

GIOR | GLOBAL INFLUENCE OPERATIONS REPORT

ZOHRAN K. MAMDANI & THE EMERGING US RED-GREEN ALLIANCE

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Executive Summary

Zohran K. Mamdani, New York City’s first Muslim mayor and a self-described democratic socialist, rose to office through a coalition that echoes the UK’s Red–Green precedent: a strategic convergence between progressive-left movements and Muslim civic organizations linked to Islamist political traditions. Mamdani’s core program is secular and rights-based — he condemns jihadist violence and does not advocate religious governance — yet Islamist-influenced groups materially boosted his 2025 campaign through funding, volunteer mobilization, and communal legitimacy, mainly because his positions on Palestine and anti-Islamophobia align with their narrative priorities. The result is a hybrid formation: not ideological fusion and not mere identity turnout, but shared antagonism and complementary capacities, formed not through formal organizational alignment but through overlapping activist networks and common messaging environments. This report evaluates how that coalition emerged, how it functions, and what its presence may signal for messaging, appointments, and policy direction in office.

The Red–Green Alliance in the United Kingdom

In the early 2000s, British politics witnessed the emergence of an unusual coalition: a partnership between segments of the radical left and Islamist civic organizations, united not by shared ideological goals but by a common opposition to Western liberalism and military intervention. This alignment became most visible through the anti-war protests surrounding the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, but it drew on longer-running currents within British political life. On one side were socialist groups, anti-imperialist campaigners, and the broader activist left. On the other were Muslim community organizations, some of which had ideological or historical connections to Islamist movements abroad. Their cooperation came to be described as a “Red–Green alliance” — “red” denoting the socialist left, and “green” symbolizing political Islam. [1]

The clearest institutional expression of this alliance was the Stop the War Coalition, founded in 2001 and led by figures such as Lindsey German and Andrew Murray, both senior members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). [2] The coalition mobilized large-scale demonstrations

against British support for US military interventions, drawing unprecedented numbers into the streets on 15 February 2003. [3] Integral to its success was the participation of Muslim civil society networks, particularly the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB). Multiple official and academic sources describe MAB as an organization linked to or influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's ideological tradition in the UK, and they note its key role in co-organizing or mobilizing for major anti-war events. [1][4]

This coalition took on a more formal electoral dimension in 2004, when the Respect Party (Respect – The Unity Coalition) was established. Fronted by George Galloway, a former Labour MP expelled after criticizing Britain's role in Iraq, Respect combined the organizational infrastructure of SWP-aligned activists with community networks associated with MAB and other Muslim organizations. [5][6] In several constituencies — particularly in East London and Birmingham — this coalition enabled electoral breakthroughs. Respect candidates, including Galloway, were elected to Parliament and to municipal councils. [7] Their campaigns frequently emphasized anti-imperialism, opposition to Islamophobia, solidarity with Palestinian nationalism, and defense of marginalized immigrant communities. These issues served as points of convergence, even when the broader political visions of the socialist left and Islamist-influenced actors diverged.

Scholars and analysts emphasize that the unity within the Respect coalition rested less on shared positive ideological commitments than on shared opposition. Both the radical left and Islamist organizations critiqued Western foreign policy in the Middle East, rejected the legitimacy of the War on Terror, and opposed the expanding national security state. They also challenged prevailing narratives of secular liberal modernity — though for distinct reasons. The socialist left framed its critique in terms of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, and opposition to neoliberal governance. Islamist organizations framed theirs in terms of defending Muslim identity, communal autonomy, and religious moral authority. The alliance thus represented convergence in negation: alignment through shared adversaries rather than shared end goals. [1]

Nevertheless, the partnership was not merely symbolic. MAB and other Muslim civic groups provided voter mobilization, volunteer networks, canvassing capacity, community legitimacy, and access to religious institutions. The left-wing organizations contributed party infrastructure, messaging expertise, media platforming, leadership figures, and ideological framing. Each side gained capacities it could not easily generate on its own. This interdependence was particularly visible in municipal politics, especially in Tower Hamlets, where local governance became a site of negotiation between Bengali Muslim political actors, leftist councils, and later independent candidates aligned with religiously grounded identities. [8]

Criticism of the coalition emerged from multiple directions. Some on the left argued that cooperation with Islamist organizations compromised secular principles and risked legitimizing socially conservative positions on issues such as gender and sexuality. Some Muslim leaders expressed discomfort with secular socialist rhetoric and the confrontational activism style of SWP-affiliated groups. Meanwhile, journalists and analysts noted that the coalition allowed Brotherhood-influenced actors to gain political representation through alliances rather than explicit ideological campaigning. At the same time, radical left organizations gained electoral traction where they had historically been weak. [2]

The eventual weakening of the alliance owed more to internal fractures than to external opposition. Respect suffered organizational disputes, leadership struggles, and ideological disagreements; SWP's internal controversies damaged its moral authority; and MAB-aligned networks shifted toward other strategies. Yet the model of coalition politics forged during this period endured: electoral partnerships built on shared oppositional framing, cross-communal mobilization rooted in neighborhood institutions, and political legitimacy expressed through the language of anti-racism and solidarity. [5]

The significance of this history lies not in accusations or moral claims, but in understanding how ideological coalitions form around shared antagonisms. The UK case provides a documented example of a political formation in which left-wing and Islamist actors worked together, not through ideological fusion but through strategic complementarity. The alliance demonstrated that cooperation could be sustained even when long-term political objectives were incompatible, so long as the immediate field of struggle — anti-war activism, anti-Islamophobia advocacy, Palestine solidarity — remained shared.

This report proceeds from that historical backdrop. It examines whether a structurally similar coalition — based on convergence in opposition and strategic mobilization rather than ideological synthesis — has emerged in the United States, centered on the rise of Zohran Mamdani, a progressive political figure whose support has included both socialist activists and organizations linked to Islamist political traditions.

Mamdani Network Affiliation Map

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA): dues-paying member of DSA; endorsed in his 2020 Assembly race after aligning with socialist principles.[9] Mamdani governed as part of a socialist caucus and advanced DSA-backed policies (e.g., decarceration, public transit initiatives).[10]

Progressive Left Endorsers: backed by prominent progressives, including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Bernie Sanders, as well as the Working Families Party, major unions, and community organizations.[11][12] These ties anchor him in a broader progressive coalition on economic and social justice issues.

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR): US civil rights organization with historical roots in Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. [13] Mamdani received strong backing from CAIR's advocacy network. "A CAIR-aligned 501(c)(4) network backed the Unity & Justice Fund Super PAC, which spent at least \$120,000 supporting Mamdani,[12] making CAIR "the largest institutional donor"[12] to his campaign. CAIR-NY celebrated his win as a "historic turning point" for Muslim political engagement.[14]

Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA): US Muslim community organization with Jamaat-e-Islami roots and close to the Muslim Brotherhood, that actively supported Mamdani. [15] ICNA's New York chapter joined the 110+ group endorsement letter,[12] and several ICNA staffers donated to his campaign — contributions that were magnified 6-to-1 by NYC's matching funds program.[12]

Muslim American Society (MAS): Islamist-leaning community group linked to the Muslim Brotherhood that mobilized youth support for Mamdani. [16] MAS youth organizers like

Abdullah Akl led street rallies ("Globalize the intifada") in which Mamdani participated.[12] MAS leaders urged followers to back him, viewing his campaign as furthering Muslim civic influence.

Coalition of Muslim Organizations: Over 110 Muslim organizations – from local mosques to national advocacy groups – co-signed an open letter defending Mamdani against "Islamophobic" attacks and urging Muslim New Yorkers to rally behind him.[12] This unprecedented show of unity provided community legitimacy and a turnout machine for his election.

Palestinian Solidarity Networks: Long-standing ties to pro-Palestine activism. Mamdani co-founded a college chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP),[17] and remains connected to groups like Within Our Lifetime (WOL), a New York Palestinian liberation organization. He has marched alongside WOL leaders who use Islamist-inspired slogans,[12] reflecting overlapping goals between his leftist anti-war stance and Islamist-oriented Palestinian advocacy.

Zohran Mamdani: Analysis

Long-Term Ideological Commitments

Zohran Mamdani's core ideology is rooted in secular progressive-left principles and a deep commitment to social justice causes. As a New York Assemblyman and now mayor, he has consistently advocated for democratic socialist policies – from universal rent control and public banking to taxing the wealthy for public services.[10] His agenda focuses on equitable governance (housing affordability, transit access, economic equality), reflecting a long-term alignment with the progressive left wing of the Democratic Party. This secular policy orientation indicates that religious doctrine plays no role in his platform;[18] for example, he has never promoted Islamic law (Sharia) or any form of theocracy in government, concentrating instead on civic issues of governance and rights.[18]

Concurrently, Mamdani has been ideologically committed to anti-imperialist and pro-Palestinian activism from early on. In college (2013–2014), he co-founded a Students for Justice in Palestine chapter, signaling that Palestinian liberation was "central to my identity," as he later described.[17] Unlike many politicians who only cautiously broach Middle East issues, Mamdani embraced the BDS movement against Israel years before it was politically expedient – in 2014, he endorsed an academic boycott of Israel, and as a state legislator, he introduced a bill to bar nonprofits from funding Israeli settlements.[18] He frames this stance as a matter of human rights and compliance with international law. In a 2025 town hall, Mamdani stated plainly: "My support for BDS is consistent with the core of my politics, which is nonviolence... it is a legitimate movement when you are seeking to find compliance with international law." [18] This quote encapsulates his long-term ideological commitment to nonviolent resistance against what he views as injustices abroad, aligning him with global leftist and anti-colonial currents.

Importantly, Mamdani's personal identity as a Muslim and an immigrant is part of his progressive outlook but not a theocratic project. He is a Shia Muslim and proudly speaks of his faith heritage, yet he emphasizes universalist values in governance. He often says his guiding star is "equality for all who walk this earth," not any sectarian or religious rule.[19]

For instance, his sharp criticisms of Israeli policies (calling the occupation "apartheid" and the 2025 Gaza war "genocide") are articulated in secular human-rights terms, not in religious language.[19] In sum, Mamdani's long-term ideology blends democratic socialism at home and anti-war, pro-Palestine internationalism, positioning him firmly on the progressive left. This foundation is secular and rights-based, even as it overlaps with causes important to Islamist movements.

Political Coalition Partners

Mamdani's rise has been propelled by a broad coalition that spans both the progressive left and the Muslim-American community. On the left, he enjoys backing from traditional progressive power bases: he was endorsed by the Democratic Socialists of America (which identified a "strong socialist voter base" in his district) and became the Queens DSA's marquee candidate.[9] In his mayoral campaign, mainstream progressive groups and figures joined the cause – the Working Families Party, major labor unions, tenant organizations, and figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez all lent support.[11] These partners see Mamdani as an heir to the Sanders/AOC wing of politics, advancing egalitarian policies. The presence of organizations like DRUM (Desis Rising Up & Moving) and CAAAV (Asian American grassroots group) among his endorsers underscored Mamdani's appeal as a multiracial, immigrant-friendly progressive who could build bridges across communities.[11]

At the same time, Mamdani galvanized an unprecedented coalition of Muslim and South Asian communities. He hails from a Ugandan-born Indian Muslim family and represents one of NYC's most diverse districts, factors that helped make him a symbol of empowerment for many Muslim-Americans. Over 110 Muslim organizations — from local mosques to national advocacy groups — formally endorsed or supported Mamdani during the campaign, an extraordinary show of unity.[12] This network included the New York chapters of groups like CAIR, ICNA, and MAS, as well as smaller community centers and student groups. They collectively condemned the "Islamophobic, anti-Black, and xenophobic" attacks directed at Mamdani during the race, framing their support as a stand against bigotry.[12] Notably, this outpouring was as much a defensive coalition as an ideological endorsement: many Muslim organizations rallied to Mamdani's side as he faced disparagement in media and politics, seeing an opportunity to advance Muslim representation and protect one of their own.

Mamdani's political events often blended these constituencies. For example, after his primary victory, he shared the stage with both progressive icons and Muslim community leaders, signaling the fusion of his bases.[19] His coalition partners thus range from secular left activists to imams and Muslim community organizers. To his supporters, this rainbow coalition is a natural extension of progressive inclusivity: just as left-wing candidates might court labor unions or Black church groups, Mamdani courted and empowered Muslim groups as a key part of his base.[19] The coalition is largely issue-driven (housing, anti-war, civil rights), but also identity-affirming – many Muslim New Yorkers saw in Mamdani a historic chance for representation. This dual nature of his alliance has drawn both praise and suspicion. Progressive media celebrated it as a win for diversity and pluralism, while right-wing critics dubbed it a "red-green axis" (an alliance of leftists and Islamists) bent on smuggling extremist influence into City Hall.[20] In practice, Mamdani's partners span a spectrum: secular socialist allies who share his domestic agenda, and faith-based organizations that, while more conservative religiously, align with him on key political goals

like Palestinian rights and anti-Islamophobia. This coalition politics helped Mamdani achieve electoral victories that neither bloc could likely have secured alone.

In the final days of the campaign, former UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn participated in a phonebank event organized by the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America to support Mamdani's get-out-the-vote effort. The event, publicly announced on social media, linked Mamdani to figures associated with the United Kingdom's earlier Red-Green coalitional politics and drew criticism from political opponents who pointed to Corbyn's contentious record on antisemitism during his leadership of the Labour Party. The appearance thus served as both a symbolic and practical instance of transnational political collaboration between progressive-left networks and Muslim community mobilization frameworks. [21]

Funding and Mobilization Networks

Beyond moral support, Mamdani's campaign received tangible support in funding and grassroots muscle from networks linked to U.S.-based Islamist organizations. Foremost among these was CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations). CAIR's national leadership took the unprecedented step of channeling major resources into a local NYC race: its new political arm, CAIR Action, largely funded and controlled a Super PAC, the Unity & Justice Fund, to boost Mamdani.[12] According to activist Linda Sarsour, CAIR became the "largest institutional donor" to pro-Mamdani efforts.[12] Financial disclosures confirm that this CAIR-linked PAC spent at least \$120,000 in support of Mamdani's campaign.[12] Such overt political spending by a Muslim civil rights group in a US mayoral race was virtually unheard of, and mirrored strategies used by pro-Israel PACs – a fact not lost on CAIR officials. At an ICNA meeting, a CAIR-California director openly declared, "AIPAC has had the run for 60 years, but it is over now... We will teach these folks a lesson... we are coming," signaling a direct intent to counter Jewish pro-Israel political influence with Muslim-American organizing.[12] This rhetoric and investment illustrate a strategic mobilization of an "Islamist influence network" funneling money and political capital into Mamdani's rise.

In addition to funding, on-the-ground mobilization by Islamist-oriented groups played a role. The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and Muslim American Society (MAS), each rooted in Islamic revivalist movements, encouraged their members to turn out for Mamdani. ICNA's New York chapter and MAS leaders formally endorsed him and integrated his campaign into their outreach. For example, a number of ICNA staffers donated small amounts to Mamdani's campaign, which, through New York's 6-to-1 public matching funds, turned a modest \$1,300 of ICNA-related contributions into about \$7,700 of public financing support – effectively leveraging communal donations into greater impact.[12] Meanwhile, MAS's youth wing became an informal part of Mamdani's field operations: activists like Abdullah Akl organized street rallies and door-knocking events on his behalf.[12] This provided a ready-made corps of enthusiastic volunteers from within the Muslim community network.

Mamdani welcomed and openly thanked these networks for their support.[12] He appeared at CAIR banquets, acknowledged Muslim community organizations in his speeches, and made it clear that he saw their participation as integral, not incidental, to his victory.[12] In turn, the organizations gained a seat at the table: Mamdani's win meant one of their allies now held high office. The relationship has been described as mutually reinforcing: "he gives them a high-profile champion, and they provide him an energized base of Muslim voters and

donors.”[22] This synergy suggests a deliberate partnership, if not formal coordination, between Mamdani's campaign and Islamist-influenced networks. It's important to note, however, that all this support was through legal and above-board channels (registered PACs, public endorsements, independent voter drives) – a point Mamdani's team highlighted in the face of criticism, noting that there was nothing clandestine about Muslim groups mobilizing for a candidate just as any interest group would. Nonetheless, the scale and ideological orientation of this support, coming largely from organizations historically tied to the Muslim Brotherhood or Jamaat-e-Islami, set Mamdani's campaign apart and raised questions about what those networks might expect in return for their investment.

Messaging Overlaps with Islamist Actors

Mamdani's rhetoric and associations on international issues – especially concerning Muslim world conflicts – show significant overlap with the messaging of Islamist-influenced actors, even as he insists his motivations are secular. His outspoken advocacy for Palestinian rights is one clear convergence. Like many Islamist movements, he portrays the Israeli occupation in stark terms: calling it "apartheid" and even using the term "genocide" for Israel's actions in Gaza.[18] In the closing days of the mayoral race, Mamdani controversially affirmed Israel's "right to exist" only "as a state with equal rights, not a Jewish state." This essentially endorses a one-state solution – a position long championed by Islamist groups (who reject the legitimacy of a Jewish state) – albeit Mamdani frames it in egalitarian language.[17] Such statements delighted his Islamist-influenced supporters but alarmed pro-Israel observers, illustrating how his foreign policy discourse mirrors that of U.S.-based Islamist networks on key points.

His campaign and activism also intersected with Islamist-leaning personalities and initiatives. Mamdani sometimes literally marched alongside them. He joined protests organized by Within Our Lifetime (WOL), a New York-based Palestinian advocacy organization, led by Nerdeen Kiswani, where demonstrators chant slogans like "Globalize the intifada" – a phrase invoking a worldwide uprising.[12] At one protest, Mamdani was photographed in a crowd led by Kiswani and Abdullah Akl (MAS youth organizer), who popularized the "globalize the intifada" chant.[12] Appearing with such figures signaled a comfort with the militant imagery they employ. Indeed, when asked to disavow the slogan, Mamdani initially demurred, arguing that the mayor shouldn't be a "language police" and noting that some activists use "intifada" simply to mean "struggle." [18] He only later "discouraged" the chant after dialogue with a rabbi, acknowledging it evoked painful memories for Israelis.[18] This episode showed Mamdani navigating a messaging overlap: trying not to alienate his activist allies who see "intifada" as righteous resistance, while coming to recognize why mainstream audiences hear it as a call for violence.

Mamdani has also platformed or praised figures viewed as radical by the establishment, aligning with Islamist networks' affinities. For instance, he publicly lauded Imam Siraj Wahhaj – once named an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing – as a "pillar" of the Brooklyn Muslim community.[12] Similarly, Mamdani courted voters at the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge, whose imam had previously glorified armed resistance in Gaza and prayed for the end of Israel.[12] Critics seized on these associations, but for Mamdani's base, appearing at a popular local mosque was simply outreach to constituents. He has shared stages with activists like Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian-American detained under the Trump administration, and later a cause célèbre among Muslim advocacy

groups.[12] Each of these instances reflects overlapping circles: Mamdani's campaign events and endorsements often featured the same clerics and agitators championed by the Islamist influence network in America.

Mamdani's relationship with Palestinian-American activist Linda Sarsour has also shaped aspects of his political messaging. Sarsour has been a visible supporter and organizer for Mamdani since his 2020 Assembly race and later during the 2025 mayoral campaign, particularly at moments when questions about Palestine activism or Muslim civic mobilization became central to public debate. [23] While Sarsour has acted as a bridge between progressive-left and Muslim community networks, her own background has received scrutiny. Multiple members of Sarsour's extended family were arrested or convicted in the late 1990s and early 2000s for providing financial or logistical support to Hamas-linked actors and charitable networks.[24] [25] Sarsour herself has denied any personal involvement with Hamas or support for violent extremism, characterizing the resurfacing of her family history as part of a broader pattern of Islamophobic delegitimization.

A particularly telling incident was the "Holy Land Five" lyric controversy. In 2017, as an aspiring rapper, Mamdani released a song referencing "My love to the Holy Land Five. You better look 'em up," – a shout-out to five Islamic charity leaders convicted of routing money to Hamas.[12] The lyric resurfaced in 2025, sparking outrage that he'd praised men found guilty of financing a terrorist-designated group. Mamdani defended the song as an autobiographical expression of Muslim-American identity rather than a political statement, pointedly stopping short of an apology.[18] This non-apology resonated with segments of the Muslim community that regard the Holy Land Foundation case as an unjust prosecution of charitable work. In effect, Mamdani's stance aligned with the narrative of Islamist advocacy groups that view the "Holy Land Five" as victims, not criminals. While Mamdani didn't explicitly endorse Hamas, his willingness to favorably mention figures tied to Hamas support networks showed how his messaging can echo the grievances and heroes of Islamist movements.

Mamdani's refusal to retract the lyric was consistent with his handling of other controversies tied to Israel. For example, when asked on CNN in October 2025 about a resurfaced statement in which he claimed that "when the boot of the NYPD is on your neck, it's been laced by the IDF," Mamdani contextualized the comment as a critique of joint NYPD-Israeli training programs rather than a literal assertion of operational coordination between the two forces. He acknowledged concern about the exercises but stated that his focus as a mayoral candidate was on "working with the NYPD to actually deliver public safety." [26]

Taken together, Mamdani's messaging overlaps with Islamist-influenced actors primarily on foreign policy, civil liberties, and identity politics fronts. He echoes their line on Palestine and Muslim world conflicts, stands alongside their community leaders, and occasionally uses or tolerates their movement slogans. However, it's worth noting that Mamdani typically repackages these overlaps in the idiom of the progressive left – e.g., citing international law, human rights, and anti-racism. This duality allows him to appeal to Islamist-influenced constituencies without overtly presenting himself as an Islamist. Still, the convergence is sufficient that Islamist networks clearly recognize him as a fellow traveler who amplifies parts of their agenda.

This broader movement ecosystem also includes organizations and activist networks that operate adjacent to more radical actors. Samidoun, the Palestinian prisoner solidarity organization designated by the Israeli Ministry of Defense as affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), has been active in some of the same protest and organizing environments that intersect with Mamdani's support base.[27] Mamdani has not endorsed Samidoun and is not affiliated with it. However, several New York-based Palestinian solidarity coalitions — including demonstrations organized by Within Our Lifetime — have included participation from Samidoun-linked activists or have shared space in multi-group protest alliances. In one instance, a student organizer who later interned in Mamdani's office appeared at rallies co-sponsored by Samidoun-affiliated networks. [28] These instances indicate movement-space adjacency rather than direct organizational or ideological alignment. They illustrate how Mamdani's political coalition overlaps with a wider pro-Palestinian mobilization environment that contains actors with differing strategic and ideological trajectories.

Audience-Specific Messaging and Coalition Maintenance

Mamdani's coalition depended not only on shared issue positions but also on deliberate modulation of political messaging across audiences. His campaign materials and public speeches emphasized secular, class-based themes such as housing affordability, labor rights, and public transit, while avoiding foregrounding his long-standing pro-Palestinian activism during the electoral phase. This strategy was described explicitly by one of his closest political allies, Linda Sarsour, during his 2020 Assembly campaign. Responding to claims that Mamdani was mobilizing religion for political gain, Sarsour stated that while Mamdani's Muslim identity is part of who he is, it was not the basis of his electoral messaging: "Our candidate is out there and just happens to be a Muslim." She further noted that Mamdani intentionally bracketed his pro-Palestine advocacy during the campaign, saying: "None of the campaign was ever like 'Free Palestine' or 'the Muslims are going to get extra rights'... It just happens to be something that's part of who Zohran is. But that's actually not been his campaign." [23]

This approach reflects a broader pattern present in earlier instances of Red-Green coalition formation, particularly in the United Kingdom during the early 2000s.[103] There, left-wing actors and Muslim civic organizations aligned around shared opposition to foreign policy, securitization, and anti-Muslim discrimination, while downplaying areas of divergence in social norms, theological commitments, and long-term political objectives. The coalition functioned effectively not because the component groups agreed on a positive ideological program, but because each benefited from coordinated mobilization, turnout networks, and mutual protection against external critique. Messaging discipline was central to maintaining the alliance: each side highlighted the shared adversary while minimizing the visibility of internal differences.

Mamdani's campaign demonstrates a similar dynamic. By emphasizing universalist and secular policy frames in public messaging while maintaining relationships with Muslim civic organizations that mobilized volunteers, donors, and endorsers, the campaign preserved broad cross-constituency appeal. At the same time, the downplaying of certain ideological commitments during the campaign does not indicate ideological concealment so much as coalition management—a strategic practice aimed at sustaining alignment among groups with overlapping, but not identical, political priorities.

Points of Divergence

Despite areas of convergence, there are critical points at which Mamdani diverges from Islamist ideologies and makes clear that he is not an Islamist himself. Firstly, his governance philosophy is avowedly secular and inclusive. He speaks the language of democratic socialism and pluralism, not religious exclusivism. Mamdani has never advocated implementing Sharia (Islamic law) or any religious doctrine in government.[18] His focus on issues like housing and transit is rooted in class and equity, not faith. This contrasts with true Islamist politicians whose agendas center on religious law or creating Islamic states. In interviews and debates, Mamdani emphasizes that being Muslim is his identity, but not his political program – his program is about social justice in a diverse society.[19]

Secondly, Mamdani has drawn a firm line against political violence and extremism, distinguishing himself from the more militant strain of Islamism. He repeatedly condemns terrorism and violence against civilians, no matter the cause. Notably, he publicly denounced the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7, 2023, as "a horrific war crime," and stressed that supporting Palestinian rights can "never be confused for a celebration of the loss of civilian life." [18] This stance distances him from any Islamist actors who justify attacks on Israeli or other civilian targets. It also demonstrates moral consistency with his nonviolent ethos (as reflected in his commitment to BDS as a peaceful tactic). Mamdani's condemnation of Hamas's brutality was significant given that some Islamist-linked activists were more equivocal on the issue; it showed he would not cross the line into apologism for jihadist violence.

Moreover, Mamdani has shown willingness to engage with communities outside his own base and to adjust when confronted with valid criticism, which diverges from a dogmatic Islamist approach. A case in point was his response to the "Globalize the intifada" slogan. Initially defensive, he eventually listened to Jewish community concerns and acknowledged the pain the phrase caused, even advising supporters to drop the chant. [18] This capacity for dialogue and adaptation – consulting a rabbi, of all people, to gain perspective – marks a departure from the uncompromising rhetoric often associated with Islamist hardliners. It suggests Mamdani's alliances do not make him beholden to every stance within those networks; he is able to push back or moderate when needed to uphold broader values (like inter-community harmony).

Another point of divergence is how Mamdani frames his advocacy in universalist terms rather than religious solidarity. For instance, while Islamist groups celebrate his pro-Palestinian positions as a win for the Muslim ummah (global community), Mamdani himself frames it as part of a global human rights struggle that includes Jews, Muslims, and others of conscience. [19] He often highlights Jewish voices who oppose Israel's occupation to show that his stance is not about Muslims versus Jews, but justice versus injustice. This is a nuanced but important distinction: it places him in the tradition of left-wing internationalism rather than in the realm of sectarian Islamism.

Finally, Mamdani's domestic policy agenda diverges sharply from the priorities of Islamist conservatives. As a New York progressive, he aligns with feminist, LGBTQ+, and minority rights initiatives that many Islamist groups (especially more fundamentalist ones) might not prioritize or even oppose. While this report's focus is not on those issues, it's telling that Mamdani has been embraced by diverse progressive groups and has not been constrained by

conservative religious positions on social matters. In short, Mamdani breaks with Islamist positions where they conflict with his fundamental ethos of equality and secular governance.

These points of divergence underscore that Mamdani's partnership with Muslim organizations is primarily strategic and issue-based, not a wholesale adoption of an Islamist worldview. He remains, at his core, a secular socialist politician who happens to be Muslim, rather than a Muslim sectarian leader who cloaks himself in socialism. This distinction is crucial in evaluating the true nature of his rise.

Assessment

Considering the totality of evidence, Zohran Mamdani's political rise is best characterized as a hybrid socialist-Islamist alignment. Fundamentally, Mamdani operates from a progressive-left platform and owes much of his success to secular coalition politics – he is a product of New York's left-wing resurgence and grassroots organizing. However, his journey to power was also markedly abetted by U.S.-based Islamist influence networks that identified in him a like-minded ally on key issues and an historic representative of their community. The alliance was mutually beneficial: Mamdani gained crucial resources and voter mobilization from Muslim organizations, and those organizations gained a sympathetic standard-bearer in high office. This goes beyond mere identity-based solidarity; it reflects an intentional convergence of interests – for example, shared opposition to Israeli policies and a joint stance against Islamophobia – that has created a Red-Green (socialist-Islamist) political synergy.

At the same time, it would be an overstatement to call Mamdani a "deliberate influence channel" driven by Islamist networks. There is no indication that he is controlled by or subordinated to those groups in terms of policy decisions. He maintains an independent progressive agenda and has taken stances (condemning Islamist violence, espousing secular governance) that orthodox Islamists would not. Thus, labeling his rise as primarily just progressive-left coalition politics would ignore the significant role Islamist-influenced organizations played in his campaign, while calling it an Islamist-driven project would ignore Mamdani's autonomous leftist convictions and points of divergence. The most accurate assessment is a hybrid alignment: Mamdani's movement represents a fusion of progressive socialist politics with the enthusiastic support of Islamist-influenced networks.

In practice, this means Mamdani will likely govern on his broad progressive mandate, but the influence of his Islamist-influenced allies may be felt in certain policy areas and appointments. Indeed, Islamist figures globally celebrated his victory as "a civilizational win" for Muslim political power, reflecting how his success is perceived as their success as well. Moving forward, the true test of this hybrid alliance will be whether these networks seek tangible policy influence and whether Mamdani accommodates them or holds to a purely progressive course. For now, the evidence suggests his rise was neither accident nor subterfuge: it was the product of a deliberate coalition that bridged socialist ideals and Islamist community interests, resulting in a novel power dynamic in New York City politics.

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