

2026: the year politics breaks

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2025 was a disastrous year — economically, politically and morally.

But the consequences of that failure are only just beginning to arrive.

In this video, I ask a simple but uncomfortable question: who is going to pay the price in 2026?

Austerity by design is still with us. Fiscal rules are still being used to override human need. Markets are still prioritised over care. And the result is that credibility is draining from politics across the UK and beyond.

I look at who is likely to fall from power — in the UK, in the US, and internationally — and why neoliberal authority is finally collapsing under the weight of its own failures. I also ask whether anyone might emerge with a credible alternative, and what that would require in economic terms.

2026 will not be an easy year. But it may be the year when technocratic politics finally runs out of road.

What do you think? Is 2026 the year when politics is forced to change?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e7B5NBRZw8?si=odcyZsYloTfWq6nl>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=dfqaj-1a04518-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page

This is the transcript:

2026 is nearly upon us.

I'm delighted to see the back of 2025. If the term a shit year was ever created for any year in history, then maybe it was 2025.

A year ago, we thought it was going to be bad, and it was at least as bad as we expected.

But let's stop moaning about what has been, and let me talk about what will be.

Who is going to have a bad 2026? Because when I look at it in politics, in power and in pain, this is not going to be a great year. Sorry to tell you that, but I'm not starting the year on a high note. I'm not predicting, I'm just talking about the consequences of the way the world is and who is going to pay the price for the current political failure that we're seeing all around us.

2026 will not, I admit, be evenly painful. Policy choices will create the losers, and some groups are being set up to fail. At the same time, some politicians are reaching the end of the road. Let's explore.

Those who are going to lose out badly are those whom neoliberalism always chooses to suffer. We are living through austerity by design.

There are those facing rising prices and falling services, and they are being told there is no money yet again to relieve the problems that they face, and these are the people who motivate me to speak out here on this channel.

The government are still choosing to restrain the services that these people need. Fiscal rules are still being used to trump human need, and markets are still prioritised over care. Now, all of that is a political choice, and those who will suffer are deliberately chosen by those in power to ensure that they do.

And as a consequence, this bad policy is actually going to begin to catch up with our politicians. Authority drains when credibility goes, and I think that austerity has finally done that for neoliberalism. Its authority is declining. 2026 will then be the year of political reckoning. We might all be suffering because of the choices that are being made by our politicians, but quite a number of them are already wobbling, and many will be toppled from their perches.

Across the pond, of course, Donald Trump is visibly deteriorating. He is literally physically declining. It is obvious that he has some form of mental cognition problem, and his decision-making capacity is obviously failing. But even though this could result in the tipping of the balance with regard to his future - and remember there is a 25th Amendment to the US Constitution that does allow a president to be replaced if they are unable to do their duties - just think about the consequences.

As the midterms loom large and as Trump gets more and more erratic, the Republicans are going to want some distance between him and them.

We're already seeing this. The MAGA - the Make America Great Again movement - are getting more and more angry with what Trump is doing.

And the more rational of the Republicans, and I know that is stretching credibility to link together the word Republican and rational at the moment, but the more rational ones are seeking that distance already. They're going to want to be rid of Trump before the midterms because they don't want to be tainted by who and what he is.

So they're going to take the risk. They're going to topple Trump. I suspect June is the month of danger for him. Why? Because it's far enough away from the midterms for people to have noted that action has taken place.

Who else will fall from power this coming June? Keir Starmer, along with Rachel Reeves, who will join him in departing from Downing Street, in my opinion. The English local election results for Labour will be grim. Scotland and Wales will compound the damage. In fact, in Wales, I suspect that Labour will become history, when for a century they could not lose an election, whatever they did.

In Scotland, the expectation was that Labour might become the largest party, and instead, the only point of discussion now left there is by how much they will lose. The SNP and the independence movement is going to be very much in control of Scotland come June 2026.

Starmer's authority inside the party will evaporate as a result. He will be on his way out. Labour is going to literally fall apart. They will pay the price for their fiscal orthodoxy, and although Starmer will claim that he's done everything that is required, MPs in fear of their seats will say, enough is enough, and get rid of him, and Reeves and maybe some others as well. But the question is, who is the successor? I put it to you; there is none.

Don't pretend that Andy Burnham is some great person waiting in the wings. We saw him try to be a leader in 2015, and I think he even tried earlier than that. He was no good then. He is no good now. He's neoliberal to his core. The fact that he's managed to run Manchester with no effective opposition because seven of the eight councils over which he governs are all Labour and totally obsequious is not proof that he could do

anything better on the national stage. There is no settled economic alternative in Labour. It's a party hollowed out by caution, and that is the price of refusing to change the narrative, and so Labour will also be departing the scene. It will just be delaying it by appointing a new leader sometime, I suspect in June 2026.

Meanwhile, who else is going to have a bad year? I'm going to be a little out on a limb here and say, I think Nigel Farage is. He might be riding high in the polls for now, but the damage is being seen. His councils are useless. That in Cornwall has collapsed. They had a majority of seats when they had the election in May 2025, but now they can't form an administration. Elsewhere, they have lost up to 20% of their members in some of the councils where they were elected, again, only months ago. They are simply underperforming, and they aren't going to actually deliver on the promises they made because those promises have collided with reality, and council tax cuts aren't going to materialise as a result.

Hype cannot survive contact with governance is the point. I'm making, and voters are noticing that.

They're also noticing the fact that the allegations of racism are sticking in the case of Farage, and whilst I'm not in any way suggesting that Reform will disappear in 2026, because I don't think it will, and I do think it will run a big challenge in the local elections in that year, and also in Wales and Scotland, I do think it is the year when the myth will be punctured. Don't believe that Reform is going to be the dominant force by 2029.

Nor will the Tories merge with Reform in 2026. Farage will not touch their record. They are, anyway, a bunch of losers. Why would he want them? Why would he want to lumber his party with these people who frankly have done nothing to solve any problem in this country for so long?

So the Tories are going to continue to drift towards irrelevance. The local members may defect to Reform, but the party itself is going to fizzle out, and even if Badenoch goes and is replaced by Jenrick, which is a horrible thought and one I really don't want to contemplate, but which could also happen in June after those local election results, the brand is broken anyway. The responsibility for failure is going to stick with the party, whoever is in charge, and oblivion is a process, not an event, and that process is well underway.

Is somebody going to have a good year? Well, Zack Polanski looks as though he could do. The Greens are doing well, but I offer a note of caution. As has been evidenced in discussion on my blog, Zack Polanski is facing internal division within the Greens. Some are saying he's too left-wing. Others are saying he's not green enough, and there are people who are arguing over economic policy, some trying to make sure that the old John McDonnell fiscal rules are put into place. Others are arguing, , As I would, that modern monetary theory must be the basis for going forward.

The point is the media scrutiny on Zack Polanski is only going to intensify. When he's offering the only left-of-centre alternative in England in particular, that is inevitably going to be the case.

There is nobody else in the field now. Your Party is going to go anywhere, that's my prediction. It's too confused, people don't trust it. People don't believe it can sort itself out, and they're not going to get any significant political ranking as a result, so Zack Polanski is the person everyone's going to be looking at. Will he survive the pressure? I don't know. That's important; could they fracture even? Yes, that's a possibility. We have seen the stresses in the Greens in Scotland. If you don't follow that, well, it's been a difficult time, or they could mature, and that's my point, they could. Their survival will, however, depend, I think, on one thing, and that is economic clarity to explain their ideas and to make it clear how they can deliver on the promise of a brighter future. A lot hangs on them getting this right.

Lib Dems, meanwhile, will remain permanently niche. The permanent also-rans and 2026 is offering very little change for them. They will remain in existence, but for them, relevance will remain elusive.

That's my forecast for the UK for 2026: a difficult year, and the only potential winners may be the Greens, but definitely the SNP, and Plaid Cymru. They are going to be riding high. For the rest, difficult times ahead, and therefore, for us as well: we're going to have the challenge of working out what we want and who we want and how we want them to do things. That's one of the themes for this channel in the coming year.

But of course, the world is not made up just of the UK. Outside the UK, Ukraine will not see peace, is my prediction. Why? That's because Europe doesn't want it. Whatever they say, the leaders of Europe are very happy that Ukraine is still at war with Russia. Why? Because they don't want Russia to be at war with them, and once Russia resolves its conflict in Ukraine, which is costing hundreds of thousands of dead Russians, and that's the tragedy of the whole thing, then Russia would have the reserves to think about spreading elsewhere. So we have to recognise the reality that Ukraine is paying a heavy price for us all, and that will continue. I can't see a way out of that.

Nor do I see an end to conflict in Gaza. Israel will not achieve the resolution that he claims is possible. The peace programme which Donald Trump has put in place is a farce; there is no one who can deliver it, and it isn't taking into consideration the needs of the people of Gaza themselves, and therefore it will be a disaster, and the human catastrophe will continue.

Moral failure compounds, political failure here, and I have no answers at present because the players around the scene are still there. Until we get rid of Trump, until we get rid of Netanyahu, until literally time might eliminate both of them, then we are in deep trouble and that moral failure will continue.

My heart bleeds for Gaza. It has done for a long time; whose wouldn't? I hope for a brighter future, but I don't really see much changing in 2026, and I don't think a change of US presidency will be of any benefit either.

So, who might have a good year? I've already mentioned: Scotland and Wales could have hope. Hope in the form of new governments that they didn't really anticipate, which can talk about the possibility of building new systems for each country in a way that might lead to independence, and which I would welcome if it did. They are being offered a way out and not just a change of manager. They, in other words, have something available to them, which is almost absent elsewhere in politics, and that is a vision. That's why they might have a good year.

Everywhere else, austerity is going to continue to backfire. Technocratic politics is collapsing, but as yet no one has got an answer to the managed decline, which it is delivering. 2026 is when the bills are going to come in, and we're going to ask the question about how will they be settled in political terms, because that is obviously what is going to happen, but this will be a strange year, a painful year, a year of reckoning for politics and a reminder that economics is all about care and that focusing on financial issues is never going to provide the answer. But we are going to have to go through this pain before you reach something which is better.

The consequence is, we must tell a different economic story, one based upon capability, and not constraint, and on care and not markets, and on democracy and not fear, and that's what I'll be doing in 2026. It's going to be difficult, but this is also an opportunity, and I'm going to try to grab it.

What do you think? Do you believe that 2026 could be the year of political change? There's a poll down below. Let us know.

Poll

[poll id="279"]

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