

Conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch hands empire to son Lachlan

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Lachlan Murdoch, Rupert Murdoch and James Murdoch shown at a 2014 event in Beverly Hills, California.

Rupert Murdoch announced Thursday he will step down as chairman of his global media empire, a conservative behemoth that shaped politics

across continents, and hand control over to his son Lachlan.

The Australian-born mogul, who built a global entertainment and news juggernaut instrumental in events from the Margaret Thatcher era to the rise of Donald Trump, will step back at the age of 92, starting mid-November, Fox Corp. and News Corp announced.

With a letter to colleagues saying he'd decided to "transition to the role of Chairman Emeritus," Murdoch drew a line under a remarkable career that saw him rise from [local news](#) in Adelaide, Australia, to amassing a stable of legacy newspapers in Britain and the United States, before launching into broadcast media.

Aggressive tabloids like The Sun and New York Post, storied dailies The Times and Wall Street Journal, and big-hitting television networks like Fox and Sky have turned the Murdoch family into some of the world's most influential figures.

But the operation's news division has drawn frequent criticism under his leadership for blurring the line between commentary and journalism.

Fox News anchor Bill Hemmer offered gratitude, saying Murdoch's "contributions are both innumerable and extraordinary."



Lachlan Murdoch, the appointed successor of Rupert Murdoch's media empire, shown in July 2017.

Critics such as Angelo Carusone, CEO of Media Matters for America, a liberal group, painted a different picture.

"In Fox News, Murdoch created a uniquely destructive force in American democracy and public life, one that ushered in an era of division where racist and post-truth politics thrive," Carusone said. "The world is worse off because of Rupert Murdoch."

Murdoch was typically unapologetic, taking a parting shot at what he called the "elites" who had "open contempt" for outsiders.

"Most of the media is in cahoots with those elites, peddling political narratives rather than pursuing the truth," he said.

Scandal

The tycoon leaves behind a trail of media scandals.

In 2011, the company suddenly shuttered the News of the World, a popular British weekly tabloid following public revulsion over its journalists' practice of hacking the phones of celebrities and crime victims to get scoops.



Fox News ousted Tucker Carlson earlier this year in the wake of the \$787 million settlement with Dominion Voting Systems.

Then in 2016, Rupert Murdoch ousted powerful [news](#) chief Roger Ailes following a sexual harassment scandal later dramatized in the Oscar-winning 2019 movie "Blockbuster."

But every controversy paled in comparison to fallout from the Murdoch empire's relationship with Trump, peaking in coverage of the Republican populist's campaign to persuade tens of millions of people that he was cheated in the 2020 election.

In April, Fox News agreed to pay a \$787.5 million settlement in a defamation case brought by voting machine maker Dominion. It alleged that the network knowingly and repeatedly promoted Trump's false narrative that the voting machines were part of a conspiracy to rob him of victory against Joe Biden.

A week after the settlement, Fox ousted conservative firebrand Tucker Carlson, one of several prominent Fox figures who had publicly championed Trump, while privately disparaging the conspiracy theory peddling Republican.

Succession and 'Succession'

The transition of leadership to Murdoch's son Lachlan, executive chair and [chief executive officer](#) at Fox Corporation, follows a period of intense speculation about the media empire's leadership plans that proved inspiration for the fictionalized and highly-rated "Succession" series on HBO.



Mobile billboards circle Fox headquarters in May 2023 with a message aimed at advertisers not to fund Fox News.

Third Bridge analyst Jamie Lumley said the transition could boost the odds of a merger between Fox and News Corp.

The company still faces litigation over the Smartmatic suit on the 2020 election, said Lumley, adding "questions also remain about how Fox will approach its programming and coverage of the 2024 election cycle, a year which will be flush with political ad dollars."

In 2020, Lachlan's younger brother James Murdoch, who had been in the running to lead the empire, resigned from the News Corp. board, alluding to "disagreements over certain editorial content."

James Murdoch and his wife Kathryn have also become significant donors to Democratic candidates and progressive environment and voting rights groups.

However, under the terms of the Murdoch family trust that controls the media empire, Lachlan and James, along with sisters Elisabeth and Prudence, will have an equal vote on the business after the death of Rupert Murdoch.

"The scramble for control will happen when he dies," New York University professor Jay Rosen said on X, the former Twitter platform.

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