

[Transcript] The News Agents / The UK politics of Israel-Palestine

Do you believe that Hamas must be eliminated entirely?

Yes, I do. But there needs to be a Palestinian authority. There needs to be a path to a Palestinian state.

That was Joe Biden speaking last night to Scott Pelly on 60 Minutes in the US. And we are moving at warp speed at the moment.

Just over a week ago, when this terrible atrocity had happened in southern Israel, America insisted it stood four square behind Israel with whatever it had to do. Conditionality is creeping in because America and other countries in the West are fearful now that Israel waging war without consequence could destabilize a region that is already a tinder box. Welcome to the Newsagents.

The Newsagents

It's John. It's Lewis. Emily's away this week. There is so much to consider and try to unpack over what is unfolding in the Middle East at the moment and the threats to wider security. And we're going to be looking at protests that took place in London and what they say about the left and why Hamas may be getting more support than maybe it deserves given its behavior and given its attitudes. We're also going to be looking at the elections in Poland where it seems that the far right party has lost an election which will be cheered in Brussels.

Let's get on to grimmer reality of the modern day Middle East because it is pretty terrifying what is unfolding, what might still unfold, who else might get involved. And there are a number of strands as we sit here kind of lunchtime on Monday talking about it where there is a kind of huge, will it open, will it not open on the Rafa crossing that separates the Gaza Strip from Egypt where aid may go in and Palestinians or other nationals who've got found themselves caught in Gaza may be able to escape. And yet the two biggest players in this, the Israelis and Hamas saying there's no deal.

No, and that's despite the fact that Anthony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, has been at various points over the weekend saying that there is a deal. In the meantime Hamas, who as you say John has said there's no deal, have been telling Gaza civilians in that bit of northern Gaza that the Israelis are bluffing, that this is fake news, that they don't need to leave. So you end up in a situation where there are people there who shouldn't be. Of course there is also a question about where they can possibly go. You've got that on the going on in Gaza, you've also what's going on in Lebanon and Hezbollah and continued skirmishes across the border between Israel's northern border and Lebanon. You've had about 20 villages also being evacuated about two kilometres from the border with Lebanon because there is fear that at some point over the next week or the next few days that this conflict extends and you start to see another front open up. And all of the time as well there's sort of steady drumbeat of war and soldiers who are being amassed on the border of Gaza for this ground invasion that everyone assumes is imminent is coming but we can't know exactly when it's going to be. And all of that time you have got the most intense diplomatic activity and you know we saw the Jordanian king in London yesterday meeting with Shisunak, we've got Anthony Blinken, America's top diplomat touring the Middle East trying to shore up opinion. We've also got those interlocutors speaking regularly to the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and whilst you can sort of see America standing by the side of Netanyahu and saying we've got your back you must do what you've got

to do they're really saying be bloody careful. Be bloody careful about what you do that you don't inflame things further that this doesn't spin out of control and you know we talked about Hezbollah in the north very well organised with a lot of weaponry. We've talked about Hamas and we saw the grotesque things that happened in Israel last Saturday. Remember there's Iran as well and if Iran decides it is getting involved we are in a whole different ballgame of ghastliness and horror and danger for the geopolitics of the world.

Yeah and I think actually one of the really interesting and telling things and perhaps it was inevitable but telling things that have happened over the course of the weekend is the kind of subtle change in messaging coming out of the White House but also the British government as well and other Western forces whereas in the immediate aftermath of the heinous attacks in southern Israel from Hamas the line was almost unequivocal from the Biden administration which came out full square behind Netanyahu and the Israeli government between the Labour Party and the Conservative parties in Britain and elsewhere which was Israel's got a right to defend itself, pausing attacks almost full stop. What you've seen over the course of the weekend and we saw it from both James Cleverly the foreign secretary and his shadow, David Lammy is a but or if not quite a but then a qualification which is this line which is to say of course Israel has a right to defend itself but of course we would always expect that Israel because it's a democratic state will always uphold the highest standards of international law and so on and it's notable as well that Biden tweeting again and again and again we must remember that Hamas does not represent all or anything close to the whole Palestinian people and I think that is good leadership on the part of Joe Biden that you can separate and disentangle these things because I think that people are seeing this in black and white terms which it is not you can support the Palestinian right to live in security to have economic prosperity to have their own state without having to support Hamas. Hamas is not the unique receptacle of Palestinian opinion it has been incredibly divisive they have fought Fatah the secular old PLO bit to get them out of no election for 15 years exactly so the idea that Hamas are the legitimate sole representatives of the Palestinian people is ridiculous and furthermore it is perfectly legitimate to say that you support the right of Israel to exist within secure boundaries and saying that Netanyahu has been a disaster which in my humble opinion you know Mr. Security hasn't brought that much security and I kind of think that Netanyahu's position he is hanging on by a thread and when this is over and please god it's over quickly without too many casualties I can't believe he's got any political future. This is one of the things that's fascinated me most sort of reading over the weekend about the you know domestic political situation in Israel and obviously in a sense domestic politics in Israel has now been put on hold has been put on pause because there's a unity government even some

of although not all of Netanyahu's enemies have come into the government because this is a rally around the flag moment Israel's a potential state of extreme peril and there's lots of precedent for that but obviously all of these questions still remain about as you say John you know Mr. Security if there's one thing that the rest of the world and certainly Israel thinks of when they think of Netanyahu it is this guy who has been at the most hawkish of hawkish ends of how Israel should deal with its enemies foreign domestic and Israel's internal security and one of the things that is most interesting I think is the connection that is being made within Israel to this catastrophe and Netanyahu's wider political reforms and the state of wider Israeli politics

so there are people within Israel saying this is a government which has been obsessed with reforms to save the judiciary which has been extremely divisive within Israel which people basically say would mean part of the end of Israeli democracy if it were to happen these huge protests that we've seen it again and again resistance from all parts of Israeli society they say that the Israeli state has been weakened by these changes by this distraction and the state and the politicians including Netanyahu has been distracted and so completely taken their eye off the ball this rising threat so for all those reasons and as you say John it feels as if his political future when this is all done is going to be extremely limited we have got a hell of a long way to go in a moment we're going to be speaking to Tom Fletcher he was our ambassador to Lebanon from 2011 to 2015 worked at number 10 Downing Street advising successive prime ministers on Middle East policy

Tom Fletcher have you seen a moment potentially as dangerous and uncertain as the one we're in right now? Yes I have I've been an often at these moments of tension between Israel and its neighbors there is that sense that things can escalate that they can get out of hand and so I think in in 2006 when I was dealing with the Israel Lebanon crisis or 2008 in number 10 dealing with another round of Israel Gaza crisis they both had that potential to escalate the problem is that even if the various parties don't want things to turn into a regional conflagration there are plenty of others who do and that's what we have to be very aware of right now. When you say regional partners who want this are you talking about Iran? Yes basically I mean I

think in a way for those who want to be a wise friend to Israel and the UK government is one of those the thing I would say is if in doubt about what to do next take a deep breath and try not to do what Iran wants you to do and in this case Iran wants escalation it wants to undermine this process of normalization between Israel and the Arab world and the danger is that if Israel drives forward a bit like America after 9-11 driven by that desire for revenge the understandable horror of what's gone on and what Hamas have done that they may end up getting into a worse situation.

Is there though Tom a path where that could be reflected in the sense that it feels at the moment as if a chain of events has been put into motion that almost feels unstoppable that everybody kind of knows that the invasion of Gaza will probably prompt a response that could escalate things more widely but that Israel almost feels that it has no choice is there another set of options that say the British government could be advocating for or might be advocating for? I think there are and so if I was in number 10 now I'd be saying look let's start with empathy and solidarity for the innocent victims of this you know they didn't choose to horror if there's a gun pointing at a child then let's try and look to help the child then you try to have a kind of hard-headed analysis of the implications and what they mean for your interests and values as the UK which for me means do no harm try to ensure that international law is respected try to minimize loss of civilian life try not to acquiesce in this sort of Trump-Putin sort of strongman world where international humanitarian law doesn't matter it's it's troubling in a way to see some of the politicians equivocating on that and then to your point Lewis you get stuck into quiet back channel international diplomacy that tries to actually see around the next corner and not fall into some of these traps and for me that means how do we get the the Rafa crossing open properly how do we get humanitarian aid into Gaza how do we use those back channels between Qatar Turkey Israel and others

and how do we get all the parties to think about where does this actually end
we all want to see a moment where we remove this Hamas threat get the hostages out without
making

civilians pay the price for that you know what's a credible government that could emerge in Gaza
when the dust actually settles what I think is missing in a lot of this is where are the calls
to the Palestinian leadership we should be rebuilding them as an alternative to Hamas
and just on the situation in Lebanon is Hezbollah under anyone's control I mean yes they were
originally funded by Iran but the Lebanese government presumably is powerless to stop Hezbollah
doing what it wants to do yes the Lebanese government can't do much to restrain Hezbollah
and Hezbollah actually have quite a lot of margin of maneuver even even with Iran look I don't
believe

that at this stage either Israel or Hezbollah want an escalation across that northern Israel border
they both know the dangers of that certainly you wouldn't find anyone in Lebanon who really wants
that escalation they would they know the danger of going down that track the US carrier groups two
US carrier groups that's quite a deterrent to have just off the coast there but there's always the
risk of miscalculation between Israel and Hezbollah there's a there's quite a good level of
conversation

level of dialogue between them to try to avoid unwanted escalation but the risk is always there
on Lebanon presumably as well you've got an economic crisis in the country as well which
again will only it will only make matters worse if hostilities flare between Israel and Lebanon
absolutely I mean the Lebanese are an incredibly resilient nation incredibly resilient society
but they've had this series of terrible shocks and the the currency crisis you know the great
explosion a few years ago but also this state failure really over a period of years since the
civil war you know we managed to end the civil war but we froze in place a system that doesn't
really deliver security justice opportunity for the people of that country so it's already a
tinderbox remember that Lebanon you know one third of people in Lebanon are already refugees
from Palestine and and from Syria but the rest of us we do not need an escalation across that
Lebanese border we have to try as we tried too hard during my time to keep Lebanon out of the
Syria civil war we now have to try to keep Lebanon out of this conflict between Israel and Hamas
and just one other thing you've said which really fascinated me which was the the sort of the back
channels with Turkey with Qatar maybe others I don't know just describe to us how that sort of
operates and whether these back channels have any power leverage over Hamas in Gaza or
the Israelis and what they might do so they can be very important particularly in those
moments of unwanted potential tension so if if rockets are fired across the Israel-Lebanon border
sometimes it might be from different militant groups and Hezbollah and Israel move quickly to
identify who exactly fired them the UN play an important role there the UNIFIL troops on the
border who are there to try and maintain the peace the Lebanese army actually and we spend a lot
of

time since my period in Lebanon building up the capacity of the Lebanese army to respond and to
try to broker off-ramps you know diplomacy is all about giving people ladders to climb down
and to climb away from this situation and especially at a moment when emotions are so raw
when people are so angry there has to be space in the conversation for those off-ramps for those
ladders to climb down and that really is what the Brits and others should be doing at the moment I
know it's what the Americans are doing Tony Blinken is doing on the ground right now I know it's

what

the French are doing in Lebanon too and I think we should be in the mix trying to be that that honest broker. Tom do you think that we need to be better at in terms of our public discourse in the West and political forces in the West differentiating between Hamas and Palestine and Palestinians? Absolutely absolutely I mean the majority of Palestinians do not want this conflict and they do not want to be led by Hamas I think what we should be saying unequivocally is that we condemn Hamas terrorism we condemn violence against innocent Palestinian civilians as well we condemn the language of dehumanization that's coming from all directions in the moment and that we stand unequivocally for humanitarian law the right of Israel and Palestinians to exist and for the people of the region to have equal rights to have security justice opportunity we stand unequivocally for humanitarian support and solidarity to the victims of violence and that we want restraint de-escalation a two-state solution and we can do all that while showing solidarity with those Palestinians under the bombs with those Israelis who've been so grievously wounded by that Hamas attack and we can do it all by neutralizing Hamas you know if I was involved now in a conversation with the Israeli leadership I'd be saying how can we support you to go after hard that list of Hamas individuals who are behind these attacks how can we make it possible to hunt them down to bring them to account but to do that without harming civilians that way

you keep the world on side you keep the international community willing to acquiesce in that sort of action but the action that harms civilians only ends up being counterproductive really fascinating to hear you thank you so much thanks brilliant thank you thank you with pleasure I thought that was so interesting talking to Tom Fletcher and you can see why a number of prime ministers wanted his counsel it's an ugly word but it's an accurate word when he was talking about the dehumanization on both sides and it was one of the things that struck me alarmed me worried me this weekend when you had the protests in support of Palestinian rights in London and other cities and absolutely right to be concerned about what is happening to Gazans what is happening in that strip with two million people living the demands for Palestinian statehood all entirely legitimate but sort of eliding into support for Hamas from some people who are murderous thugs and behaved uprociously and are misogynistic and homophobic and all the rest of it yeah you know we should say most of the people I'm sure who were those protests would not subscribe to that and you know they want to express their support or and concern about what might happen in Gaza and what is happening there which is completely legitimate I mean my reflection coming to the end of the weekend and again I think that dehumanization word is really interesting and important my reflection was I can totally understand how it could be that if you were on either side of this if you were say a British Jew or you were a British Palestinian that you could come to the conclusion that the lives in this conflict don't matter so if you're a British Jew I can totally understand how you could find it deeply distasteful that after everything that happened last week that it would be now that so many could take to the streets in a way that you could perhaps not imagine in sort of similar circumstances for other conflicts or after what you would see is a sort of terrorist event where so many people you probably knew or know someone who knows had lost their lives and it's just this idea that you worry that there is an element of anti-Semitism behind all of this and the Israelis always judge the different standards and so on and I can totally understand that I can also understand that if you were say British Palestinian you might think from the initial political reaction that no one cared

about your relatives lives that no one was talking about in those initial days about restraint and indeed we heard sometimes some people talk as if there was a sort of almost unqualified right of retaliation this is what I think is one of the most problematic things about this debate overall which is it can so often descend into what feels like a zero-sum game where nuance goes to die and it is in terms of covering it but also just observing it it can end up being pretty dispiriting yeah and that you end up with people picking up the cudgels on social media you are either pro-Israel or you're pro-Palestine and mask has made this worse and Twitter yeah social media has made it infinitely worse where there is no room for any shades of gray you can only paint in the blackest of black or the whitest of white and there is nothing in between and of course this is an intractable problem that has huge historical roots that's based on a series of misunderstandings is based on a series of suspicions which get worse and worse and worse and that good people who want to make progress on both sides and they are

there are being drowned out in the cacophonous noise that you're getting from the extremes on both sides and I think that people who call for just flattening Gaza there are some on the militant kind of riot in Israel are wrong and need to be called out as wrong and the people who say the problem is we need to kill the Jews they are also wrong there is a way of having a discourse a civil discourse even at a time like this and I thought Tom Fletcher spoke beautifully to it of the need to de-escalate this even though it is a time of enormous tension but I think it's precisely because that this is an issue which as we were saying earlier it all comes back to this this is an issue which people feel so viscerally often about sometimes because they've got direct connections sometimes when they don't that it can lead you to unfortunate places that on the left and the right being as extreme as you can or being as emphatic as you can about this issue is almost becomes sort of almost part of your political virility it becomes the way that you express your politics most forcefully whether you're on the left and right in the left that leads you to an odd place which means that sometimes you can get some voices by no means all and often at an extreme but some voices that would appear to make excuses for and sympathise with a force like

Hamas that no one on the left or indeed no one in decent politics ever ought to sympathise with because this is a political force Hamas which is deeply aggressive homophobic misogynist and has all sorts of manifestations which no one in the liberal west would ever seek to or should ever seek to have any truck with and that has all sorts of reasons which I think are connected with the way in which the left has come to see Israel very often basically through a sort of colonial prism that this is a kind of colonial problem and that they are have an anti-imperial kind of element to their politics and that's how they see Israel on the right meanwhile there is a certain force which has come to see attachment to Israel and defensive Israel are so central to their politics is almost a kind of a way of seeing Israel as the liberal force democratic force within the middle east and to attach yourself to it and to support it is again sort of part of your political identity and to be as hawkish as possible on it is a sign of kind of right thinking and good thinking and the truth is is that both of these approaches are absolute high roads to nowhere and that the only way within British politics and any politics that we're going to get anywhere on this is to leave those sorts of approaches to one side and actually focus on what matters which is the lives of innocent Palestinians and Israelis in connection to whom they have much in common yeah I mean if

that description that Lewis has just given of the sort of support from the right of Israel right or wrong I mean it doesn't sound familiar I mean go to America and go to a certain republican conferences on the right and the Christian right and one of the things that always struck me when I was reporting from there was that the love of Israel was immense I mean total huge can do no wrong it's so ideological yeah so ideological your side can do no wrong but I always thought God forbid they ever met a Jew because they probably wouldn't like the Jews but they quite like Israel and it was kind of one of those weird things of America that is still very much there and of course is a potent force still when America is deciding what its foreign policy should be yeah it is ideological in that sense that it's like a lens through which your side can do no wrong and anyone who questions it instantly has to be seen through the lens of someone whose character is at fault but just on the Hamas thing just to say something I think we don't give enough attention to in terms I and again it's a question for the kind of left more generally look at some of the friends of Hamas as well and some of the forces that have been in support or at least not condemning them over the course of the last week Iran Russia China and everything is often through that kind of anti-imperial anti-western lens and and that should give people pause for thought we're going to be talking about division again although it kind of seems small beer in comparison but actually for Europe the elections that have just taken place in Poland are really important and significant and we'll be discussing that next

this is the news agents

well understandably the international community world's focus has been on what's been going on in Israel and Gaza but there have been loads of elections over the weekend which has certainly been keeping me busy New Zealand we have the Australia vote as well referendum but the really important one was in Poland because this is an election that was billed as not just the usual thing as sort of change of government change of party but many polls felt that democracy itself was on the line you had the ruling Polish law and justice party which in all sorts of different ways it's kind of populist force ultra conservative force has not only been changing life in Poland but as far as the EU is concerned that many polls are concerned have been making democracy in Poland itself weaker and that there has been democratic backsliding and even the election itself was accused of being free but not fair despite that voting on Sunday an exit poll suggests that the law and justice party although it's come first will not form a government that the opposition will win which is huge news for Poland but also potentially for the EU and Ukraine as well which we'll discuss joining us to talk about it is Jakub Krupa who's a Polish journalist for Emlex Jakub long night for you it is a massive night and a massive result absolutely thank you for having me it was a massive night and I think fairly unexpected the size of the victory for the opposition victory in the literal sense but the fact that they will be able to form a government with a quite substantial majority for Polish reality I think that is surprising obviously seeing that when we when we first got notifications from the PIS press office saying you know what we're not really organizing like a proper big electoral night which is going to give you a statement that was like first signs that something big is happening and just give people a sense who who aren't familiar with the PIS or injustice party Prime Minister Morawiecki why is it that so many polls but also the EU as well find them so objectionable what have they done in their eight years in Poland so over the last eight years they've substantially tried to rebuild the Polish democracy so essentially they said we it's governed by the order and it's we don't like the way the institutions of the country are formed we need to change it it's all

rigged for the liberal elite kind of a language that you can probably see familiar in other places as well it was original in that sense sort of pre it was very much we're very much before Brexit and before Trump and that they obviously chaired both Brexit and Trump in that sense in the first years in the government and they obviously changed it to the way the courts operate the critics the European Union say they rigged the courts they essentially the courts are no longer impartial the judges are quite often appointed in that kind of illegal way assault on the media freedoms as well to state media essentially turned into a bizarre propaganda machine supporting the government to the point that the I think the last news bulletin before the election was one and a half hour long which was like mixed kind of clips between how great the government is and how horrible Tusk was when he was last prime minister and please do remember about it and Donald Tusk who people probably remember from the brexit negotiations he was the EU council president at that time previously leader of Poland and he is leading opposition force and will likely be prime minister now that's right so in that sense for him to come back from Europe and kind of working on brexit he by way keeps mentioning this he keeps saying I've seen firsthand how brexit unfolded how the campaign unfolded we don't want to be nice example yeah you're certainly being mentioned there saying I mean you drew the comparison without quite saying it with Trump I mean obviously 2020 Trump loses an election and says he won it are we going to see something similar or is there any kind of has there been any laying of the ground to suggest that in any way the election is illegitimate a bit yes so yeah let's talk to Tusk who's the the fact leader of the law and justice party he kind of conceded he said it's likely that we will not form the next government we'll do whatever we can to stop others from betraying Poland again a kind of very loaded

language there but he kind of accepted the fact that this happened but during the day and a lot of kind of people as received with the party were kind of undermining the way the voting unfolded during the day the reason for that is the government kind of built in kind of not only general election but also a referendum on four extremely loaded questions about migration retirement age again questions phrase in the way essentially do you agree with the government or do you think that your life should get worse so I think there will be some questions about it and we have obviously the courts need to approve the effect of the election again I think something you don't have in the UK and the courts as we know the allegation is they have been changed by the government to be supportive but but the irony is of course isn't it unlike 2020 which was a fair election the whole point is with this is that it was actually being rigged in the government's favor absolutely and yet despite that with record turnout highest turnout over 70% I think since the Fourth Communism in 1989 despite that fact the government has been removed I mean how important

do you think this is Jacob for you know to call it grandly kind of liberal democracy in Europe and also in terms of its importance within the wider EU context as well I think it's massive I mean obviously it sends a clear signal in terms of if you can defeat populists you can go in the end of that ever direction and you're right the extraordinary mobilization of 73% of polls particularly young people particularly young people going to the polls and kind of deciding that yes we want to get rid of this government is something absolutely phenomenal now what's going to happen next I think the interesting questions there are how do you get back from illiberalism particularly with a coalition that is built with free parties of kind of very diverse profile how do they govern together how do they agree on things and also how do you change

reforms that were introduced by breaking the law without breaking the law I mean the sort of essay question is what will the reaction be in Brussels, Kiev and Moscow I would imagine in Brussels that's a very simple answer it's champagne corks, relief, joy that law and justice party has been beaten but what does it mean in terms of Ukraine where Poland has been very close and what will Russia be thinking the signal that this government will send is we want to have good relations with Ukraine we want to build on that kind of positive link that we developed at the start of the war accepting over two million refugees from Ukraine we want to develop this strategic partnership between the two of us. Fannyakov I mean within the EU context it really really matters for the future right in the sense that if this has gone the other way the question it would basically have posed to the EU would be how do you deal with a state that is a massive you know Poland's one of the big big EU states absolutely central to the to the projects how do you deal with one that is either rapidly backsliding towards not being a democracy or is arguably not a democracy anymore and now they don't have to deal at least for now with that question which means that Franco-German-Polish cooperation can be a driver for the EU absolutely and obviously one of the big themes of the last few years I mean the cooperation between Poland and Hungary as well there was a giving each other cover in all sorts of votes in the European Union Hungary is now more isolated under Orban now yeah but they got Slovakian government now to help them out so there's a problem there again but definitely Poland will now be coming back to the kind of main thought of the European Union the kind of mainstream trying to direct things and I think particularly in the context of Ukraine that will be a very loud voice they're trying to help them out again I think one of the questions that I'm asking myself is how do they balance the international politics and the domestic politics there's an expectation of sorting out the state media the state companies the lack of level playing field in politics that we talked earlier the courts women's rights there's a lot very long to do list on the desk of whoever becomes the prime minister probably Donald Tusk and international politics will be there but they will need to strike a balance in terms of how to do that. Jakob thank you so much for coming in to talk to us thank you. Thank you. This is The News Agents.

Before we go having dealt with the crisis in the Middle East the elections in Poland we're going to talk about the behavior of one conservative MP Peter Bone the MP for Wellingborough who has just been investigated over alleged behavior and he is facing a long suspension from the House of Commons.

Yeah so this is long-standing conservative MP Peter Bone he's now facing suspension from the House of Commons after a ruling by the independent expert panel which sometimes assists the House

of Commons authorities when investigating an MP this panel has found that he has quotes committed

many varied acts of bullying and one act of sexual misconduct all of these allegations Mr Bone denies but they are really serious I mean allegations against Bone include quotes an unwanted incident of sexual misconduct when the complainant was trapped in a room with a respondent in a hotel room in Madrid not knowing what was going to happen next a deliberate it was a deliberate abuse of power and indecent exposure there are other things as well Bone verbally belittling ridiculing abusing and humiliating a complainant Mr Bone repeatedly physically struck and threw things at the complainant and there are others as well and if the House of Commons Standards Committee agree with these findings then he could face a six-week suspension as per the

recommendation and then he could face a recall petition loses his seat and we'll be looking at yet another by-election in this case in Northamptonshire Sea of Wellingborough.

Is it me I cannot remember another parliament where there have been so many MPs that have fallen foul

of the rules of the House and the rules of decent conduct is it that MPs have got worse or is their conduct held to a higher standard now? I think that it's the latter actually I don't I suspect probably if we had the same standards that we have now and crucially the same mechanisms to investigate and uphold those standards and that's been one of the big changes then I think in Parliament's gone by we would have seen more by-elections I mean you know never forget it has happened in Parliament's gone by and typically what would used to happen is they would just lose the whip and they'd have to sit as an independent for the remainder of the parliament

a very quietly important constitutional change we had was under Cameron this was in response to the

expenses crisis when lots of MPs had done wrong sometimes criminal proceedings were launched against them but there were still MPs because there was no mechanism at that time for removing an MP until the election happened there was a big outcry about that led by Zach Goldsmith actually when he was a member of Parliament and they introduced this bit of legislation a recall petition which meant that under very specific circumstances usually connected to an MP's exclusively connected to an MP's conduct they could face a recall petition and lose their seat it is being quietly transformational because you say John we're now seeing time after time this having effect to the point of even removing Boris Johnson and in Sunak's case it doesn't probably matter because his you know majority is big enough to withstand this stuff you could imagine in a future parliament oh hello Kerstama small majority in a future parliament that actually you could imagine a government having its majority whittled away as a result of this stuff in the future assuming that MPs continue to misbehave and you've got this piece of legislation which could remove MPs one by one over the course of a parliament I mean we looked at you know you look at the John Major government where he had a very tiny majority that whittled away to next to nothing

and depended on DUP votes if some of the people who'd been caught up in cash for questions and all that had been forced out Major wouldn't have had to wait until 1997 for a general election we'll be back tomorrow we'll see you then bye bye bye bye the news agents with Emily Maitlis, John Soaple and Lewis Goodall

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