hope because people can understand that there is a way forward if the right ideas are offered to them. Big ideas still have a chance. Our politicians have tiny, crushed ideas which are leading us nowhere.

What we have to do if we are to find hope out of the wreckage of 2024, is to find the big ideas.