

POLITICS REVIEW



Greens defeated by Labour in Holborn and St Pancras by-election

The Holborn and St Pancras by-election took place last night, with a resounding yet expected victory for Labour's Sagal Abdi-Wali (pictured left). She picked up 45% of the vote, farther away than expected from the Green vote share, which reached 33%. Green leader Zack Polanski stood in the seat, and was expected to come close, but failed to, only increasing the left-wing populist vote share by 2%. This comes after the Greens adopted a 'Zionism is racism' motion, which has gone down very controversially - the Chair of Amnesty, Sandy Ruthven, left the Greens, and many have said that the Green party now face an anti-semitism problem. Overall, Burnham can feel confident about his party's performance.

Burnham bold in his first conference

Like it or not, Labour want to stay - Ed Bunting

Over the last few weeks, the five UK political parties have been in party conference season, renting out a drab exhibition hall and making a keynote speech announcing several new and swanky policies for a boost in the polls. In particular, the Green Party's conference has been dominated by a controversial motion to declare Zionism as racism, a policy point that has been hailed as anti-semitic by its detractors. Reform UK's conference included an agreement signed with the potential future President of France Jordan Bardella to use the military to return migrants back to France. However, the Labour Party conference arguably shook up the zeitgeist in a way no other party was able to do, and it could prove that Andy Burnham has every intention of staying past 2029.

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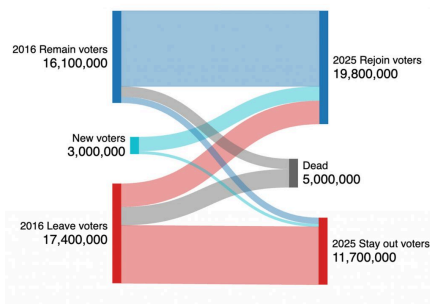
Burnham bold in his first conference

Like it or not, Labour want to stay - Ed Bunting

Continued... Burnham made several key announcements during his party conference speech last Tuesday. The flagship announcement was ending the triple lock protection on pensions, which currently means the state pension goes up by inflation, earnings, or 2.5%, and replacing it with a de facto double lock, removing the requirement by inflation - this has been projected by the Institute for Fiscal Studies to save £15 billion per year by 2040. This has been criticised by the Conservatives and Reform for being too anti-pensioner with other areas to cut such as benefits and foreign aid, however many have welcomed the shift in attention presented by Burnham, especially as this announcement was paired with plans to introduce 45,000 new work placements for 16-18 year olds.

Voters and Brexit: then and now

Source: YouGov

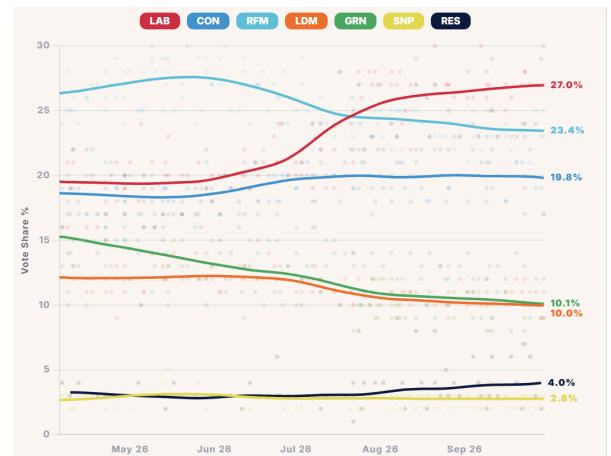


The main media headline came a day after the speech, when Burnham was asked a question on whether rejoining the EU was out of the question, to which he responded that the UK could 'go all the way' and commit to re-joining the EU. This was a huge policy announcement that again sparked outrage on the right - the usual detractors of GB News and the Daily Mail accused Burnham of betraying Britain's democratic decision, yet many point to the fact that if a second referendum was held, a 'Bretun' would be on the cards in an overwhelming margin. It also doesn't help that up to 5 million people who voted for Brexit have in fact died.

Crucially, the conference policies have seemed to be electorally astute. The flagship policies of a 'Bretun' and ending the triple lock have been said by Burnham to be implemented after 2029, when the next general election is to be held. Unless you watch GB News or read the

Daily Mail, in that case you might as well head to the polling station right now. This creates a situation where Burnham can promise the world to voters (rejoining the EU, ending the triple lock, and even proportional electoral reform) if he maintains a majority or enters a viable coalition.

Those conference announcements seem perfectly directed at Liberal Democrat and Green voters, and given the polling state of the country, it seems to have initially worked in his favour. Polls conducted after the conference have been music to Labour HQ's ears, as YouGov has them up by 3 points to 27%, their highest score since January 2025, Opinium has them up 3pts to 30%, another record high score since Labour entered office, and Survation also has them up to 30%, up one point. Meanwhile, the Greens have been slumping to polling levels on or below 10% **after their leader Zack Polanski embarrassingly lost the Holborn and St. Pancras by-election**, along with the Liberal Democrats, who, unlike the Greens who are mired in political scandal and extremism, seem to be doing absolutely nothing with their policies. As comedian Ania Magliano put it on the SNL UK weekend update, 'The Liberal Democrats are hosting their party conference this weekend'. Not even a punchline is needed to humiliate them. To the right is the current UK polling state as of October 2026, where a clear lead for Burnham is shown.



Whether one likes it or not, it is arguable that Andy Burnham could be here to stay past 2029, however most will say it is still extremely early to be making this forecast. In the meantime, I shall accept the supreme overlord Andy Burnham, move to Manchester, put *The Queen is Dead* on loop, and go and study English Literature at Cambridge, like the "cultured" folk who vote Labour.

BolsonarUno and BolsonarDos

Corey Sartin

As Brazil begins its 2026 Presidential election, the incumbent Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva finds himself unexpectedly threatened in the first round. Despite his reasonable tenure in the context of the recent Brazilian political landscape, he appears to have met his electoral match. However, a bigger surprise is that Lula's Presidential opponent is none other than Flávio Bolsonaro, the son of Jair Bolsonaro.

Frequently labelled the 'Trump of the Tropics,' Jair Bolsonaro's political standing was founded in right-wing populism and social conservatism. He is a vocal opponent of same-sex marriage, progressive curriculums and government intervention in economics.

Following the 2022 Presidential election, Jair Bolsonaro was involved in an attempted coup in an effort to eradicate the wisps of democracy that still endured in Brazilian politics. His subsequent list of charges included taking part in an armed criminal organisation, attempting to violently abolish democracy, organising a coup, and damaging government property and protected cultural assets. As a result of ill health, it was determined he could spend time under 'humanitarian house arrest'. At present, Jair Bolsonaro resides in his mansion in Brasilia - a fitting punishment for such charges, I'm sure.



Just a few years after his father's betrayal of the Brazilian electorate, Flávio Bolsonaro has had the audacity to ask the Brazilian people: 'Yeah, but what about me?' Perhaps more shockingly, the voters seem to be responding 'sure, why not?'

This repeated shift in the Overton window, and the acceptance of increasingly extremist right-wing politics internationally, has set a precedent for the popularity of far right politics.

A month ago the state of Saxony-Anhalt in Germany elected a member of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as speaker of its state parliament. Claims that this party does not represent the definition of 'far right' are baseless; the German intelligence agency has classified the party as 'extreme-right' since May 2025. I encourage you to read its most recent policy proposals. For a taste, here is one of their policies below.

7.6.1 Islam does not belong to Germany

Its expansion and the ever-increasing number of Muslims in the country are viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values. An Islam which neither respects nor refrains from being in conflict with our legal system, or that even lays claim to power as the only true religion, is incompatible with our legal system and our culture. Many Muslims live as law-abiding and well-integrated citizens amongst us, and are accepted and valued members of our society. However, the AfD demands that an end is put to the formation and increased segregation by parallel Islamic societies relying on courts with shari'a laws. The AfD wishes to curb a trend towards religious radicalisation amongst Muslims, and these turning into violent Salafists or terrorists.



AfD's hints of an inundation of Muslim people in German society are unfounded. A research report by the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) or the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees lists the Muslim population as around 8-8.5% of the total German population. Additionally, the report states that a major source of this immigration is 'from crisis regions in the Middle East and South Asia.' Efforts to villainise those fleeing war and persecution is a dangerous perversion of sense and humanity.

Furthermore, the statement that Muslim immigration is 'viewed by the AfD as a danger to our state, our society, and our values' demonstrates rhetoric comparable to that of the early Nazi party. By defining an ethnic group as a danger to German society as a whole, the AfD frames the issue of immigration as a social and cultural problem, rather than an economic one. This creates an 'us vs them' culture, which draws parallels with Nazi sentiment.

The prevalence of on-the-nose racism under the guise of protecting cultural identity has become something of a theme for developing extreme-right parties. To suggest that the mere presence of a minority in your country is a threat to both its society and values is a callow and bigoted sentiment.

It is easy to point fingers at the rise of Trumpism in the USA as the catalyst for the recent perpetuation of stereotypes, anti-immigration sentiment and racism. However, the issue runs deeper than that. Realistically, politicians did not suddenly convince previously angelic members of society to be aggressive racists and extremists. The legitimisation of extremism by politicians provides a platform for radicalism on an international level.

This speaks to a fundamental and deep-seated issue within the international community, rather than a blip in an otherwise moderate and reasonable society.

With the expansion of extremist politics throughout the international community comes manipulation of reasonable and legitimate political viewpoints in discourse. Opinions previously seen as cartoonishly extreme are now being pushed by successful political movements across continents. The increasing power of populism, evidenced by Flávio Bolsonaro's recent success, showcases the extent of the shifting political landscape. The current events are a testament to the volatile nature of politics and wider society, and how extremism can spread rapidly and unchecked within the international community.

What happened at the Conservative Party conference?

A report on the party's new position - Eleanor Costa



Founded in 1834, the Conservative Party is one of the UK's largest political parties. With around 85 years spent in government and a long-standing commitment to economic liberalism, the party has built a membership of more than 123,000. Following their recent conference in Birmingham, the Conservatives entered the new parliamentary session with renewed confidence and a more defined strategy. Party leader Kemi Badenoch has repositioned the Conservatives firmly on the right, promising "a fight coming in British politics" and outlining a five-party landscape she believes the Conservatives must navigate.

Badenoch dismissed rumours of a "unite the right" strategy, insisting the Conservatives can win a general election without forming a coalition with Reform UK. In her most personal conference speech to date, she criticised Reform for questioning whether non-white Britons with

foreign heritage can be considered English — a moment that effectively shut down any prospect of collaboration between the two parties.

Her speech stood in stark contrast to Andy Burnham's, which focused almost entirely on Labour's aims rather than attacking opponents. Badenoch, however, leaned heavily into drawing dividing lines, even mocking Burnham as a "Paddington Bear prime minister" who hopes problems "go away". The difference in tone highlights her strategy of energising Conservative supporters by sharpening distinctions between her party and its rivals.

Despite this assertive stance, there were areas the Conservatives avoided. After Burnham raised the possibility of closer ties with the EU, Badenoch declined to engage, making clear she would not be drawn into debates on Europe. Another notable omission was social care: shadow cabinet ministers offered no substantive proposals for reforming the system, leaving a significant policy gap.

Over the past year, Badenoch has grown into a more prominent figure, becoming the first Black woman to lead a major UK political party. She has strengthened her position within the Conservatives and re-established the party's identity on the right, even overtaking Reform in some recent polling.

Populational murder-suicide

Bioweapons and their consequences - Fred Britton

Russia has never shied away from the development and propagation of biological weapons. The Cold War saw an exponential increase in the number of new and interesting ways of annihilating entire populations with ease. Until 1969, both the USA and USSR maintained active bioweapons research, with stockpiles of weapons ready for deployment in the event of the war going hot. This changed under Nixon, who saw the futility of preparing weapons that could and would be almost as devastating to themselves as to the Soviets, even more so than nuclear weapons, leading him to axe the project and have the USA's stocks destroyed. US bioweapons research shifted from offensive to defensive, preparing countermeasures to biological attacks from foreign and non-state actors. Meanwhile, the USSR was creating up to 100 tonnes of smallpox, genetically bred to be resistant to heat, cold, and antibiotics, per year. The organisation responsible for the creation of these horrifyingly potent strains was Biopreperat - "Bio-preparation". This cover name implied a civil defence background, possibly a Soviet equivalent to the US's Center for Disease Control, perhaps an organisation dedicated to preparing the population for resisting biological weapons attacks. To a twisted degree this was true, Biopreperat actually was creating vaccines to immunise against certain bioweapons. Soviet bioweapons, that is.

The military deployment of bioweapons is absolutely not an exact science. For a nation to gain any strategic upper hand through the use of bioweapons, is if said nation has a marginally better defence system against their own strain of weaponized pathogen. An inevitability of highly viral pathogens is that they will spread. Thus, in order for the existence of bioweapons development in a country to be justified, that country must also have developed a defence - often in the form of a vaccine - to their own weapon. A commander must realise that they will be the direct cause of countless of their own citizens' deaths if bioweapons are deployed. A commander gambles that their nation's bioweapons programme has prepared, not just adequately, but better than their enemy for the use of weaponised pathogens.

Now to today. In the closing days of September 2026, rumours began to circulate on the Russian-speaking internet that there had been a lab leak at the Irkutsk Anti-Plague Research Institute in Siberia, close to the Mongolian border in Russia. On October 2nd, researcher Darya Shipilova died a gruesome death alone in a hospital in Shelekhov, in the Irkutsk Oblast (region). Since then, Shelekhov has been locked down by Russian authorities. The government in Moscow is denying that anyone else has been infected, and has refused to confirm that Shipilova was killed by plague, instead citing "a pneumonia of unknown aetiology". This is a lie. The Russian authorities know exactly what Shipilova has been infected with, and why. Just like the name Biopreperat, the words "Anti-Plague" could well be misleading. The Russian authorities have denied that anyone else has been infected, yet at least five hospitals across the Irkutsk Oblast have been quarantined, with visitors being turned away. As of the sixth of October, another person is reported to have died. What happened in late 2019 in Wuhan is happening again in Irkutsk - the state authorities are denying, denying, and denying any problems, whilst unsightly scrambling to get the problem under control before it escalates.

Whether or not it turns out that the Irkutsk outbreak was caused by a bioweapon or not, it ought to make people stop and think. Why are we allowing the propagation of these species-killing weapons, and what can we do to alleviate from, defend against, and ultimately destroy these weapons.

For whom the bell tolls

And who stays at home - Owen Martin

Britain has no shortage of political opinions, ask almost anyone about immigration, taxes or the NHS and you will probably get an answer before you have finished the question. The problem is getting people to put those opinions on a ballot paper. This is called a low “turnout” where people have the capacity to vote but choose not to, resulting in a question for the democratic legitimacy of a vote due to a portion of the potential voters not being represented in the outcome.

The 2024 General Election provided perhaps the clearest warning on this issue as turnout fell to around 60% (compared with 67.3% in 2019) with Labour winning 411 seats and a huge parliamentary majority, but receiving only 33.7% of the vote resulting in a total 20% of the electorate’s preference. This means Labour secured around 63% of the seats in Parliament (411 out of 650) with the support of only around one in five registered voters. That does not make Labour's victory illegitimate, however it does demonstrate one of the quirks of Britain's First Past the Post system with Labour winning an enormous majority of seats despite most voters either choosing another party or choosing not to vote at all. The outcome was a political landslide, but not one of public choice resulting in Parliament looking very Labour; Britain itself being considerably less so.

The contrast with the 2016 EU referendum is particularly striking as turnout reached 72.2%, with 51.9% voting Leave and 48.1% voting Remain. Leave, therefore won with roughly 37.5% of the entire electorate, as opposed to the 51.9% of people that actually voted. That distinction matters, but so does the turnout itself. More than seven in ten registered voters decided that the Brexit vote was worth leaving the house and entering a polling station for. Whatever one's view of the result, it demonstrated that Britain is perfectly capable of voting in large numbers when people believe the stakes are high enough. This suggests that the problem may not simply be political apathy, people will vote when they think something genuinely important is at stake. The challenge is convincing them that another Thursday in a polling station is worth more than another Thursday evening in front of a TV.

The Clacton by-election (13/8/26) has now provided an almost perfect recent example as Nigel Farage won with an extraordinary 63.34% of the vote, receiving 22,239 votes. At first glance, this looks like an overwhelming endorsement. However, turnout was just 44.4%, down from 58.7% when Farage first won the seat in the 2024 General Election. That means Farage's 63% translates to only around 28% of the total electorate. Fewer than three in every ten eligible voters actually voted for him. His victory is completely legitimate; he won decisively under the rules, but the statistic puts into perspective the true democratic strength, or more precisely, weakness, of his mandate. The circumstances make Clacton even stranger. The major political parties largely stayed away, leaving Farage facing a collection of independent, fringe and novelty candidates. Count Binface received 26.93%, finishing second with 9,455 votes. The result tells us something about Farage's popularity, but it also tells us something about how little enthusiasm there was for the election itself with just over 35,000 voters of the 79,785 people who could vote choosing to have their say in who their next MP should be, clearly showing the issue at hand.

This is where low turnout becomes politically important as it tends to reward parties with highly motivated supporters. If one group is willing to queue at the polling station while everyone else decides that politics can wait until after dinner, that group's influence becomes disproportionately large. Reform UK, with its highly motivated support base and strong focus on immigration and dissatisfaction with the established parties, can particularly benefit from this dynamic.

There is also a generational problem with younger voters being generally less likely to participate, meaning politicians have a greater incentive to listen to people who reliably turn out (older generations). This creates a rather unfortunate political loop: young people feel ignored, so they do not vote; politicians notice they do not vote, so they have less reason to chase their support; young people then feel even more ignored and so on and so forth.

Britain therefore faces a strange democratic paradox. The country is politically noisy, but electorally quiet. The 2024 General Election produced a historic change of government on 60% turnout; the EU referendum demonstrated that 72% can turn out when the stakes feel enormous; and Clacton has shown how a politician can win 63% of the vote while receiving the backing of only around 28% of the electorate. The question is no longer simply “who is winning elections?”, it is “who is actually turning up to decide them?”. If Britain continues to leave its ballot boxes half-empty, the people who do turn up will inevitably have a rather loud say in what happens next.

IN DEPTH: The ruins of an empire

How colonial destabilisation drives today's migration to the UK - Adam Daowd

For over decades now, migration has become one of the most discussed and divisive topics in politics. Driven by outrage from the far right, many people seeking asylum in the UK and across Europe have been alienated from local communities and attacked constantly over crimes they did not commit. Whether it's Brexit, or the Southport riots, or the rise in parties like Reform and Restore UK, or even masked men dressed in black blocking the port of Dover. Only on the 16th September, a town in Oxfordshire held a referendum to leave the country over plans to house around a thousand migrants in a nearby former military base. However, in this article I will not try to discuss the role of asylum seekers in our current society, but rather explain the historical structural inequalities which have now caused the high levels of migration we are seeing. Within this, of course, is a source of self-reflection as I aim to discover how the destructive colonial forces today's 'patriots' adore led to their worst nightmare.

Between June 2025 and June 2026, according to a report from the Home Office, the UK received a total of 85,891 individuals seeking asylum. This is a pronounced decrease from previous years, where the sum would hover around 100,000. As a comparative metric, 2024 saw the highest levels in recent history of asylum seekers at 108,138. However, more significantly for this argument, the percentage of applicants with origins from formerly colonised countries is particularly significant for the discussion. According to reports from the Home Office, of the 85,891, 73.32% (excluding the 'other' category on the report) of applicants' countries of origin were formerly colonised nations. Meanwhile, countries of origin formerly colonised by the British Empire comprises 55.35% of the total, which may serve to reflect a correlation between colonial history and modern-day migration. We can also see that this data is not an anomaly; at higher rates of asylum applicants in 2024 we saw around 72.7% come from formerly colonised countries. On a purely statistical basis, therefore, we can clearly see that a history of colonial oppression has severe implications with regard to current resettlement. However, how have these exploitative projects starting in the 15th century pierced through to still heavily influence society today?

One clear implication of colonialism leading to the global economic inequality we see today is the structural economic oppression of members of formerly colonised countries. This is best symbolised through the use of labour exploitation by colonial powers over three centuries to boost economic growth back home while enforcing economic regression upon the indigenous people. This began with the enforcement of the slave trade at the start of colonial expansion, wherein the Triangular Route found its origins in transporting tens of millions of Africans to different plantations. By robbing the Western Coast of their human capital, there was an immediate stagnation of the economy that lasted for centuries as agriculture and other local industries suffered with labour shortages. Meanwhile, countries in Europe were at the height of the industrial revolution and leading the globe with their economic expansion, while these West-African countries were restrained to only begin building modern transport and manufacturing infrastructure in the early 20th century. By the mid 18th century, slaves made up 95% of West African export value, hence reflecting a shift in the economy from strong industries to a reliance on the slave trade where the revenue was concentrated with the few local rulers and kings that sold the slaves. As a result countries like those in West Africa forced to indulge in the slave trade were not able to construct the foundations for a strong modern economy where simultaneously colonial powers in Europe experienced unprecedented levels of economic prosperity.

The implications of colonial presence also stems further than the slave trade. Other forms of profiteering by these European powers reached astonishing levels of labour exploitation, as seen most vividly by the Spanish Empire in South America. The 'Potosi mita' was a state-coordinated forced labour system designed to maximise the extraction of local resources (e.g. silver) from what is modern-day Bolivia. Introduced by Spanish conquistador Francisco de Toledo in the late 16th century, the scheme spanned over almost 3 centuries until it was abolished in 1825. Most significantly, however, are the remnants of the scheme today. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson reveal this in their book 'Why Nations Fail', where we can use the example of the contrast between the two Peruvian towns Calca and Acomayo. These two towns are extremely similar in many senses - they are both composed of Quechua-speaking descendants of the Incas and are situated high in the mountains. They both produce the same staple mountain crops such as corn and beans, while only being around 65 kilometres apart. In fact, Acomayo was a historically significant centre for the Incan Empire. However, Acomayo is significantly poorer - inhabitants consume one third less than those in Calca. Those living in Calca manage to sell their crops in regional markets, whereas in Acomayo all the crops are an essential form of basic sustenance for its residents. Roads to Calca are generally surfaced, whereas to Acomayo they are in a dilapidated state. The differentiating factor? Acomayo were in the jurisdiction of the mita scheme, Calca were not.

Another consequence of colonial rule is extreme long-term political instability, and where else but the Middle East and more particularly the Levantine region. Historically, the area surrounding Jerusalem and Damascus has faced constant shifts in control and invasions from foreign powers, and where there should have been the rise in industry and the mass of growth of their respective economies, these Levantines found themselves under the restrictions of the Ottoman Empire and servicing those in Istanbul, as we discussed with West Africa and South America. But the impacts of imperialism are far further reaching than just economic issues. While the French were revolting against the monarchy, the Founding Fathers were writing the American Constitution, and us Brits instilled Parliamentary Sovereignty, countries in the Middle East were forced into submission by Ottoman repression, and the local peoples were not given the ability to gain self-governance and build their own nation. However, Ottoman rule was diminished by 1922, and individual nations were consequently formed, but through no choice of the local people. Even after liberation from one oppressive power, the cultural and political identity of these peoples was subverted by European powers in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, where Britain, France and Russia sat around a table to divide the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces into spheres of influence. Again, decisions made about the people of the Levant was dictated again in the Balfour Declaration, where a British politician declared Palestine, a country already inhabited and thousands of miles away, a homeland for Jewish people, undermining again the sovereignty of the people living in the region. Through proxy wars and other forms of conflicts in which the local peoples were crushed by imperial forces, these Arab countries were not able to properly constitute a nation for its people. 15 years ago during the Arab Spring these same people finally found some strength in their protest and opposition to tyrannical leaders who exploited the institutionless and structureless nature (in all political senses) of these countries, but by the time these 'revolutions' came to pass countries like Syria and Iraq were centuries behind their counterparts in Europe, reflecting the sheer magnitude of political regression that came with colonialism.

We can clearly see the consequences of European colonialism across the globe, consequences that still heavily dictate the standard of living and freedoms of billions in formerly-colonised countries. But does this really explain why tens of thousands of people are migrating to the UK today?

Ultimately, the same countries that expanded their colonial conquests during the second half of the second millennium were once under imperial control. However, we do not see the same disparity in standard of living between the coloniser and the colonised. Britain experienced the rule of the Roman, Norse and Norman empires, which did remove them of their sovereignty and economic freedom for centuries. But what separates this from European colonialism is the nature and timing of imperial rule. Through the use of mass slavery, mass labour exploitation, and other forms of empire-wide oppression, post-renaissance empires managed to achieve what the Romans or Vikings could not in institutionalising the inequalities we now face. This is then further emphasised by the timing of imperial rule; while the colonists were building the basis of a functioning democracy in an 'enlightened' Europe, the colonised did not have the political sovereignty to embed essential institutions into society.

Therefore, through enduring brutal imperial conquests, regions like the Levantine, West Africa and South America never managed to escape the shadow of colonialism's legacy, and even while they formally became independent these same countries were pushed into building nations and infrastructure on delicate foundations. These political tensions have manifested into civil wars and brutal, oppressive tyrannies, and economic tensions have left populaces trapped in a cycle of endless poverty. In that light, surely these same peoples would migrate. In comparison with the undeniable prosperity we face here, surely we should expect millions to come in search of solace from the ruins of an empire.

Special thanks to our contributors:

Fred Britton, Ed Bunting, Eleanor Costa, Adam Daowd, Owen Howard, Owen Martin and Corey Sartin

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