

The British Debacle

By Alex Taft

Across the pond, there has been a recent crisis in the British government. It all started with the British prime minister, Boris Johnson. PM Boris Johnson, leader of the British Conservative Party, faced harsh criticism throughout his term. These criticisms range from hosting large and lavish parties in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic to hiring known sexual offenders into his cabinet. On the scandals, Professor of International Service at American University, Garret Martin, explains that Johnson's scandals "involved revelations around his government's repeated and brazen ignoring of its own COVID-19 lockdown rules", but that in the end, it was Johnson's "handling of a tawdry affair involving the promotion of a member of parliament accused of serious sexual wrongdoing that proved the final straw." Much of the British populace was unsurprisingly upset with the wrongdoings of their own prime minister that had come out. So upset in fact, that a vote of no confidence, essentially Britain's equivalent of an impeachment trial, was held to get rid of Boris Johnson for both his scandals and his general incompetence as a leader, with inflation and other issues only mounting under him due to his policies. The vote of no confidence failed to remove Johnson from the seat of prime minister, but even so, "over 40% of his own lawmakers voted against him" (Perrigo). He seemed to have secured his continued term as prime minister, but very shortly after his vote of no confidence, many of his lawmakers started resigning from the government; some due to scandals being pressed against them, and some due to not wanting to be associated with Boris Johnson and his cabinet. As a result, Boris Johnson took it upon himself to leave office prematurely on September 6th. He left office with one final speech to the British people, ending it with "Thank you all very much", before ultimately passing the title of British prime minister to the new leader of the British Conservative Party, Elizabeth Truss.



Elizabeth Truss assumed the office of prime minister, as well as the title of leader of the Conservative Party, right as Boris Johnson resigned on September 6th. Hopes were high for the new British prime minister, but those hopes were quickly drowned by a wave of disappointment, as Truss almost immediately passed policies that proved only to worsen the situation in the United Kingdom. London-based reporter Daniel Victor stating that "it was unwelcome news when her signature economic plans immediately made things worse." Victor goes on, elaborating that "Her announced plans for tax cuts, deregulation and borrowing so alarmed global investors that the value of the British



pound sank to a record low against the U.S. dollar.” This, along with a continued division within the British Conservative Party between those who supported Boris Johnson and more traditional Conservatives, left Britain only spiraling further and further into turmoil under Elizabeth Truss. A poll from Redfield and Wilton Strategies, a British political polling organization, showed that Truss managed to achieve a historically high 70% disapproval rating, with even 67% of Conservatives disapproving of her administration despite her being the leader of the Conservative Party.

Basically, no one really liked Truss because she came into office at a time when problems in Britain were mounting, then proceeded to immediately make everything worse. It didn't help that members of the Conservative Party were continuing to resign due to more scandals and some party members resigning in protest against Truss, only fanning the flames. The situation came to a head during a British Parliament vote on fracking, which turned into “a reported scene of bullying, shouting, physical manhandling and tears” (Victor). A regular vote on an issue in the Parliament had devolved into absolute chaos. In an interview with the *BBC*, Christopher Bryant, a representative in Britain's House of Commons, had this to say on the event: "I saw a whole swathe of MPs effectively pushing one member straight through the door. I've seen photographic evidence of one MP's hand on another. I have never seen scenes like that. All of this is happening because there is complete chaos in government." Bryant added that some members of the Conservative Party were "literally crying on my shoulder". This pure debauchery in the British Parliament was clearly not a good look for the already failing term of Elizabeth Truss, who was now being grilled by members of the Parliament and her own party. Truss publicly stated “I'm a fighter and not a quitter”, but these words aged like milk, as only six weeks into her term as prime minister, she quit.

Truss officially left office on October 20th, further adding to the chaotic situation in the government. Adding insult to injury, Queen Elizabeth II had passed away only two days after Truss assumed office; quite the foreshadowing for Truss's tumultuous six week term. In her place, a new leader, who is the first Indian to ever hold the position of prime minister in British history, arose to the position of prime minister and Conservative Party leader: Rishi Sunak. However, unlike Elizabeth Truss, Sunak has so far proven to do a good job in fighting Britain's most pressing issues. Within mere hours of Truss leaving office and Sunak reversing her policies, the British pound immediately rose in



value, rebounding to a value of \$1.13 USD (Wearden). Hopes are high for the new prime minister, who so far seems to be more transparent than Boris Johnson and more fiscally responsible than Elizabeth Truss. One can only hope that this grand British debacle is coming to a royal close.