

AMERICA 250

CIVIBUS



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BY SAMUEL HARRIS



250 years after the Declaration of Independence, the political landscape of the land of the free and home of the brave is at its most divided since the Civil War. White House Republicans are attempting the unprecedented in areas of immigration, foreign and economic policy. All the while, Democrats stage a comeback. An increasing percent of partisans view members of the other party as immoral. This magazine will explore the rebels, rioters and rulers defining the polarised terrain of America in the year 2026.

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What Will Happen In November's Midterms?

After a contentious and polarising campaign, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States of America in November 2024. To propel him to victory, he combined a wide coalition of working-class Hispanic, Black and Asian voters with the Republican Party's usual white, non-college-educated and rural supporters. One issue unified them – the economy. Two months before the election, a Pew Research Center poll found that 81% of US voters said that the economy would be very important to their vote in the upcoming presidential election.

On January 20, 2025, Trump started his second presidency. He blocked asylum seekers entering the country. Before restarting the programme predominantly for white South Africans, the administration also froze all refugee processing. As a result, the number of migrants crossing the US-Mexico border dropped to its lowest in 50 years. Then Trump's focus shifted inwards. Through a combination of arrests and deportation flights, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deported around 540,000 individuals within one year of his inauguration. ICE's aggression was also directed towards Americans. In January 2026, two US citizens in Minneapolis were killed by ICE agents on separate occasions. Backlash ensued. Recent polling indicates approval of Trump's handling of immigration slumping to a net negative 19 percent.

Iran is the nation which has dominated Trump's foreign policy. In June 2025, the US attacked three nuclear facilities in the nation in an attempt to destroy its nuclear capabilities. On 28 February 2026, the United States and Israel launched joint airstrikes on Iran. Several members of the Iranian regime, including the Ayatollah, were either killed or severely injured. In response, Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz. A prolonged and chaotic stalemate followed. So far, the price of war has cost the US government \$113 billion and the global economy \$2.2 trillion.

Trump slightly reduced federal income on tax tips, overtime and Social Security, although the cuts were a far cry from his policy of abolishing them. Benefits in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act were outweighed by the tumultuous impact of Liberation Day. On 2 April 2025, the average rate of tariffs, an import tax paid by the importer, levied by the US rose from 2.5% to 22.5%. Compounded with rising fuel prices caused by the war in Iran, tariffs proved disastrous for the US economy. Inflation spiked, growth stagnated and consumer confidence plummeted.

Trump's overall approval rating sits at negative 25 percent. In three months, Americans head to the polls to decipher control of Congress. If Republicans somehow maintain control, then the rogue Trump continues. If not, then Democrats will use every trick in the book to ensure he doesn't.

In the middle of a president's four-year term, he faces his greatest electoral test. Control of Congress is decided in the 'Midterms' through elections for the entire House of Representatives and ½ of the Senate. Together, these two chambers form the legislative branch of government, which enacts laws, funds federal agencies and holds the White House to account. On November 3, 2026, all 435 seats in the House are elected, alongside 35 of the 100 Senate seats. 36 states hold elections for their governors.

Primaries are elections in which political parties select candidates to contest a general election. On March 3, 2026, primary season began with Democrats and Republicans in Arkansas, North Carolina and Texas all electing nominees to contest the November 3rd election. It will conclude on September 15th in Delaware. Between the two dates, primaries took place in scattered states roughly every week.

Republicans currently control the House of Representatives. Led by Speaker Mike Johnson, the Grand Old Party (GOP) won 220 seats at the 2024 election, narrowly defeating the Democrats' 215. 218 seats are required for a majority. This means Democrats need to gain a net of three districts to control the chamber. Like a British constituency, each district elects one individual to represent them in Congress using the first-past-the-post system. On average, districts house 765,000 residents.

The Cook Political Report (CPR) estimates a district's competitiveness by several factors, including its political makeup and environment. Editor-in-Chief Amy Walter describes 18 seats as "toss ups," elections where neither candidate has an advantage. These will ultimately decide the makeup of the House. Republicans are defending 14, whilst Democrats are defending 4. This places the GOP on the backfoot.

Described by the CPR as a district with even support for Democrats or Republicans, Arizona's 6th has been narrowly won, and lost, by President Trump in previous elections. Republican Juan Ciscomani faces Democrat Joanna Mendoza. The district's population is primarily located in the suburbs of Tucson. Michigan's 7th has voted for the Electoral College winner in the past five presidential elections. It includes the state capital of Lansing. In November, Republican Tom Barret will contend with Democrat William Lawrence.

Iowa's 1st, an urban and rural district nestled in the southeast of the state, usually votes for the GOP. Republican Mariannette Miller-Meeks rivals Democrat Christina Bohannon. Although the three districts are geographically distinct, they share two characteristics. Firstly, incumbent Republicans are seeking re-election. Secondly, polling suggests that those GOP Representatives will lose their election bids. Voters attribute concern over the rising cost-of-living as the reason for supporting Democrats.

Before the primary season, redistricting dominated conversation around November's midterms. In July 2025, Trump urged Texas to redraw its Congressional districts in order to maintain his party's grip on the House. Five new Republican-leaning seats were created. California, led by Democrats, responded in kind. This provoked a string of states gerrymandering, the practice of unfair drawing of districts to favour one party over the other, across America. GOP leadership estimate their party can gain as many as 14 seats due to these efforts.

At Trump's first midterms in 2018, Democrats gained 41 seats. For them, it was their greatest gain in over forty years. At the time, Trump's approval rating was negative 10 percent. It is now 15 points lower. Generic ballots ask voters whether they would rather vote for a generic Democrat or Republican in the next congressional election. Currently, Democrats lead Republicans by 6.4 points. Considering a blue wave seized control of Congress in 2018, a blue tsunami is entirely likely. We predict Democrats gain control of the House of Representatives.

Republicans also control the Senate. In 2024, the GOP trounced Democrats to win the chamber by a margin of 53–47. Senators are equally divided into three classes, each elected every six years on rotation, so all 33 seats in Class 2 are up for grabs in November. Furthermore, two special elections will take place to replace JD Vance and Marco Rubio, who exchanged seats in the Senate for the Cabinet when Trump entered office. If each party wins 50 seats in the Senate, then the chamber will remain in Republican hands due to Vice-President Vance's role as tie-breaker. There Democrats need a net gain of four seats to win it.

The clearest path for Democrats gaining the Senate travels through the swing states.

Democratic Governor of North Carolina Roy Cooper, from 2017 until 2025, left office with widespread support. Months later, he announced his candidacy for the 2026 Senate election. In a state won by Trump by 3 points, nominating a candidate with a positive approval rating of 16 percent was a no-brainer. Cooper leads opinion polls over the Republican with a margin of seven points.

Maine is the only state represented by a Republican in the Senate which Trump failed to win in all three of his bids for the Presidency. Susan Collins, the 73-year-old moderate Republican, seeks a sixth term in office. Meanwhile the Democratic primary was one of the most tumultuous in 2026.

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First, an oyster farmer named Graham Platner became a sensation when he launched a progressive campaign supported by Bernie Sanders. Next, 77-year-old Democratic Governor Janet Mills threw her hat into the ring. If she was elected, then she would've become the oldest freshman Senator in US history. Ultimately her campaign lacked the finances to compete with Platner, therefore she withdrew. In June, Platner was elected as the Democratic nominee with over 70% of the vote. His candidacy was riddled with controversy. Misogynistic social media posts and tattoos with Nazi connotations led to some caution, although the final straw was an allegation of sexual assault. On July 10, 2026, Platner withdrew from the race. Consequently, an emergency convention was held, resulting in Troy Jackson replacing Platner. Once again, polls suggest the Democrat is likely to unseat the Republican due to the financial fallout from Trump's war in Iran.

A Democratic Senate also requires the party to hold its current seats.

In 2020, Democrat Jon Ossoff won a Senate election in Georgia with a margin of 1.2 percent. Four years later, Trump won the state with a larger majority. As a result, many thought Ossoff was bound to remain a one-term Senator. "Ossoff to top list of at-risk incumbents for 2026," headlines wrote. As a result of voter dissatisfaction with the cost-of-living, Ossoff leads his Republican opponent in opinion polls by a gap of seven points.

A different story unfolds in Michigan. Democratic incumbent Gary Peters retired, so Democrats selected a candidate to replace him. Progressive Abdul El-Sayed narrowly defeated centrist Haley Stevens to become the party's nominee. He faces Republican Mike Rogers. Firstly, El-Sayed must gain the support of low-income voters who supported Stevens. Then, he will need to discard Rogers' likely approach of branding him with the socialist label. El-Sayed also must contend with the displeased centrist wing of his party. Democrats hope he can accomplish that over the following three months.

To cement victory, Democratic Party leaders and strategists plan to flip a series of Republican seats in the Midwest.

Amid the red wave of 2024, three-term Democrat incumbent Sherrod Brown lost his Senate seat in Ohio to the GOP. Meanwhile, Ohio Senator JD Vance resigned- the Vice-Presidency prevented him from serving in the chamber- and Jon Husted was appointed as his replacement. Under Ohio law, a special election must occur in November. Brown, the Democratic nominee, faces Husted, the Republican nominee, in the upcoming contest. Trump's war in Iran and gas prices tilt the opinion polls in Brown's favour.

Finally, Texas may be the jewel in the Republican crown about to fall. Democrats last won a statewide election there in 1994.



The GOP primary, contested between incumbent Senator John Cornyn and the state's Attorney General Ken Paxton, led to a runoff easily won by the latter. Previously, he was indicted on two counts of first-degree securities fraud. James Talarico defeated Jasmine Crockett by six points to become the Democratic nominee. Talarico uses his fervent Christian beliefs to fight for a myriad of progressive policies. Support for universal healthcare and taxing the rich are among them. References to religion appeal to the staunchly Christian Bible Belt state of Texas. Consequently, Talarico leads Paxton in most opinion polls. Democrats are attempting a similar offensive in Iowa.

For Democrats, the challenge of flipping control of the Senate is colossal. It was a feat they failed to achieve during the first Trump presidency. North Carolina and Maine appear as highly likely pickups. Georgia and Michigan are probably holds, while Ohio, Texas and Iowa are longshots, although they are essential for a nationwide blue wave. In the scenario in which all seven contests are won by Democrats, they would gain control of the Senate with a margin of 52-48. This means they can only afford to lose in one state. Although the task of winning seems demanding, we predict Democrats will gain control of the US Senate.

Intriguing contests are also happening in gubernatorial elections. Democrat Xavier Becerra, who served as President Biden's Secretary of Health and Human Services, faces Steve Hilton, a former adviser to British prime minister David Cameron, in the election to succeed term-limited Gavin Newsom as Governor of California. In Ohio, a tight race between Republican rising star Vivek Ramaswamy and Democrat Amy Acton is unfolding. Democrats have not won the Ohioan governorship since 2006. James Fishback, the longshot candidate in Florida's Republican gubernatorial primary, gained widespread attention for a series of far-right comments. Republican Byron Donalds is widely expected to defeat Fishback before winning the general election in deep red Florida. Progressives hope they can elect single mother and bartender Wisconsin's Francesca Hong as the first socialist governor of a US state.

Midterm elections are often portrayed as referenda on whichever party holds the White House. From the corn fields of Iowa to deindustrialised towns of Ohio and expanding suburbs of Georgia, concerns over affordability will drive November's referendum to produce a resounding rejection of Republicans.

In polling by Emerson College, no issue rivals the influence of the economy on the choice of likely voters. The subject which won Trump the White House two years earlier may lose him Congress. "It's the economy, stupid," declared political strategist James Carville.

The most interesting characteristic of the incoming blue wave are the people who form it. Across the country, progressives who advocate for higher taxes on the wealthy, universal healthcare and an end to American support of Israel are winning Democratic primaries. This drastically contrasts the position of the age-old status quo. Six candidates from the DSA, America's largest socialist group, are Democratic nominees for Congressional elections, of whom only one currently serves in the Capitol. Following wins by progressives in New York and Seattle last year, many claim a new dawn developing for the Democratic Party.

With control of both chambers of Congress, Democrats hope they can appropriate, investigate and legislate to produce a lame duck Trump Presidency.

Is Donald Trump A Fascist?

Donald Trump is the most prominent figure of the 21st century. In 2016, he staged the greatest political upset in modern history when he overcame 66/1 odds to barely defeat Hillary Clinton in his election as President of the United States. Trump became the first President to lack prior military or government experience upon entering office. Eight years later, he staged the greatest political comeback to again win the White House.

At the 2020 election, Joe Biden trounced Trump. Next, the former President was met with an onslaught of lawsuits. In 2023, he was found liable for sexually abusing journalist E. Jean Carroll and was ordered to pay \$5 million in damages. Trump was also liable for defamation, due to consistent public statements, and mandated to pay \$83.3 million to Carroll. In May 2024, Trump was found guilty of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in a plot to cover up hush money payments he paid to Stormy Daniels. This made him the first former US President in history declared a felon.

Meanwhile, Trump was scheming a return to the White House. He announced his campaign for the 2024 presidential election in autumn 2022. Soon enough, the Republican party coalesced around him. Meanwhile inflation spiked. The number of illegal migrants crossing America's southern border soared. Combined with an ageing and decaying Biden, fertile ground was set for a Trump victory. Following a disastrous debate for Biden, immediate cracks began to show. Democrats replaced Biden with his Vice-President, Kamala Harris, as their nominee in the impending election. That wasn't enough. Trump was re-elected as President of the United States of America. He won 312 electoral votes to Harris' 226, and 77 million ballots to her 75 million. This made Trump the first Republican since 2004 to win the popular vote.

The notion of a man returning from a devastating electoral defeat, then receiving near-universal condemnation by his own party over the January 6th attack and becoming a felon, to winning the US Presidency by a margin bigger than he did before is unprecedented.

Alongside a significant victory for Trump came remarkable criticism. He was described as racist, xenophobic and authoritarian, but the label that stuck: fascist. On January 6, 2021, Trump incited his supporters to attack the US Capitol building in a final attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. As a result, nearly \$3 million worth of damages and over 140 injured police officers, one of whom died. Trump's role in January 6th sparked questions over whether he falls under the general definition of a fascist. "Yes," Kamala Harris answered.



Fascism is the surrender of freedom, persecution of minorities and promotion of hatred. No nation has ever prospered under its rule. Associated with it are the death of millions of Jews in the Second World War.

Fascism developed in Italy after World War I. In 1919, Italian journalist Benito Mussolini organised his campaign in Milan, where squads of street fighters beat up socialists and communists in local government. During that year, Mussolini coined the term 'fascism' to describe his movement. He later seized control of government, through violent means, and was appointed Prime Minister of Italy in 1922. In Mussolini's Italy, liberal democracy was dismantled. Police forces were tasked with rooting out political opposition and controlling the population. Instructors "drilled" fascism into the mind of children. News was censored by the state.

Adolf Hitler, an admirer of fascism, modelled his Nazi party on Mussolini's regime. In the deadliest conflict in history, Hitler persecuted Jews, civilians and political opponents, compounding to a total of 17 million deaths across Europe. Fascist movements were also formed in Japan and Latin America.

Considerable debate exists among scholars defining fascism. "Trying to define 'fascism' is like trying to nail jelly to the wall," historian Ian Kershaw wrote. Some claim it is a socially radical movement with ideological connections to extreme equality, while others say it is an extreme form of conservatism. Fascism is broadly characterised as rejecting liberal democracy and promoting extreme nationalism and authoritarianism through means of political violence and cults of personality. In this examination of Donald Trump, I will use that definition.

Liberal democracy is the bedrock of Western civilisation. It limits the power of government whilst protecting the rights of individuals. Hitler's Third Reich became a police state in which Germans enjoyed no guaranteed basic rights and the SS, the elite guard of the Nazi state, wielded increasing authority through its control over the police. There are clear parallels with Trump's deployment of National Guard troops to Democrat-controlled cities.

In June 2025, he deployed 4,000 members of the National Guard to Los Angeles in order to quell mostly peaceful anti-ICE protests. It is President in US history to use that power.

While he declared DC in a state of emergency, violent crime in the city was at a 30-year low. Trump's deployments illustrate an unnecessary abuse of power by a rogue character attempting to greatly increase the size of government.

The manner in which Trump governs has also led to concerns over the erosion of liberal democracy. As of July 2026, Trump has signed 269 executive orders. Meanwhile the Republican-controlled Congress has enacted 102 laws. Trump's most significant include dismantling government departments and reducing federal spending by hundreds of billions of dollars. In any other administration, such actions would have involved a lengthy and bruising battle with Congress; in Trump's, just another day. On the first day of his second administration, Trump pardoned around 1,500 individuals convicted of, or awaiting trials for, crimes related to the January 6th attack. This demonstrates a considerable bias, given he reacted to mostly peaceful protests in Los Angeles with the National Guard. As a result, the US' political system, designed to prevent centralised power, appeared in trouble.

In March 2026, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute at Gothenburg University stripped the US of its status as a liberal democracy. Their report also concluded that the US is hurtling towards autocracy at a rate quicker than that of Hungary and Turkey.

Ultrationalism is an extreme devotion to, or advocacy of the interests of, a nation especially regardless of the effect on any other nations. Hitler pursued ultrationalism in his annexation of Austria and invasions of Poland and the Soviet Union.

Immigration is a cornerstone of both administrations. During his first term, Trump promised to build a wall on the US' southern border with Mexico. He suggested Mexico should foot the bill. In the second term, Trump shifted inwards. He has pursued a policy of mass deportations using deportation flights. As of mid-2026, the Department of Homeland Security claims they have deported 948,000 illegal immigrants since Trump entered office. Some backlash ensued.

In late January 2025, Colombia blocked two military aircraft carrying U.S. deportees from landing in the country, but later reversed its position after Trump threatened steep retaliatory tariffs on Colombian imports.

Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump embraced the slogan "America First" to describe his candidacy. The US government adopted it as its official foreign policy doctrine during the first Trump administration. This resulted in US withdrawal from prior international commitments, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); UNESCO; UNHRC; and the Paris Agreement. In 2018, Trump privately threatened US withdrawal from NATO, then urged European countries to increase defence spending.

His second administration has also exhibited the Monroe Doctrine, advocating for US dominance in Latin America. In January 2026, US forces successfully captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Trump's intention was to replace the Venezuelan dictator so he could gain access to the nation's oil. Six months after the intervention, Trump claimed his administration had collected \$13 billion from the sale of Venezuelan oil.

Whilst he has threatened to annex Greenland, such claims are yet to materialise. In the first state of the union address of his second administration, Trump declared the US would "one way or another" control the territory. He believes Greenland is an "absolute necessity" for American national security.

Trump's profound and absurd rhetoric leans into nationalism. "All Americans are hurt by uncontrolled, illegal migration. We are out of space to hold them," Trump declared, relating to his proposal of a US-Mexico border wall. Most strikingly, he claimed NATO "sent some troops to Afghanistan... and they did, they stayed a little back, a little off the front lines." In reality, 1,025 NATO troops died during the US-led conflict.

If he cares more about himself than his country, then is a man truly an ultranationalist? Trump chickened out of military service. He received five military draft deferments during the Vietnam War- one due to a perfectly timed diagnosis of bone spurs in the heel. In 2025, the Qatari royal family donated a private jet, worth close to \$400 million, to Trump for use as Air Force One and later his presidential library.

Political violence is the deliberate use of power and force to achieve goals. In Mussolini's March on Rome, thousands of fascists approached Italy's capital, ultimately resulting in the appointment of Mussolini as prime minister, although he lacked a democratic mandate.

Trump lost the 2020 presidential election by a margin of 232 electoral college votes to Biden's 306. Rather than graciously conceding, like every other losing candidate in the modern era, he attempted to overturn the results in a desperate bid to remain in power.

In a one-hour long telephone call with Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, Trump said, "So look. All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have. Because we won the state."

Meanwhile Trump was planning one of the gravest attacks on American democracy. On January 6, 2021, he delivered a one hour and 14 minute speech in which he declared "We can't let that happen," in relation to Joe Biden's certification as the winner of the election. Trump called on his supporters to "walk down to the Capitol... And we fight. We fight like Hell." Up to 2,500 individuals entered the Capitol. As a result, \$3 million worth of damages and over 140 injured police officers, one of whom died. Ultimately the attack was unsuccessful. Biden entered the White House two weeks later.

Following the attack, Trump garnered the label "fascist." Anatomy of Fascism author Robert Paxton, who previously refused to label Trump with the term, changed his mind. Trump's January 6th attack was compared to Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch. Whilst the attack was a failure, and Trump returned to power with a democratic mandate four years later, it was a clear example of political violence.

The question is this: will Donald Trump refuse to leave the Presidency in 2029? Trump claimed that he lost the popular vote in 2016 due to millions of illegal immigrants voting for Hillary Clinton en masse. In 2024, when asked whether he would accept the result, he answered "Yeah, if I think it's an honest election, absolutely." Trump's niece, Mary, suggested that, if Trump had lost to Kamala Harris, then he would've "called for another insurrection."

A cult of personality is a term applied to leaders who somehow inspire unquestioning loyalty. Mussolini developed one when his political party encouraged Italians to purchase a Mussolini-themed calendar each year. Trump sells hats. In 2024, his online merchandise store generated \$8.8 million.

To understand how Trump developed a devoted fanbase, picture his followers. In 2016 and 2024, around ⅔ of America's white working-class supported Trump's bid for the White House. The message was apparent- "left-behind" voters in the Rust Belt were frustrated with decades of decline through economic hardship. These voters were willing to support an outsider candidate, such as Trump, who not only opposed the establishment, but was in prime position to defeat it.

Trump's charismatic authority cultivated a loyal following among supporters. As a result, an "us versus them" populist approach formed. Trump acknowledged his cultish support when he claimed, in 2016, "I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters." In July 2024, fervent beliefs were strengthened due to the assassination attempt on Donald Trump. This enabled him to claim a god-given mandate.

Political scientists Benjamin Goldsmith and Lars J.K. Moen class "Trump followers" as individuals who voted for Trump in 2020, "strongly approve" of his performance as president, "strongly approve" of his handling of the coronavirus, believe Trump will go down in history as an "above average" or "outstanding" president, believe Trump acted "responsibly" after the 2020 election, believe Republican leaders "should follow Trump's leadership," and "strongly agree" with the view that mainstream media has treated Trump unfairly. 10% of respondents to their survey, which was an accurate representation of American voters, were classified as "Trump followers." The research demonstrates the validity of Trump's cult.

To some extent, Trump satisfies the definition of "fascist." He is governing by executive order; his armed forces captured the leader of a foreign government so his could profit; his participation in the January 6th attacks clearly exhibited political violence; and he has developed a cultish following. Despite this, an albeit fragile democracy continues. The Democrats have not been outlawed. Trump's America does not share a key characteristic of Hitler and Mussolini's regimes- a one party state. Perhaps Trump's fascism exists, but is not as severe as 20th century Europe's.

Ultimately "fascist" is used as an insult. On the left, Democratic politicians Joe Biden, Kamala Harris and Tim Walz all used the term to describe Trump during the 2024 presidential campaign. On the right, commentators associate the term with Nazism, and by extension socialism. Former Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene compared mask wearing to the holocaust. In 1944, George Orwell wrote, "It will be seen that, as used, the word 'Fascism' is almost entirely meaningless. I have heard it applied to farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, the 1922 Committee, the 1941 Committee, Kipling, Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Priestley's broadcasts, Youth Hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else."



TOP: JANUARY 6TH CAPITOL ATTACK
BOTTOM: JAMES TALARICO. DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR US SENATE FROM TEXAS



SPOTLIGHT

ZOHRAN MAMDANI

Meet a more serious Zack Polanski, left-wing Andy Burnham and charismatic Ed Davey

On 24 June 2025, an earthquake struck US politics. The 33-year-old longshot candidate Zohran Mamdani defeated Andrew Cuomo, part of one of the state's most powerful political dynasties, to win the Democratic Party's nomination for mayor of New York City. Later, Mamdani won the general election. His ideology of democratic socialism is taking the US by storm.

Zohran Kwame Mamdani was born in Kampala, Uganda in 1991 as the only child of an academic father and filmmaker mother. His birth to Indian parents outside of America makes Mamdani ineligible for the US Presidency. Raised in Uganda and South Africa, he moved to New York City at the age of seven. Mamdani attended the highly selective Bronx High School of Science and earned a degree from Bowdoin College in 2014. Following a career as a rapper, he entered politics as a local campaign manager. In 2020, Mamdani was elected to the New York State Assembly representing Astoria.

With virtually no name recognition outside Queens and registering in opinion polls at around 1% of the vote, Mamdani announced his candidacy for mayor. At the core of his platform was a cost-of-living reduction in one of the world's most expensive cities. He planned to establish a network of city-owned grocery stores, end rent increases in one million of the city's apartments, end bus fares and increase the minimum wage. To achieve victory, Mamdani pursued an active campaign on social media. One clip of him attacking Cuomo in a Democratic primary debate garnered 10 million views on X and 11 million on TikTok. Mamdani is one of a few politicians who truly understands the value of social media presence. His charismatic charm, stylish branding and clever editing creates eye-catching short-form content. Thirdly, a weak field of candidates propelled him to victory. Andrew Cuomo served as Governor of New York from 2011 until 2021, his term defined by a mishandling of COVID-19 before he ultimately resigned due to numerous allegations of sexual misconduct. In June 2025, Mamdani won the Democratic Party's primary. He earned 56% of the vote in the final round, compared to Cuomo's 43%.

As the Democratic Party's nominee, Mamdani advanced to the general election. Against him, Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa. Cuomo chose to continue his candidacy as an independent. As a result, the anti-Mamdani vote coalesced around him. President Trump, who described the Democrat as a "communist," endorsed Cuomo.

Within the Democratic Party's establishment, key figures were unwilling to support their own nominee. The party's leader in the House of Representatives Hakeem Jeffries endorsed Mamdani days before the general election, following a four month standoff between the two. Its leader in the Senate, who represents New York, declined to endorse him whatsoever. This illustrated a bourgeois disconnected with the people. Nevertheless, Mamdani continued his campaign. On 4 November 2025, he defeated Cuomo and Sliwa, winning over 50% of the vote. His social media strategy drastically increased turnout, especially among young voters.

On 1 January 2026, Mamdani was inaugurated into the office of Mayor of New York City. This meant he became the city's first Muslim mayor and the youngest since 1892. After his predecessor Eric Adams was indicted twice in 2024, he signed nine executive orders. Mamdani's first action was to revoke all of them.

Israel's government said the mayor poured "antisemitic gasoline on an open fire." This related to Mamdani's scrapping of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which included opposing the state of Israel. In response, Mamdani claimed his administration would combat hate and division. Opposition to Israel was a theme in his mayoral campaign. If prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu entered New York City, then Mamdani pledged to use his leverage to arrest him, based on the warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. Recently, the New York mayor acknowledged he lacked the authority to do so.

Within weeks of inauguration, Mamdani's first crisis struck. As a winter blizzard approached New York City, the mayor appeared on local television and social media advising residents to hunker down. His leadership was described as calm, authoritative and reassuring. As a result of the storm, the city's road infrastructure was notably damaged. Consequently, Mamdani began a "pothole blitz" in which his city government successfully filled 100,000 within 100 days of his inauguration.

One concern Mamdani faced was a potential inability to work with New York's Governor Kathy Hochul. Any major tax increase proposed by Mamdani's city government requires approval by the state government. Considering Hochul's reluctance to endorse Mamdani, and her self-description as a "staunch capitalist," many viewed this as a political impossibility. They were wrong.

In January 2026, Mamdani and Hochul announced a plan to implement a free-at-the-point-of-use childcare scheme for two-year-olds in New York City. Beginning in autumn 2026, Hochul agreed to invest \$1.7 billion in funding the first two years of the project. Initially, it will cover 2,000 children in high-need areas, before expanding across the city. Under the plan, families could save over \$20,000 per year.

Three months later, they announced a pied-à-terre tax. Owners of properties valued between \$1 million and \$3 million will pay a 4% annual tax; properties worth \$3 million to \$5 million will face a 5.25% tax; and those above \$5 million will owe a 6.5% tax. The tax exclusively applies to second homes. It came into effect in July 2026 and is expected to raise \$500 million annually.

Plans to reduce the cost of housing were central to Mamdani's campaign. New York City's rent-stabilized apartments are a network of one million units, primarily owned by private landlords, whose rent increases are determined by the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB). The city's mayor appoints members to sit on the RGB. In June 2026, it voted, by a margin of 7-1, to stop rent increases for renewals of one-year and two-year leases between October 2026 and September 2027. This fulfilled one of Mamdani's key campaign promises.

In May 2026, Mamdani announced Block by Block, a plan to build 200,000 new affordable homes. A further 200,000 existing homes will be preserved. To fund it, \$22 billion worth of capital investment over the next decade. Construction for this demanding and ambitious project begins in early 2028.

New York City's budget for fiscal year 2027 was agreed in an eleventh hour deal between the Mamdani and City Council. Through a combination of efficiency savings, grants from state government and a pension restructuring, the city's \$12 billion deficit will be eliminated. Disputes over funding for city programmes led to discourse between councilmembers and the mayor. Although Mamdani will likely need to increase tax or reduce spending next year, this marks a significant moment for an indebted New York.

Bill de Blasio served as New York City's progressive mayor from 2014 until 2021. His term was defined by a frayed relationship with the state legislature and public dispute with Cuomo. As a result, de Blasio's term is perceived by many as a failure. In contrast, Mamdani has squeezed funding to close the city's deficit, expand affordable housing and fill potholes out of Albany. He is yet to end bus fares and establish five city-owned grocery stores, although Mamdani claims to remain committed to that agenda. Where previous liberal mayors have failed, Mamdani has flourished.

The unwritten rule in politics is that governments are most popular on their first day. The Leadership Quarterly wrote that presidential approval tends to be high early in the president's term and decrease over time. Mamdani is the exception to that rule. Since he entered office, his net favorability rating, according to Siena University, has ballooned from positive 16 to positive 32. His formula of solving kitchen table issues with high publicity is clearly successful.

In June 2026, a trio of socialist candidates in New York City won the Democratic nomination in their Congressional districts. They will likely win their seats in November's midterms. Across the nation, candidates from the party's left flank are thriving. Republican Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described the New York Mayor as the "leader of the Democratic Party." Mamdani's legacy will extend outside New York. It will be the kickstart of a progressive revolution which could shape the next chapter of America.

NEWS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED



India's Cockroach Janta Party used AI-generated images to promote its cause

On 12 June 2026, Elon Musk became history's first US-dollar trillionaire. Much of that wealth has since eroded. His aerospace, satellite internet and space infrastructure company, SpaceX, offered its shares to the public through the stock market for the first time. This is known as an initial public offering, or IPO. Excitement around the stock increased its value from \$150 to \$176. Given Musk owns 42% of SpaceX, this meant his net worth skyrocketed from \$900 billion to \$1.4 trillion. Like most IPOs, the hype faded. Concerns over capital spending and artificial intelligence infrastructure costs propelled the fall. As a result, Musk lost his trillionaire status on 23 June 2026. In August, one SpaceX rocket crashed into the moon. This created a crater between 19 and 27 metres long, equivalent to the length of two school buses. Consequently, the value of SpaceX's stock plummeted by 9%. Musk's net worth continues to fluctuate due to the volatility of SpaceX. His title as world's first trillionaire is incorrect. He'll be its first recurring trillionaire.

India's education minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as a result of a satirical political movement. In May 2026, over 2 million aspiring doctors sat India's main medical college entrance exam. Only 137,000 of them will be admitted. This makes the assessment one of the most crucial in the world. After allegations that a question was leaked, the government cancelled the exam and candidates were urged to resit. Amid pressure, 20 students died by suicide. Frustration with the process resulted in the creation of the Cockroach Janta Party (the Cockroach People's Party). Contrary to its name, the group isn't a political party — rather a youth-based satirical movement. On 20 July, tens of thousands of Indian Gen Zs descended on Delhi to demand greater accountability from government and for the education minister's resignation. Pradhan resigned on 25 July. Commentators suggested the departure signalled the beginning of the end for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In January 2026, two American citizens were killed by on-duty ICE agents. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the federal agency responsible for arresting and detaining undocumented immigrants in the US. Renee Good and Alex Pretti were shot, on separate occasions, while protesting ICE. Elements of their stories were repeated six months later. Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a 52-year-old undocumented immigrant, had lived in Houston, Texas for 35 years, where he ran a construction company and raised his three children. He died while driving, when agents pulled him over and fired a fatal shot through the open passenger-side window. They were searching for someone else. Six days later, Joan Sebastián Durán Guerrero was driving around his neighborhood. Agents stopped him at an intersection outside the local laundromat and fatally shot him. In response to all four incidents, the Trump administration had ICE's backs. Meanwhile voters are beginning to turn their backs on the White House. 52% of Americans say Trump has gone too far in deporting undocumented immigrants — a figure that has only grown.

A Guide to German Politics



President Trump is pursuing instability without an end. During the Iran conflict, he mocked British prime minister Starmer for “talking to his team” and French President Emmanuel Macron because “[his wife] treats him extremely badly.” Earlier this year, he said NATO troops “stayed a little off the front lines.” He has threatened withdrawal from NATO. Meanwhile, Russia has continued its violent and abhorrent invasion of Ukraine, hiking energy bills challenging security in Europe for the first time since the Second World War.

At such a time of chaos in America, the UK should seek an alternative to its age-old “special relationship.” The most credible replacement would be a much closer relationship with Europe. Geographically and economically, Europe are our closest neighbours- demonstrated by the EU accounting for 41% of the UK’s exports, the highest of any trading bloc. Militarily, the UK has shared a history of collaboration with Europe as a member of NATO. Therefore, tighter relations with the continent is the only logical path to a secure Britain amid international turbulence.

The public agree- almost every opinion poll since late 2021 has suggested the UK would vote to rejoin the EU, with the most recent polls suggesting a lead in the upper double-digits. Support for rejoining the EU is also shared by the Greens and Liberal Democrats, as well as the prominent nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. Seemingly, the prime minister agrees. Last May, his government signed an agreement that reduced red tape for exports between the UK and EU, and built closer ties with Europe. Whilst this deal is largely insignificant, boasting economic advantages of just £9 billion over 15 years, it portrays a larger “reset” in Anglo-continental relations. During the ongoing Iran conflict, Starmer has announced that he will pursue a closer

defence partnership with Europe.

Despite both public and political support for Europe, Britons know very little about it. In a recent YouGov poll, measuring the most famous foreign politicians, Brits showed they know little about the European Group of Five- the five European countries which wield the most power in the EU, because they have the highest populations and number of EU parliamentarians. 86% of Brits recognised the name of the French President; 52% recognised the Polish prime minister; 37% recognised the Italian prime minister; 26% recognised the German Chancellor; 25% recognised the Spanish prime minister. Given Spain is the most visited country by Brits, the last figure is surprisingly low. In the above YouGov poll, 6 of the 10 most recognised foreign politicians are Americans. Does this mean that the British media invest too much attention into American politics?

The Federal Republic of Germany is the most populous country in Europe, with 83 million inhabitants. Its GDP of over \$5 trillion makes the German economy the largest in Europe.

From 1933 until 1945, Germany was governed by the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis.) Following Germany's loss in World War II, disagreements among the Allied Powers regarding Germany's future and a fragmented political landscape resulted in the division of Germany into East and West. The West freely elected a capitalist government, whilst the East was run by a communist one-party state. The West was a founding member of the European Economic Community (EEC), later evolving into the European Union (EU), while the East was part of the Warsaw Pact. In 1990, German reunification meant the East rejoined the West. German politics is governed by the nation's constitution, styled the Basic Law.

The Bundestag is the lower house of the German Parliament. It scrutinises the government's work, decides on the Federal Budget and deployments of the Federal Armed Forces outside Germany. All federal legislation in Germany must earn the approval of the Bundestag to become law. It comprises 630 members. All German citizens aged over 18 are able to vote. Germany uses the mixed-member proportional system to elect these individuals, which is also used in Scotland and London. Therefore voters cast two ballots.

The first is for an individual to be their local MP to represent a constituency. The first-past-the-post system is used so the candidate who wins more votes than any other candidate, wins. Recent reforms mean, to sit in the Bundestag, the candidate must be part of a political party who won more than 5% of the nationwide vote. This means some constituencies do not return an MP to the Bundestag.

The second ballot is for a political party. Parties that receive at least 5% of the nationwide second vote are allocated seats relative to their share of the vote through the Sainte-Laguë/Schepers method. Each political party publishes a list of candidates who will represent their state (Land) if elected. Once each party's total number of seats has been calculated, these seats are divided among the party's Land lists based on the party's vote in each state. Germany requires political parties to win at least 5% of the national vote to prevent smaller, often more radical parties, from entering Parliament.

The Bundesrat is the upper house of the German Parliament. Its key role is to defend the interests of the Länder (Germany's 16 states) at the central government level. Two approaches are taken to legislation- consent bills and objection bills.

INTERNATIONAL

The Bundesrat votes on consent bills. They require the majority of Bundesrat members to approve so they can become law. Consent bills account for around 40% of legislation. This means the Bundesrat is less powerful than the Bundestag and is instead more comparable to the House of Lords. There are 69 members of the Bundesrat. They are appointed by Germany's 16 state governments. All members from a particular state must vote in the same way on each vote.

The President of Germany is Head of State. His major responsibilities include appointing and dismissing the Chancellor and ministers, promulgating legislation, and representing the German state in formal occasions both domestically and internationally. It is precedent that he does not comment on or engage in day-to-day political affairs.

The German President is elected by an electoral college named the Federal Convention. It consists of all 630 Bundestag members and an equal number of members from the state parliaments. To win — a candidate must gain a majority of votes in the first or second ballot or a plurality in the third. Elections for German President occur every 5 years, whilst Presidents can serve a maximum of two terms in office. Frank-Walter Steinmeier has served as President of Germany since 2017.

The Chancellor of Germany is Head of Government. They are responsible for managing the government on a day-to-day level, establishing government policy, and representing Germany at events alongside other world leaders. Whilst observers have described the German political system as a "chancellor democracy," alluding to the immense powers of the head of government, Germany's Chancellor holds similar powers to their Italian counterpart. The Chancellor's official office and residence is at the Federal Chancellery in Berlin.

The first responsibility of the newly-elected Bundestag is to elect a Chancellor. To win — a candidate must gain the support of the majority of the Bundestag. If no candidate achieves that level of support after two rounds of voting, then the President can accept a so-called "minority chancellor" — who would have the same rights as a chancellor elected by an absolute majority — or to dissolve the Bundestag and hold a new election. If a Chancellor resigns, dies or is removed from office, then the Bundestag must elect a successor. Friedrich Merz has served as Chancellor of Germany since 2025.

Germany's last federal election was held on 23 February 2025. In November 2024, Chancellor Olaf Scholz dismissed FDP leader Christian Lindner from his government, after Lindner refused to compromise on debt rules. As a result, the SPD-FDP-Green coalition collapsed, resulting in Scholz losing a vote of confidence in the Bundestag. Eventually, the Bundestag was dissolved in late December so that a federal election could occur in February.

The German public responded with a resounding rejection of Scholz's centre-left government. His party, the SPD, plummeted from first to third place, losing 9% of the vote. Meanwhile Scholz's coalition partners, the Greens, lost vote share, whilst the FDP not only lost vote share, but its entire standing in Parliament.

The CDU/CSU, led by Friedrich Merz, won 28.5% of the vote, placing them first. Nicknamed "the Union", the two Christian conservative parties form a political alliance in the Bundestag and abstain from competing against each other. The CDU operates in 15 of Germany's 16 states, whilst the CSU solely operates in Bavaria.

The most striking image emerging from Germany's election was its map. Alice Weidel's AfD dominated the former East Germany, whilst Merz's alliance was prevalent in the former West Germany. Given 39% of working-class and low income voters supported the AfD, the party's success in the historically poorer East stands to reason.

In an astonishing showing, the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) won second place. Following its establishment in 2013, the party secured the best result in its history. Founded with the intention of creating a conservative alternative to the pro-EU CDU, the AfD has gradually shifted rightward to advocate for "remigration" of immigrants from Germany, restrict the influence of Islam and stop government spending on refugees. The AfD's xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric has led to the Central Council of Jews in Germany describing the AfD as an "extremist party" that "embodies Nazi ideals." Alice Weidel, a lesbian woman who lives in Switzerland with her Sri Lankan wife, led the AfD to win 20% of the vote. Her grandfather, a prominent Nazi, was appointed by Adolf Hitler as a military judge.

To understand the extent at which the European Union relies on Germany's membership, imagine an EU without Germany. The EU would lose one quarter of its GDP; its budget would be reduced by €13 billion euros; and Eurozone members would lose a power to bail them out amid economic turmoil. In return, Germany dominates the EU. Frankfurt houses the European Central Bank. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, is the second German in the job. Germany is responsible for 1/3 of Europe's manufacturing output. This means free trade disproportionately benefits the German economy.

On 6 May 2025, 69-year-old Merz was elected Chancellor after two rounds of voting. In the first round, Merz failed to reach the 316 votes required to become Chancellor, falling short at 310. He was successful in the second round where he won 325 of 630 votes. Considering the CDU/CSU controlled 208 seats, over 100 short of a majority, they formed a coalition with the SPD. An informal agreement named the "firewall" among main parties states they should not co-operate with extremist parties. Therefore Merz's centre-right alliance joined forces with the centre-left SPD to form a "Grand coalition." Skeptics criticised Merz's decision to join the SPD, arguing it symbolised the continuation of a party voters overwhelmingly denied.

Merz is wary of the United States. Before entering the Federal Chancellery, he had visited the US over 100 times and described former President Ronald Reagan as one of his role models. Following Vice-President JD Vance's speech at the Munich Security Conference, where he declared Europe as the greatest threat to the US, Merz shifted his tone. Addressing a conference of young Catholics in March 2026, the German Chancellor said he wouldn't advise his children to go to, get educated or work in the US. Merz's comments reflect his wish to move German foreign policy away from the US.

He has prioritised defence as a major pillar of his government. In April 2026, Merz announced his aim to grow the size of the German military so that it becomes the largest "conventional fighting force" in Europe by 2039. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius' strategy identifies Russia as the primary threat to German security, therefore he plans to grow the German military's personnel to a total of 460,000 combat-ready troops from a current 186,000.

To fund the dramatic increase, Germany will increase its defence spend by €67 billion euros by 2029. Opinion polls suggest the boost has strong support from the German public.

Immigration propelled the AfD to its success in February 2025. Amid the refugee crisis one decade prior, nearly 1 million Syrians entered Germany to seek refuge, and were met with open arms by Chancellor Angela Merkel. In March 2026, Merz and Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa announced they hoped that 80% of Syrians living in Germany would return home following the fall of Assad. Little detail was specified regarding how the returns would work. In 2025, the number of asylum applications fell by more than half compared to the previous year.

Like former British prime minister Sir Keir Starmer, Merz flourishes on the international stage while suffering extensive unpopularity at home. Just 19% of Germans are satisfied with his performance. Morning Consult claimed this means Merz is the most unpopular leader in the democratic world. A series of policy and communication blunders, from borrowing hundreds of billions in his first major act as Chancellor after campaigning as a fervent fiscal conservative to a tendency towards impulsivity have made Merz's initially dire position appear nearly untenable.

In September, the states of Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, elect their state government. The AfD lead polls by double digits in both states. State governments have complete control over policing, education and public housing. This places the AfD tangibly close to power, although the firewall policy may prevent them gaining it.

The decline of German industry is also apparent. Germany has produced the automobile behemoths such as Volkswagen, BMW and Audi. China threatens that dominance. Reportedly Beijing has built a policy project, named "10,000 little giants", specifically targeting Germany's Mittelstand, the country's ecosystem of middle-sized, innovative industrial suppliers and firms. As a result, the \$94 billion trade imbalance between the countries will likely grow. To quell German economic woes, Merz is considering abandoning Germany's Sunday shopping laws, which require the closure of German stores on Sunday to protect the Christian day of rest. Backlash will ensue.

During the Greek debt crisis, Germany's rescue fund meant the future of Athens was decided in the German Bundestag. Since 2010, stakes have soared. Russia invaded Ukraine. The US pivoted away from Europe. Now the future of the entire continent depends on whether the AfD can erode the CDU's grip on West Germany. If they can, then post-war Germany's reputation as a beacon of stability is shattered. Recent polls place the AfD as the most popular German party with support from 28% of voters, leading the CDU by six points. The German establishment's last hope appears to be its firewall.

Andy Is The King Of All This Land



On 20 July, Burnham was appointed as the United Kingdom's 59th prime minister. He's the first Catholic prime minister, the first born in the North of England since Harold Wilson and the first to represent the Co-operative party.

On his desk, a mountain of challenges. How will Burnham lower the cost of living? Reverse decades of stagnating productivity and living standards? Manage a tumultuous relationship with the White House during the Iran War? His new job will demand vast amounts of decisiveness, courage, and resilience, whilst subject to the greatest volume of scrutiny in the land.

Politically, who will Burnham appoint to his cabinet? Crucially, how will he defeat Nigel Farage's Reform UK, leading the opinion polls with a 25% of the vote, after gaining control of nearly 1,500 council seats and 14 councils in May?

Previously, Burnham served as Member of Parliament for Leigh, government minister and Mayor of Greater Manchester. During his political career, he has worn a plethora of ideologies- from ardent Blairite to Brownite to Corbynite. After two attempts at the Labour leadership in 2010 and 2015, Burnham left Westminster to govern Manchester, a job in which he earned the title "King of the North." As discontent sparked over the leadership of prime minister Sir Keir Starmer, Labour MPs viewed Burnham as a possible successor.

Scandals encroached on other potential candidates- tax affairs for Angela Rayner and a relationship with Peter Mandelson for Wes Streeting- making them less electorally permissible. Even so, Burnham lacked the golden ticket required to run for Leader of the Labour Party- a seat in the House of Commons. In January, Burnham was rejected by Labour's NEC to run in a by-election, citing concerns over the cost of a by-election for the Manchester mayoralty. In reality Starmer's allies on the committee knew Burnham posed a significant threat to his rule.

After a dismal performance by the Labour Party at May's local elections, MP for Makerfield Josh Simons resigned, triggering a by-election. Burnham returned to Parliament as Simons's successor on 18 June.

The Labour Party ended over a century of domination in Welsh politics; failed to win Holyrood when they were destined to two years prior; and lost over 1,000 councillors in their heartlands, plunging Sir Keir Starmer's government was in crisis.

Around 111 Labour MPs signed a letter urging his resignation. 4 cabinet ministers, including Jess Phillips and Miatta Fahnbulleh, resigned. Numerous parliamentary private secretaries (PPS) resigned.

A speech Starmer delivered, which attempted to save his premiership, had the reverse effect.

On 14 May, Health Secretary Wes Streeting resigned.

Hours later, Josh Simons resigned as Member of Parliament for Makerfield so Burnham could replace him. The working class former coal towns of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Hindley and rural areas, which lay on the western edge of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, composed the constituency of Makerfield. The move was a risk. Reform UK swept local council elections one week prior, where they won 24 of 25 contested seats on Wigan Council and 50% of the vote in Makerfield.

"I am standing aside so that Andy Burnham can return to his home, fight to re-enter Parliament, and if elected, drive the change our country is crying out for," Simons wrote in a statement announcing his resignation from Parliament.

The next day, Labour's NEC approved Burnham's candidacy. January's concerns over the cost of a subsequent Manchester mayoral by-election were dismissed. This reflected Starmer's loss of political capital as a result of May's local elections. On 19 May, Burnham was confirmed as Labour's candidate.

Reform selected local plumber Robert Kenyon as their candidate in the by-election. Throughout the campaign, Kenyon was criticised for a series of misogynistic remarks. The Independent identified Kenyon had posted that women can't "ref, drive or give directions", that women presenting rugby games on TV "aren't up to the job and only there to tick a box" and that he had declared: "I'm sexist, sorry but I am."

Meanwhile critics viewed Burnham as using Makerfield as a springboard for winning the Labour leadership. He did not live in the constituency, and the products of immense growth in Manchester hadn't borne fruit in Makerfield. Burnham refuted this criticism by claiming that he previously represented parts of the constituency when he was MP for Leigh and that his children were educated at local schools.

Ultimately Burnham won the Makerfield by-election on 18 June. He won nearly 25,000 votes, or 55% of the vote, increasing Labour's vote share. Kenyon won 35% of the vote. A surprising result for Restore Britain, a far-right party led by Rupert Lowe who splintered from Reform UK, meant they performed in third place with 6.8% of the vote.

In an appearance on the BBC's Question Time during the Makerfield by-election campaign, on 4 June, Burnham declared that if he were elected MP for Makerfield, then he would join a Labour leadership election. This confirmed his intentions to become prime minister. Following his victory at the Makerfield by-election, those intentions became reality. Burnham arrived in London on 22 June, hours after Starmer announced his resignation following a weekend of deliberation at Chequers with his family, where he was treated as royalty.

The King awaited coronation. His chariot, a delayed Avanti West Coast train, was paralleled by helicopters from BBC and Sky News. "Rome is saved," Conservative MP Desmond Swayne declared when Burnham was sworn in as MP for Makerfield by clerks. "He's not the messiah," bellowed another, to which Burnham replied "Naughty boy." Upon arrival, 200 of Burnham's courtiers, Labour MPs, gathered in Westminster Hall to take a selfie.

In the crowd, numerous hallmarks of the Starmer government, including Rachel Reeves, Ed Miliband and Jonathan Reynolds. Just hours after applauding Starmer's tears, they wore smiles. The speed at which Starmer allies shifted reflects the disloyalty of many MPs. "When the herd moves, it moves," Boris Johnson rightfully declared.

Murmurs swirled over who else could join the leadership election. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Darren Jones soon declined, whilst former Armed Forces minister contemplated the decision, proposing 5 tests for a successful government, before ultimately declining. By 15 July, Burnham was nominated by 379 Labour MPs, or over 90% of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He was also nominated by 23 groups affiliated with Labour, electing him Leader of the Labour Party on 17 July.

DOMESTIC

After accepting the King's invitation to form a government on 20 July at Buckingham Palace, Burnham was driven to Downing Street. Unusually, Burnham refused to use a podium for his inaugural address to the public. This illustrates Burnham's aim to reduce barriers between the public and politicians. In the speech, Burnham described his appointment as a "circuit breaker for Britain," promising to introduce a new political and economic model.

Typically a prime minister's inaugural address is unifying but policy-sparse- he will thank the previous leader and offer encouraging words to Britain. Burnham's speech was an exception. He pledged to change the education system; build more council homes; honour commitments on defence, whilst meeting the fiscal rules. Later in the year he promises to produce a 10-year plan for Britain.

Burnham pledged to end rough sleeping in his first act as prime minister whilst on the steps of Downing Street. This echoes a pledge he made as Mayor of Greater Manchester. He failed to achieve the policy- the number of rough sleepers in Manchester fell from 268 in 2017 to 89, before climbing back up to 197 in 2026. With the powers of the central government, Burnham hopes to defy his own record, although limited resources have been committed.

In one of his only major speeches prior to entering government, Burnham declared his proposal to establish Number 10 North. This means some functions of the Prime Minister's Office will move from Westminster to Manchester. Burnham described it as "the nerve centre of a rewired Britain." He hopes to delegate the UK government's powers to local government, spearheading Greater Manchester's golden age as a reason for devolution. Results have been mixed. Scotland and Wales have received the greatest powers, but lag behind their English peers.

Burnham's rise to Prime Minister, and the policy he hopes to accomplish in the job, reflects the localisation of British politics. He is the second prime minister in recent years to have served as a mayor- following Boris Johnson. Prior to 2000, British mayors had bells. Now they have budgets. And real national influence. Local government appears to be the catalyst to political success.

At the first meeting of his Cabinet, on the second day of his premiership, Burnham pledged to form a "cost-of-living government." Earlier, he announced the scrapping of VAT on household electricity bills from October 2026, which will save the typical household £45 per year. The government claimed loss of revenue from this measure would be replaced by scrapping Starmer's digital ID scheme.

Hours later, Darren Jones revealed no money had been dedicated to the scheme.

The man responsible for leading Burnham's cost-of-living strategy is John Healey. This startling appointment followed weeks of speculation centered on two individuals- Ed Miliband and Shabana Mahmood- likely becoming Chancellor. Days before Burnham entered office, the Financial Times reported he'd appoint the latter to the Treasury.

Instead Healey will reside in Number 11. Prior to his appointment, Healey served as Defence Secretary from 2024 until June 2026, when he resigned from Starmer's government after it had dedicated just £13 billion out of a requested £28 billion to increase defence spending. After his resignation, Healey earned respect from across the political spectrum.

Burnham hopes Healey will use this political capital to navigate the treacherous waters any Chancellor must wade, softening the impacts of tough fiscal decisions. Healey has served as Member of Parliament for Rawmarsh and Conisbrough in South Yorkshire since 1997, a former Treasury minister and Gordon Brown's PPS. Healey has promised to focus on fiscal discipline, growth in every postcode, backing Britain, wealth creation, and making life more affordable as Chancellor.

Ed Miliband was appointed Foreign Secretary. Given Miliband has never worked in foreign policy, his appointment appears bizarre. The Telegraph reported the White House is "deeply concerned" by Miliband's appointment, adding his record as Energy and Net Zero Secretary will be a "point of friction." Considering Burnham aims to focus on domestic policy, he was expected to appoint an experienced and knowledgeable Foreign Secretary. Miliband fails to meet that criteria. Perhaps he will be replaced by Starmer in a few years.

Shabana Mahmood remains Home Secretary. She has served in the job since last September's reshuffle. Currently, Mahmood is in the process of introducing significant reform to the UK's asylum system, which means refugees will no longer receive permanent protection. Burnham voted for these reforms in the House of Commons.

Wes Streeting returns to the Cabinet as Defence Secretary. Following Starmer's resignation, Streeting withdrew from the Labour leadership election, endorsing Burnham, after announcing a premature bid which proposed rejoining the EU, increasing capital gains tax and banning social media usage for under 16s. Streeting has no experience in foreign or military policy. His appointment was described by former head of the British Army Lord Dannatt as "very disappointing."

Like usual, Burnham played favourites when selecting his Cabinet. Burnham's inner circle, allies and fellow Northerners replaced Starmerites.

First he awarded allies. Louise Haigh acted as Burnham's gatekeeper during the transfer of power. Now she'll be Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. She was responsible for increasing Burnham's popularity within the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), transforming the idea of a Burnham premiership from a far-fetched daydream to a reality. Anneliese Midgley identified Makerfield as the constituency where Burnham would contest a by-election. She will serve as his government's Chief Whip. Miatta Fanbulleh, the intellectual powerhouse of Burnham's political machine, was appointed as Energy and Net Zero Secretary. The high concentration of women within Burnham's inner circle has led many to describe him as "Labour's first female prime minister."

The trademarks of the Starmer government were ejected from Cabinet. Rachel Reeves, David Lammy, Steve Reed and others all made way for Burnham loyalists. 13 of the 27 ministers in the new Cabinet represent a constituency in the North of England; whilst 6 represent the South; and 4 represent Scotland and Wales. They will likely adhere as loyalists to his drastic devolution agenda.

An analysis by the i Paper identified 17 cabinet ministers attended the universities of Oxford or Cambridge, making Burnham's cabinet the most Oxbridge-educated in the modern political era.

Over the past decade, the task of running Britain has proved impossible. Burnham is "acutely conscious" of the fact he is the seventh prime minister in ten years. Over the following years, he'll have to navigate the perilous waters of a divided political landscape, polarised media and unfortunate financial and geopolitical circumstances, all while attempting to please his backbenchers. Burnham is Labour's hail mary candidate for Prime Minister. If Labour changed prime minister again, then their credibility would hemorrhage. Therefore they need Burnham to succeed. Will he?

CIVIBUS MAGAZINE



"Civibus" is Latin for "Citizens". We believe there are many parallels between the ancient and modern world.
Civibus is the Magazine for the Thinking Citizen

CREDIT

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Samuel Harris is the Editor of Civibus Magazine. He founded it in March 2026, inspired by his passion for politics and the world around him. The work in this magazine is entirely his.

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