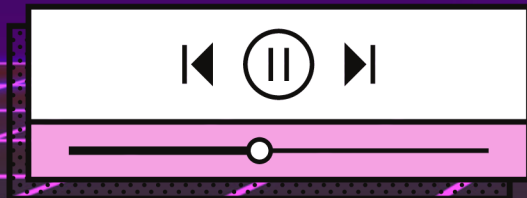
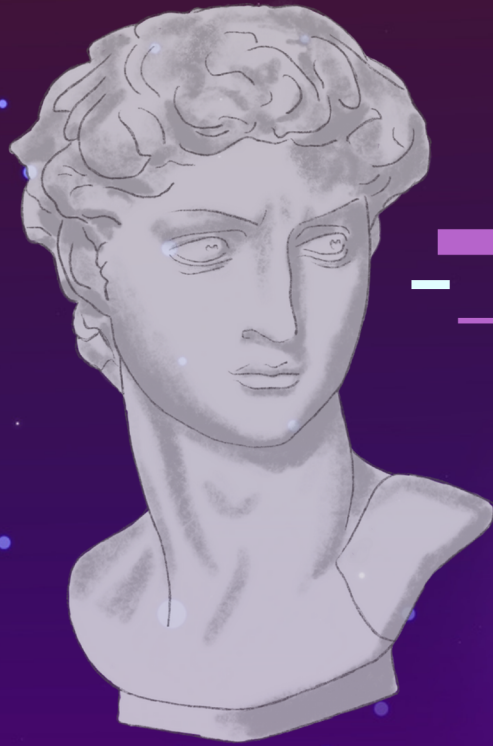


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A MARXIST CAUCUS IN DSA

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Winter 2025

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THE VAPORWAVE FEVER-DREAM

In his 1993 work *Spectres of Marx*, French philosopher Jacques Derrida countered the liberal-triumphalist ideas put forward by Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*. In contrast, Derrida introduced the term "Haunt-ology" to suggest that quite the opposite was true, that the present continues to be dominated by the haunting ideological specters of the past.

In the early 2010s, before he died, Mark Fisher popularized the theory of Hauntology as applied to culture. The issue, Fisher said, was the slow foreclosure of the future. The suffocating, universalizing liberal capitalism had won, but there was no glory in the victory. It was getting harder and harder to imagine change, and at the same time it became clearer that society was getting worse, not better. In that dying climate, citizens of Western capitalist states began grasping for the future by looking to the past. Politics and culture became overrun by half-remembered pastiche. The box office was flooded with sequels, style became obsessively anachronistic, and culture became exclusively referential.

Around the same time, a musical and artistic movement emerged which simultaneously embodied and was informed by Fisher's theory. *Vaporwave*, with its music produced from the sampling of elevator music and 80s pop hits, and its visuals based on mixed collages of 90s internet aesthetics, iconic consumer items, Greek busts, and anime characters, was an artform built entirely out of remixing anew the cultural hauntings of the past.

Vaporwave was seemingly the archetypical meme, self-conscious of its own existence as a meme. And at the same time, it was political, a critique of late-capitalist consumerism by an ironic embrace of a simpler consumerist time.

But just as the art movement was gaining the attention of the mainstream, it was being declared a dead genre, even as the memes kept coming.

Around the same time, in the realm of actual politics, three visions of the future emerged, each themselves an effort to recapture the past. Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn offered Modernist Welfare State nostalgia. Elon Musk mixed mid-century dreams of space travel and flying cars with the industrial capitalist dogma of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison. And Donald Trump tapped a reactionary nostalgia, reviving Reagan's slogan, 'Make America Great Again,' while somehow also tapping into internet virality.

Trump's odd blend tied together an anti-establishment ethos around the most establishment of figures: an 80s businessman spending billions to co-opt anti-consumerist rhetoric and populist styling. And Trump gained ground on the same internet locale where Fisher first observed the Vaporwave revival. Message boards, eclectic online social and quasi-political social networks searching for an avatar to give voice to their malaise. And so in this great nostalgic flux there was a moment—the internet calls it the 'Great Meme War'—when Trump's rise and Vaporwaves's fall coincided. And at this inflection point, the two aesthetics gave birth to a misbegotten horror—TrumpWave. It was a flicker in time, a couple months at most. But the more this moment in time fades into the past, the more it feels permanent.

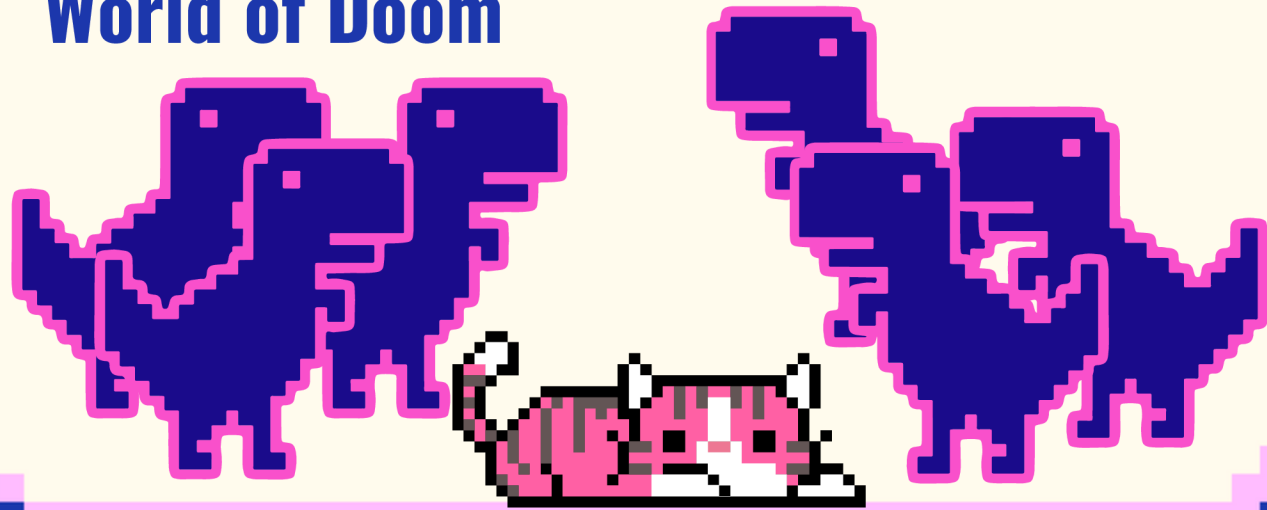
Sanders and Corbyn failed. But Musk and Trump were on a shared trajectory for power. Now Musk—who revived TrumpWave with his DarkMAGA—increasingly owns the internet infrastructure on which memes are made and spread, waging a global culture war by flooding our feeds with endless far-right misinformation.

At the same time, the 'dead' aesthetic of Vaporwave—and the hopes of the Bernie moment—refuse to die, haunting us as a good dream in a waking nightmare.

Welcome to the fever dream.



Revolutionary Optimism in a World of Doom



BY IAN MOHR



The recent re-election of Donald Trump as president of the United States has a much different feeling than the first time he won the presidency.

Instead of experiencing a resurgence, the opposition has been left demoralized. The response from liberal Americans who took to the streets in nearly unprecedented numbers in 2017 has not materialized this time around. Even the response from leftists, whose anti-Trump actions drew headlines right after the 2016 election, has seemed muted. This is not surprising. Trump's second victory was much less shocking than his first. After eight years, Trump's rhetoric has been normalized and his far-right program has won over the plurality of Americans who voted. This was not the case when he lost the popular vote in 2016, as the Electoral College carried him to victory.

The response since Trump's victory from much of the anti-Trump camp has been one of doom and despair. The Democratic Party, supposedly the most powerful organization which could fight back against Trump, has shown itself to be ill-equipped for the task. Leaders like Joe Biden and Chuck Schumer have rallied under the illusion of bipartisanship, promising a "smooth transition" into the Trump administration and putting up little outward resistance to his agenda. They are forming themselves into a loyal opposition which does little to fundamentally oppose his ideas.

The Democrats' failure, compounded by their accommodation to Trump's agenda, highlights the necessity for a true opposition, an opposition based on the politics of class struggle and provide a way out of the crisis faced by the American people.

Popular movements such as Black Lives Matter in 2020 can radicalize people, sparking a resurgence of revolutionary-minded politics which are otherwise largely absent from the public discourse. However, the momentum which arises from protest needs to continue past the moment of the protest itself. Many liberal and progressive organizations experienced unprecedented growth out of the dissatisfaction of Trump's election in 2016 but few are tangibly stronger today, and they are not prepared to wage an effective resistance to Trump.

Only DSA and other socialist organizations with a concrete program for change have remained resilient over these past few years. It is futile to solely organize against something without also organizing for a broader vision, as the failure of the Harris campaign has demonstrated.

Building Enduring Resistance

When thinking about future steps, it is crucial to look to the past. Daniel Singer's influential 1970 book *Prelude to Revolution* chronicles the lessons of the May 1968 student and worker uprising in France. During the uprising, the established unions such as the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the bureaucratized, Stalinized French Communist Party (PCF) failed to meet the moment.

Rather than lending their full support to the mass demonstrations with the potential to topple the conservative government even when they had many chances to do so, organized labor and the PCF gave weak support to the demonstrators, favoring limited reforms and a focus on winning via electoral means. The conflict between the old left and the new left met its high point during this crisis, demonstrating that the revolutionary fervor of the supposedly revolutionary PCF had been long undermined through collaboration with the established powers. The stagnant Soviet Union, complicit in suppressing the Prague uprising that same year, provided no inspiration for the revolutionaries, and their representatives in France replicated the uninspiring line of Moscow. The result? A victory for the conservative right in France in the next election. The demise of corresponding global movements of the late 1960s foreshadowed further right-wing victories in the next decade, which allowed for the implementation of neoliberal policies around the world, and resulted in a dark spiral into irrelevance for pro-worker forces in the aforementioned countries.

The overarching perspective, however, of *Prelude to Revolution* is one of revolutionary optimism, an optimism which when expressed seems almost unbelievable today. Singer predicted socialist revolutions taking place in France and Italy within the decade, with the global events of 1968 serving as just a taste of what was to come, a foreshock to a much larger earthquake soon afterwards. Written just two years after the 1968 upheaval, Singer's argument makes a lot of sense in the context. 1968 was a year which saw unprecedented shifts in political dynamics, with student movements joining with corresponding general strikes in France and across the world.

But the projected revolutions never came. The collapse of the Soviet bloc ended a great tension between world powers, with the victory of capitalist forces propelling a vision of an "end" of history. History, of course, never ended, and continues to unfold. The collapse of the USSR did not mean that capitalism was the inevitable outcome of history. Rather, it was a temporary victory over a decaying system which provided little alternative hope for the international working class.

The final two paragraphs of *Prelude to Revolution* lay out a rejection of that deterministic view of history. I'll leave them here.

"If there is an intellectual victim of the current crisis, it is the fatalistic interpretation of history, the belief that what is must be so and that if it is to be swept away, the upheaval will come on its own. Man counts, the Vietnamese reminded the world, even in the nuclear age. This is why, once the description and analysis is over, there can be no clear answer to the question running through this book—whether the age of conflict, which has already begun, will see the victory of authoritarian rule or the triumph of revolution. The future will be what you will make it. What we shall make it.

Don't run, young comrades. Don't climb onto exposed barricades just to be shot at. Watch your step, because the ground is full of pitfalls. For you, workers in industry, some traps will be dressed up as 'truly revolutionary.' For you, students, technicians, intellectual workers, not all the traps will be so obvious as 'participation.' Watch out and learn. But go on advancing together, in a fighting formation, because your generation can take us on the road to socialism and freedom. And the alternative is still a relapse into barbarism, with or without nuclear doom."

Singer's warning is still relevant.

His identification of pitfalls and "revolutionary" traps, which in this context refer to the neutralization of radical energy through the co-option of the May 68 movement by the PCF and the unions, has parallels in our society today. The United States doesn't even have the powerful reformist socialist parties or powerful unions that France had in 1968. Our watered-down equivalents, liberal Democratic politicians and liberal unionists, have done a good job of co-opting genuine grassroots movements by transforming their demands into watered-down legislation and symbolic gestures, diffusing the trajectory of true systemic change.

Over the past 54 years, a lot has changed. The threat of nuclear doom has given way to more varied threats, greatest of all the threat of climate change. But the strongest threat remains: the large-scale loss of human life in war and genocide to the benefit of none but a few imperialist forces who stand to profit from immense suffering. The danger of climate change is constantly downplayed, not only by the fossil fuel companies and their enablers who deny it altogether but by politicians who reject any sort of meaningful action because of their notions of civility. The threat of a 'New Cold War' with China and Russia, with politicians on both sides of the aisle engaging in more escalatory rhetoric, looms larger than ever before.

We have to move beyond niceties if we're going to have a chance to preserve the planet for our children and their children. The threat of far right authoritarianism and proto-fascism, exemplified by the recent election of Donald Trump but also by a resurgent phenomenon which has arisen in many countries across the world lately, has been downplayed since the election. This comes after Kamala Harris made "our democracy on the line" the centerpiece of her campaign. In a crucial time when Democrats and union leaders should be forming a new resistance to Trump's agenda, they have been mostly silent or even conciliatory to Trump, such as American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten's greeting to the present-elect: "Even though I am one of those people you probably dislike, happy Thanksgiving. I am grateful for this country."

Singer's callback to Rosa Luxemburg's famous slogan of "socialism or barbarism" underscores the reality of the situation. In the words of Luxemburg,

"Today, we face the choice exactly as Friedrich Engels foresaw it a generation ago: either the triumph of imperialism and the collapse of all civilization as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration – a great cemetery. Or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method of war."

We face a choice, as past generations have faced, and will continue to face if we don't resolve the question once and for all. There is an alternative to the present system, and that alternative is a socialist society.

Young people are usually at the forefront of social change, as they were in France then and they are today. But that doesn't mean the youth are inherently radical. According to exit polls, 42 percent of young people who voted in the recent U.S. presidential election voted for Trump, compared to just 31% in 2020. This mirrors past phenomena: the millennial generation had similar patterns, with only 32% voting Republican in 2008 compared to a near tie in 2024. This is not a new phenomenon: in a 1970 Gallup poll, only 49 percent of people aged 21-29 said the U.S. did not make a mistake getting involved in the Vietnam war, compared to 61 percent of Americans over 50.

The lesson from all of this? Young people now, just as in the 1960s, won't lead us to liberation without conscious organization and strategy. Just hoping history will finally catch up to the inevitable revolution to come ignores the collective effort required to make that happen. People who have been captivated by the tide of revolutionary moments find themselves directionless when the energy fades. When the protests die out and a cause which captivates a large audience seems to be on the tail end of its prominence, what comes next?

Singing To Victory

"El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" (The people united will never be defeated), perhaps the most influential protest song worldwide, was written by Quilapayun during the revolutionary period in Chile in 1973. Its message, while adopted by various anti-government protests over the years, remains decidedly socialist in message and in meaning. Only through collective action – through our collective power – will we ever be free. The first line of the song relays a simple message:

"We are going to win."

Take that to heart. Now isn't the time for pessimism.

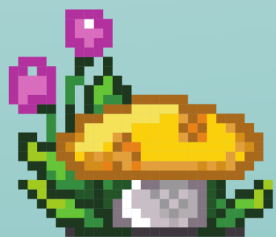
Historical mistakes must lead to future lessons learned, which equals future victories. Opportunities for wins need to be anticipated and planned for in advance rather than pushed away when they arise.

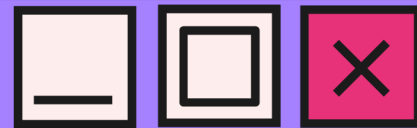
The lack of a concrete organization between the upheavals of the past few years is a sore spot in the American left. Millions of people who participated in the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests returned to normal daily life without much thought towards politics besides perhaps voting every couple of years. The disunity of the movement was a hindrance to it, because without unified demands and a unified, lingering force to achieve those demands, any movement is ultimately bound towards failure.

So what can be done about that? The strongest of all the classes is the working class. Only through our collective power, through forming ourselves into radical unions, socialist political organizations, and exerting the greatest strength we have – the power we can collectively exert if our demands aren't acceded to – will we be free as a collective. We can't expect to free ourselves without an organization with the potential to fulfill our demands, to carry out action in support of those demands and to serve as a fighting force against the capitalist class.

Don't run, as Daniel Singer said. This is not the time to give up. Quite the opposite. The next few years will determine the outcome of the next century of world history. Will we push towards a better world or stagnate into an economy based on exploitation for the foreseeable future? Again, the choice is in our hands.

We need to build ourselves into an organization which has the power to act collectively to win concrete change when future mass social movements arise. The prelude to revolution has arisen many times throughout our history, and its failure to fully materialize is not inevitable. The course of history is always in flux, and can change through the intervention of the organized force of the working class. Whether or not it will change in our favor depends entirely on us and our willingness to organize for that change.





DSA MUST MOVE DECISIVELY TO LAUNCH A NEW PARTY

BY SARAH MILNER

🐦 SARAH_PDX



The election of Donald Trump has opened up a window of opportunity for DSA: a significant chance to launch a new party and dramatically alter the political scene in the US. But to do this, we will have to fundamentally change our strategy and cohere for the first time a unified, national party-building effort that breaks from the Democrats.

A new party won't just come about, we have to be the catalyst for it.

Trump and The Crisis of the Democrats

Despite an election which was close in raw numbers—Kamala Harris was only a few hundred thousand votes from an electoral college victory—the results were a crushing blow to the Democratic Party leadership and their theory of change. Four years of Biden have left the country and world in an even worse crisis and with Trumpism ascendant from a popular vote mandate.

Now the left is forced to pick up the pieces. The signs on the ground are grim. Nearly every major demographic group shifted right. Republicans surged with young men, cut into Democratic margins with voters of color, and gained ground in urban centers and safe blue states. Whereas in 2016, Trump's election was perceived as an aberration, sparking a massive fightback, this time there seems to be a mood of widespread exhaustion. The Democratic Party leadership and media apparatus is showing dangerous signs of a further turn right: ominously wavering on immigration and trans rights.

While The Democratic Party itself has plummeted in popularity, there are numerous signs that this is caused by their own unpopular policies.

A popular program for left wing policies exists, but not within the Democratic party.

But this situation also offers substantial opportunity. While the Democratic Party itself has plummeted in popularity, there are numerous signs that this is caused by their own unpopular policies. In Nebraska, Dan Osborne, a union mechanic running as an independent, outperformed Kamala Harris by almost 10 percent. Down-ballot measures for abortion rights and school funding overperformed even in deep red states. Precinct level data and exit polls seems to indicate that Harris' support for the genocide in Gaza cost her at least Michigan, and possibly other swing states as well. A popular program for left wing policies exists, but not within the Democratic party.

The Democrats became the party of a brutally unpopular status quo. Inflation, war, the end of COVID safety measures, and a worsening nationwide housing crisis all drove a sense of exhausted malaise punctuated by brief moments of sharp economic pressure. To this list of genuine grievances, the right added wedge issues, on immigration, trans rights, and crime, which they effectively used to divide the Democratic base.

Republicans made themselves the popular change alternative, offering equal parts revenge and revanchism for those who felt their lives had gotten worse. The hollow liberalism of Democrats left it easy to link declining standards of living to progressive social reforms, especially when those reforms maximized visibility while offering little in the way of actual redistribution of power and wealth. After 15 years of a steadily rising left, the one-two punch of Biden and Trump threatens to undermine large sections of the liberal, labor, and nonprofit world. The socialist movement, even as we face significant dangers, is the only force positioned to actually present an alternative to the Democrats and the hard right.

Should Socialists Support a Break from the Democratic Party?

Socialists must break from the Democrats. Some comrades have described the Democratic Party, variously, as merely a ballot line we can use, or as a partial-party ripe for realignment. But, while the Democrats may be decentralized and in some ways institutionally weak, they are far more than just a ballot line. The Democratic Party is a brand, a political structure, a set of policies and governing legacies, and a cohesive, expansive social institution composed of a vast network of personal and political connections, media representatives, layers of the labor and nonprofit world, fundraisers and donors, and big and small money donation networks.

DSA's present strategy is a de-facto realignment strategy. But, organized on purely pragmatic grounds, there has been very little engagement with the tremendous hurdles that would actually have to be overcome to transform the Democrats into a Socialist Party.

Such an effort would require the wholesale replacement and purge of officials up and down the party, the establishment of a vast network of committed counter-institutionalists willing to work within the ‘new’ Democratic Party yet fully dedicated to its transformation, and a decades-long effort to regain the trust of workers.

To be a “Democrat” and to run as a Democrat is not neutral ground. It is to tie oneself, politically and structurally, to administrations which invariably run aground trying to navigate the contradictions of American liberalism.

Realignment, while it may be our de facto approach, is not a serious plan to build the socialist movement. It drags us towards a splintering of our base between career-minded reformers who aim to work within the system, who compromise more and more in the pursuit of power, while casting off a steady stream of disaffected radicals who turn towards hyper-confrontational tactics out of frustration with the failed approach.

To be a “Democrat” and to run as a Democrat is not neutral ground. It is to tie oneself, politically and structurally, to administrations which invariably run aground trying to navigate the contradictions of American liberalism. The persistent co-optation of movements, the endless string of administrations derailed by imperial wars, and the habitual turn to the right—all of these are structural dynamics within a party caught between its desire to tap into, lead, and direct the forces of social change on the one hand, and its ideological, material and organizational commitments to the capitalist system on the other. To be a Democrat is therefore, simultaneously, to place oneself at the mercy of a party dedicated to the defeat of socialism, and also to tie oneself to the brand, identity, and reputation of failed administrations like Biden and Obama—even as they personally condemn us.

Building our own party is the only viable future for socialism in the US. If we put forward a plan to launch a new party by the end of the Trump administration we can grow and we can dramatically increase our influence in US politics over the medium term.

The Next 10 Wins Vs. The Next 10 Years

The most common justification for continued support of de-facto realignment is that the strategy has “worked in the past.” This is not entirely untrue. DSA’s strategy of running as Democrats has helped us to present ourselves as a credible opposition, distinct from third parties and leftists sects in that we actually contest for power and win. The Sanders campaigns provided a major upsurge for the left, and the elections of AOC, and other members of the squad helped grow DSA.

But the strategy of repeating this approach for the foreseeable future is deeply flawed. Entering into positions of power within the Democratic Party is not a neutral thing. The pressure of lobbyists, conservative party leaders and media is immense. Without a clear plan for a break, DSA endangers the very oppositional status that made our electoral credibility so vital. This is why the strategy has not actually been working over the previous four years. DSA has shrunk in size, while our disorganized electoral strategy has compounded the inevitable opportunist decisions made by politicians, and our lack of a clear political line left us wholly unable to present a nuanced criticism of figures who were simultaneously to the left of the rest of congress and yet clearly betraying vital socialist principles. The result is that short term gains quickly became short term problems because they were not attached to long term strategies.

Donald Trump’s second election has created a unique political opportunity for the left. The whole Democratic Party social structure has failed to deliver even on its lowest mandate, to be the lesser of two evils and block out the extreme right. The uninspired agenda of Biden and Harris were a drag not only on their own prospects, but of all those who associated with them. This is what being tied to the Democratic Party establishment results in. Even leaders with independent profiles and class-struggle orientations had their reputations compromised, and for little effect, with AOC and Bernie defending Joe Biden to the end, only for Trump to win anyway.

The uninspired tailing of the Biden/Harris regime by these progressive politicians is only the logical conclusion of the overall strategy of realignment. And the “proximity” of AOC and Bernie was not able to divert Biden/Harris from material support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza, the ongoing inter-imperialist conflict in Ukraine, and was able to win only marginal improvements on progressive policies, almost all of which will immediately be reversed by Trump.

Even as these opportunist pressures showed the inevitable dangers of the realignment strategy, the AIPAC funded purge of Cori Bush and Jamaal Bowman showed the untenability of proximity as a strategy. Caught between compromise and principle, Bush and Bowman struggled to achieve either. The pressure employed to kick them from the party is a mere fraction of the kind of pressure we can expect if we seriously grow a socialist bloc to a size where it can meaningfully contest for power.

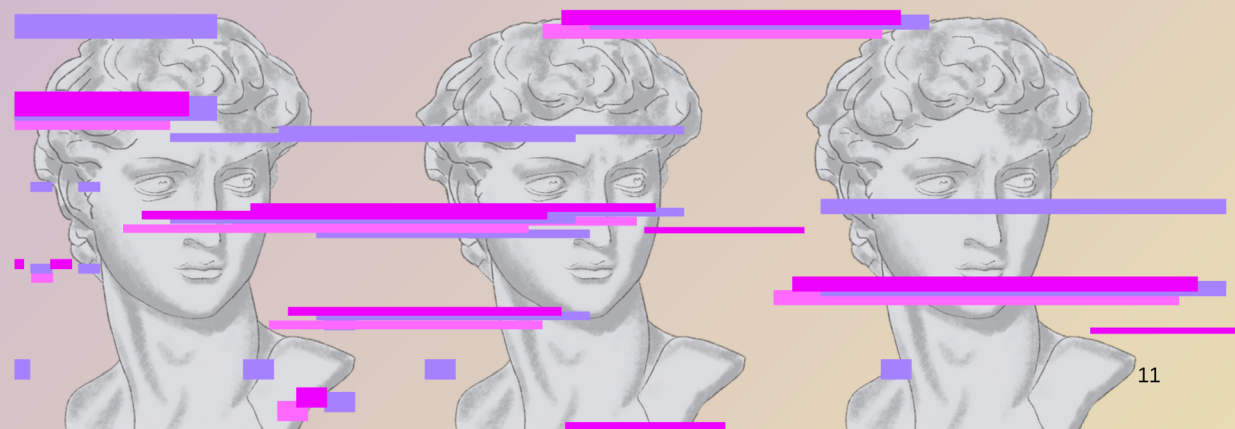
Why has realignment triumphed, if its strategy is so riven with faults? The approach has existed in a vacuum, as the only practiced strategy in DSA. The revolutionary wing of the organization has so far failed to put forward serious evidence of the viability of an alternative approach, let alone a systematic plan to implement such an approach. This has been the single biggest failure of the current National Political Committee (NPC), and it is the urgent responsibility of DSA’s left caucuses to put forward a clear plan and timeline for a break.

Sleepwalking Into Realignment

The greatest success of the last four years for DSA has been that we survived, with our numbers, political principles, and status as a leading force on the left relatively intact. During that time, partyist forces within DSA have begun to experiment and cohere. But despite that, the last four years have been a series of missteps and missed opportunities for DSA. Four years on from Bernie’s second loss, we are no more meaningfully closer to a party than when the Biden administration began.

From 2021 to 2023, the comrades from SMC and the predecessors of Groundwork set out to navigate the Biden era through technocratic fixes, increases in the staffing budget, and heavy handed bureaucratic maneuvers against groups like the BDS Working Group. But the central crisis in DSA was not a matter of strategy, messaging, experience or discipline. It was a political crisis. We lacked a clear reason for our existence as a political force under Biden. Caught between work-within-the-system reform pushes and militant minority agitation, the organization ended up in a crisis of finances, democracy, and participation.

This led to a vote, at the 2023 National Convention, for a new course. But so far, the current NPC, while avoiding many of the worst mistakes of the previous one, has similarly struggled to present a unified, coherent Partyist vision. Under Trump, DSA will have an opportunity to revitalize our political line. But we must learn the lesson from the last four years: a unified message and strategy that explains the utility of our organization is the only way to reliably grow the socialist movement.



Fighting the Right - Fighting For an Alternative

Donald Trump's second election is a disaster for the working class. His victory has discredited the Democratic party in a less acute, but deeper and more profound way than in 2016. Whereas 8 years ago he was perceived as an aberration, he now has a mandate, a fact that will surely show through in his policies and conduct in office.

In their failure, the Democratic Party has handed Trump a repressive state perfectly set up to implement right wing politics. Politically and organizationally, fighting the right and breaking from the Democrats are deeply tied together.

In their failure, the Democratic Party has handed Trump a repressive state perfectly set up to implement right wing politics. Politically and organizationally, fighting the right and breaking from the Democrats are deeply tied together.

In 2016, huge numbers of people mobilized to popular protests against Trump. While protests are certain and eventual mass mobilizations are almost inevitable, their character and duration will be much more conditional in his second term. The grab-bag of liberal, progressive, anarchist, reformist and sectarian strategies that permeated the protests of the first Trump term will not work in a second, where popular demoralization and a frustrated desire for actual results is likely to undermine dead-end tactics and demobilize protesters quickly.

Greater repression, not only from Trump, but from universities, tech companies, and perhaps even Democrats who seem far more amenable to his politics this time around will mean that protests face a much steeper climb in the next four years than in previous ones. And yet his suffocating pressure has the counter-intuitive potential to create explosive eruptions when breakthroughs do occur, as resentment and disenchantment with the government will have longer to build.

Consequently, socialists need to mobilize to protests with a much stronger strategy and line, and an intention to actually win socialist leadership of popular movements. We can employ the tactics of the United Front, joining wider coalitions with our own, distinct political line, and put forward a Partyist analysis and the dirty break as an alternative both to adventurist, self-marginalizing tactics and a return to the 'vote blue no matter who' strategy that got us into this mess.

Socialists also need to try to equip movements with real, workable demands. In the last years the left was highly susceptible to self destructive ultra-liberal tactics that generally failed to convince broad layers and instead allowed cynical progressive leaders to briefly grab onto movements until their energy had ebbed. Though it has faced its own substantial challenges, the Palestine solidarity movement presents a promising example of a demand more fundamentally polarizing to the political establishment, while still being generally popular.

This lesson should be drawn further—we need to try and bring to movements an escalating series of transitional demands, which engage ordinary people in the struggle, and help move them forward to positions that conflict with the fundamental logic of capitalism. Socialists need to combine a capacity for urgent, constant, energetic principled mass work with sustained agitation around a single, consistent line.

This is why it is absolutely vital we establish a clear program at the 2025 convention to give us a coherent message we can bring to each struggle we join.

As we join protests to fight Trump, socialist leaders and especially elected officials will need to become dramatically more confrontational with the state, no matter whether the Democratic Party objects. Socialists should use whatever means they have to block illegal and immoral laws. Politicians should organize for noncompliance by engaging in civil disobedience and legal nullification, trying to mobilize popular protests to prevent enforcement.

Such a tactic, deployed at scale, would almost certainly provoke a significant legal crisis. Such a crisis should be welcomed by leftists, as it is the only viable way to stop the coming attacks from Trump. But as we learned under Biden, all these tactics can only have a limited impact in the absence of a single, galvanizing political strategy. To reach the advanced layers in the anti-Trump resistance, DSA needs to offer a credible plan to create the alternative needed to defeat Trump. The dirty break is deeply intertwined with our efforts to win leadership of the anti-Trump resistance. The Democratic party failed. Socialists must offer an answer.

Putting A New Party On A Timeline

It is vital that DSA commit to a dirty break strategy at the 2025 convention.

The first move of DSA in executing the dirty break should be to make a splash with a "pre-party" slate. DSA should run cadre candidates—an ambitious goal would be about 10—for Congress across the country. The sooner DSA can commit to this and announce it the more effective the strategy will be. DSA should tactically run at least a few of these candidates as independents in deep blue or deep red states where there are Dan Osborne-style openings. DSA should also consider, in places where it's viable, carrying on the campaign into a third party run if we lose the primary.

By committing to this approach loudly and openly we would present ourselves as a force with a decisive plan. Running candidates with shared branding, messaging, and advertising would allow us to pool resources and fundraising and put the Democrats on the back foot.

The more clearly this slate was committed to building an independent party the more of a dramatic impact it would have.

To make such a plan viable DSA would need to pool and cohere our already sizable electoral training material and federal level campaigning experience and begin a deliberate outreach effort to chapters across the country to get commitments for campaigns.

At the same time as we do this DSA should put forward a priority plan for establishing municipal level parties in every major city that has nonpartisan local elections.

In Portland, we're already trying to lay the foundations for this. Staff should be directed to assist chapters with legal and logistical hurdles to make that happen, whether it's de facto parties or a genuine new legal municipal formation. DSA should support local chapters to target down-ballot races to run independents such as nonpartisan races, races with a massive Democrat or Republican majority, or races in districts with an unusually high third party vote.

To achieve this and make it work DSA would have to unify our work in a way we never have before.

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Running candidates with shared branding, messaging, and advertising would allow us to pool resources and fundraising and put the Democrats on the back foot.

To start, we need to pass a general national strategy, including a short propaganda program that can give us unity in our messaging and rhetoric in all fields of work, so that from labor to mutual aid we're emphasizing a shared set of key points. These programmatic points are the political and directional basis for a new party.

As part of a new national strategy, we also need to establish basic guidelines and expectations for elected officials, so that their campaigns effectively communicate our program in action, and we must decide collectively what actions to take if DSA campaigns or elections come into conflict with our adopted national approach.

We should be relentlessly agitating with criticisms of the Democrat's failures, trying to convince frustrated liberals that Harris' campaign failed because of her underlying politics. We should prepare a pamphlet and town halls across the country to express our strategy and debate the need for independence and the steps forward for the left. Right now; the NPC should commit to a messaging line supporting a break, and direct staff, our comms committee, and our working groups to share it.

Launching a New Party

What should all this be building towards?

In 2027 we should hold a founding conference of unions and left wing organizations to launch a party. There should be no illusions. Such a task will be enormously difficult. The vast majority of unions, progressive organizations, and voters will not initially listen to us. We will have to fight for endorsements from union locals, smaller and more radical unions, and reform caucuses.

But by staking out the line of party-building, we amplify the importance of our gains far more. It is one thing to have a socialist endorsed in a Democratic Primary—it is a reverberating and inspiring vote that will be noticed across the country to have them do so when running on their own line.

A huge amount will depend on the extent to which our local trials and pre-party candidates make real gains. The party at launch will be, like most historical American left parties, an uneven project with various candidates running on fusion tickets, distinct local ballot lines, as independents, and as Democrats. But we should have a unified political line, brand and internal structure that unifies these disparate socialist campaigns that is consciously distinct from the Democrats. Socialists can look to examples like the anti-Nebraska movement, the Non-Partisan League, and the Populists for inspiration: each group employed tactical and ballot line flexibility while building up its base around clear rallying points and then broke through as it cohered.

The dirty break will be dirty—there will be some places where the split happens very fast, and others where the Democratic Party and DSA remain tied for years. But It has to be an actual break: a formal commitment, in word and action, to splintering from the Democrats, radicalizing a chunk of the voting public around socialist politics, and cohering a militant left wing which can then turn its sights towards winning majority support among workers and cohering the institutions of radical proletarian struggle for the crises of capitalism to come.

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We should aim to build up a party as something more than just an electoral vehicle.

A strong party is a social institution: it provides a narrative of society, offers political education, mutual aid, labor solidarity, social life, media and news. It also operates as a counter-cultural force to the dominant liberal capitalist political culture. A party has to be something which offers people a coherent shot at a better life. To build for these we have to make DSA party-like. Strong communications, coordinated interventions in public political debates, unified strategies across the country, a clear connection between mass action and electoral strategy, and a program to unify our work.

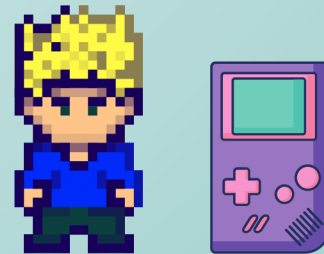
The vital task for Marxists in DSA is to lay out a clear plan for a break within the next four years, as quickly as possible, start implementing it on the current NPC, and then pass it at the next convention.





DSA Electeds Must Lead The Resistance To Trump

BY MICHAEL LEGORE



Trump's decisive victory over Kamala Harris in the November election has many questioning the ability of the Democratic party to resist Trump.

Among liberals, fear and hopelessness abound, with many giving into doomerism, bitterly repeating regressive narratives placing blame on one demographic or the other. DSA electeds must take the lead in reorienting this anger and hopelessness in more constructive directions. The political void left by the Democratic party offers an opportunity for DSA electeds to seize the initiative and offer a vision of resistance that can pull people back from the brink of despair. They must lead by example and make the case that resisting Trump and creating a better world is possible.

The Democrats Will Not Save Us

The Democrats have shown time and again that they are neither willing nor capable of resisting Trump. Their insistence that Trump would be the end of democracy is now undercut by their newfound willingness to work with him. Not only have they worked with him before, but during Biden's time in office they have also adopted many of the same regressive policies that they have derided Trump for. By the latest numbers, Biden was on track to deport more people in 2024 than in any of the Trump years. Under Biden's administration, the US is producing more oil than ever, more than any other country ever, exacerbating the climate emergency and careening us over the 1.5 degrees of warming target set by the Paris Agreement. With "friends" like these, who needs enemies?

DSA and DSA-adjacent electeds such as Bernie Sanders or AOC who, prior to the election, heavily tied themselves to the Biden/Harris administration, have lost trust among workers and especially the left, with AOC having her DSA endorsement revoked. Bernie and AOC started as political outsiders, which was a part of their appeal.

By trying to incorporate themselves into the Democratic party, a brand which is rapidly becoming toxic among working people, their main source of trust with their base—their outsider status—was compromised.

In the aftermath of Trump's victory, these two important figures seem to be moving in opposite directions. On the one hand, Bernie has distanced himself from the Democrats, making several scathing statements about the failure of Democrats. On the other hand, despite the Democrat's devastating loss, AOC has continued in her attempts at party entryism, vying for (and losing) a bid to chair the House Ways & Means committee, and reportedly signaling to Democrats that she would cease her support for primary challenges to establishment Democrats. In either case, both must remember now that their appeal comes from being different from the Democrats, not from being a part of the Democratic Party.

Progressive outsiders like AOC have chosen to fall in line with the Democrats hoping they will score political points that can be used to influence minor reforms later. But this strategy is a dead end.

We have seen that, absent sustained pressure from DSA members, DSA electeds are susceptible to being assimilated with a system that supports capitalism and empire. This has been marked most clearly by several DSA electeds' disappointing support for pro-Israel policies such as supporting Iron Dome funding. Jamaal Bowman, who had initially supported the Iron Dome, has since reversed his position due to pressure from DSA. While his most recent primary bid was defeated amid massive spending on his opponents from AIPAC, by taking a principled state in line with DSA, he rejoins the larger left movement that will fight to see him re-elected in the future.

Progressive outsiders like AOC have chosen to fall in line with the Democrats hoping they will score political points that can be used to influence minor reforms later. But this strategy is a dead end. The capitalist system is exceedingly efficient at absorbing popular will when it is expressed through acceptable channels. Some reforms are occasionally won after years of sustained struggle from workers, but economic power is still kept in the hands of capital, and therefore any wins can still be clawed back over time by the ruling class.

Socialists Must Lead the Charge

We believe DSA electeds must take the lead in confronting the ruling class represented by Trump, the Democrats, and the Republicans. Trump's administration is bound to create and accelerate crises in the coming years, and socialists must be prepared to organize within them. We must be ready before crises boil over so that the working class is already organized to take advantage of them. We will likely see large protest movements spring up to resist Trump's policies and DSA electeds should help ensure that we learn the lessons of past uprisings to create a more lasting resistance this time around.

One lesson we've learned from recent protest movements such as the George Floyd uprising, is that movements without clear decision making and demands are vulnerable to cooptation.

In 2020, many marches and demonstrations were commandeered by anyone with confidence and a bullhorn. Additionally, without clear decision making structures, demands could be made by any group claiming ownership over the movement, demands that were often either watered down by more liberal elements, or totally removed from mass consciousness by the ultra-left fringe. Militant or confrontational protests were turned into sit downs with police, marches moved in circles back to the same places to stand off against cops.

DSA electeds already have a certain democratic mandate to help lead protests, and they can use this mandate to help facilitate greater protest democracy.



DSA electeds must resist attempts by liberals to demobilize the movement and should push for protest democracy as a way to prevent the movement from being defanged.

By transforming protesters from consumers of protest to active participants, we can ensure that protesters are more informed and bought into the demands of the movement. For example, the DSA should create a guide to establishing protest democracy that electeds and members can learn and proliferate to argue for its necessity, and organize training sessions for members and electeds on protest democracy and why it is important. That way when shit hits the fan, we're ready.

By transforming protesters from consumers of protest to active participants, we can ensure that protesters are more informed and bought into the demands of the movement.

DSA electeds need not wait for popular energy to bubble up – they should use their office to plan and lead protests, focusing on linking together causes, making comprehensive socialist demands and reinforcing the notion that protest movements must be disruptive to the status quo.

DSA electeds should find ways to escalate confrontations with the ruling class over Trump's policies, even going so far as tactically violating unjust laws. For example, many fear new abortion restrictions during Trump's tenure; DSA electeds could resist this effort by setting up campaigns to mail abortion medication from their offices to those in states that ban abortions, daring the administration to stop them. They could also stage occupations of government buildings, as we saw in 2020 in Seattle or during the Palestine student movement last summer.

Electeds should use their office to provide cover for organizers and protesters on the ground. In 2017, in response to Trump's so-called Muslim Ban, airport shutdown protests spread rapidly across the country. DSA electeds could organize actions like that, especially ones that disrupt vital transportation, shipping, and manufacturing infrastructure.

With repressive state violence a distinct possibility —such as trumped up charges against protesters, RICO cases or getting disappeared—electeds should also use their offices to keep track of protesters who have been unjustly imprisoned, organizing for bail funds, and using any means at their disposal to keep Trump's overreaches in the news. And it is much harder to ignore protesters getting arrested when one of them is an elected representative.

We Need An Alternative To What Trump Is Offering

DSA electeds cannot focus solely on resisting Trump, they must also articulate a clear and hopeful alternative.

As with Trump's first presidency, there is sure to be a steady stream of outrages created by his administration. The relentlessness of attacks is the point. We cannot merely resist this onslaught – fighting merely to prevent things from getting worse can only lead to burn out and demoralization of the movement.

Instead, we must offer a better path. Many feel instinctively that the system is not working for them and are looking for any alternative to it. Part of the allure of Trump is that he promises to blow up the system that many have become disillusioned by. Even false promises of change such as the initial “joy” campaign of Harris or the “hope and change” promised by Barack Obama have shown that when a campaign even offers untrue promises of change, they will resonate with a population desperate for something different. Bernie's broad and enduring popularity can be explained by the fact that he offered a sincere vision of a world better than what we have today, and a plan to achieve it. By pushing for a transformative alternative, DSA electeds can capture disaffected workers into our movement.

Socialist policies are popular – Medicare for All has majority approval, with 8 in 10 democrats supporting it. Abortion rights amendments passed in 7 states, 4 of which went for Trump (and Florida had a majority with 57 percent but not enough for a supermajority required for amendments). Missouri, a state that also went for Trump, passed a referendum increasing minimum wage and granting sick leave to workers. DSA electeds should fight for these policies and more.

Given that no DSA elected official enjoys a legislative majority, we face an uphill battle in convincing the general public that passing a socialist program is possible.

This is especially true for national electeds, a small and shrinking minority in Congress. And truly, it is highly unlikely that the number of socialist legislators grows in a steady, linear manner until we have the numbers needed to pass sweeping reforms.

But history does not unfold linearly. Rather, history is full of sudden ruptures and explosive revolutions, when periods of stasis are broken suddenly as millions take action, entering the field of history which is usually reserved for a small group of elites.

DSA electeds must champion a mass movement based approach, calling back to past revolutionary periods such as the Civil Rights movement or the mass sit-down strikes of the Great Depression

The priority of DSA electeds should not be to focus only on the next achievable legislation, but to expand the imaginations of the masses to understand politics as something more than what happens every four years.

DSA electeds must champion a mass movement based approach, calling back to past revolutionary periods such as the Civil Rights movement or the mass sit-down strikes of the Great Depression, where mass action opened up political opportunities which seemed impossible just a few years earlier. In the absence of a legislative majority, national electeds' role, therefore, is primarily propaganda and raising class consciousness, but not only through messaging, but by helping to lead the masses in struggle, showing them the truth of revolutionary potential in fact.

While the role of electeds on the national level is primarily propagandistic, there are options at the local level for passing meaningful reforms.

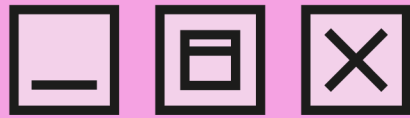
Local DSA electeds may have more ability to enact specific reforms, as resistance to socialist-leaning policies locally is often lesser than on the national stage, and progressive majorities are often more concentrated in a handful of key left-leaning urban neighborhoods. DSA members doing good things in the community are also often able to go less noticed by reactionary national media that would demonize them. DSA has had many local successes: passing historic minimum wage reform in Renton, WA, passing a Green New Deal, rent control, raising minimum wage, and tenant protections in Portland, ME, and winning a historic tenant bill of rights in Tacoma. These reforms are not enough, but they are helpful as evidence for working people of how socialist electeds can deliver positive change.

As we have laid out in our article “DSA Must Move Decisively To Launch A New Party,” one of the top priorities of DSA going into 2025 should be to break from the Democratic Party and begin forming a new party. DSA electeds should take an active part in this process.

In local elections this has already started, with some DSA electeds relying on DSA organizing for the majority of their campaign efforts. These campaigns are testing grounds for DSA organizing tactics, mobilizing members, canvassing, signature gathering, etc. But if creating organizing infrastructure were the only step in making a party, we might already have one. A new party must be a political extension of the working class, as a worker-driven organization fighting for workers. To get there we must connect together the smaller successful local movements into a wider party movement making use of strikes, sit-ins, occupations, protests, votes, and initiatives, and any other means at our disposal.

People are eager for change, eager to fight back against Trump, but that won't come from the Democrats. We need our own party, with workers selected from our own ranks that we put forward to fight for us and we need to become comfortable with holding those electeds accountable. ***DSA electeds have a responsibility to use their mandate to lead in building the mass movement that we will need if we are going to beat Trump, and we must hold them to that responsibility!***



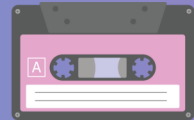


SHOCK & BOOGALOO

Perspectives for Trump's Second Term

BY HENRY DE GROOT

DEGREAT4



A Radical Regime For A Radical Crisis

The second election of Donald Trump will likely mark a turning point in American history.

Trump's second term contains all the dangerous tendencies of his first term, which, having hardened over his last four years in opposition, now return as a more thorough break with the existing capitalist-democratic order.

Trump's radical platform did not develop out of his own imagination. Rather, it represents a comprehensive set of solutions to the problems posed to the American capitalist class by a number of current and inter-related crises.

American-led Western capitalism is indeed under pressure from a number of serious crises. Western economies have never fully recovered from the trauma of the Great Financial Crisis of 2007-2008 and the resulting Great Recession of 2007 to 2009. The global economic recovery was only possible based on unprecedented quantitative easing, leading to the accumulation of massive amounts of sovereign debt, and the real engine of the global recovery was the Chinese economy, with China accounting for 35 percent of global GDP growth from 2008 to 2023. Public debt spiked again massively during the pandemic, while the Chinese economy has been weakening at an increasing pace.

Moreover, since the 2007-2008 recession Western governments have faced an on-again off-again challenge from both progressive and reactionary populist movements, kicked off largely by the Occupy Wall Street global movement of 2011, and continued in the US through the two Bernie campaigns and the Black Lives Matter uprisings, and around the world in a large number of instances including the Arab Spring, powerful anti-austerity movements in Spain, Greece, and Ireland, the Yellow Vest movement in France in 2018, and more.

In the US, the Democratic Party has only managed to hold off the progressive-populist movement through a combination of accommodation and co-option on the one hand, and underhanded, undemocratic maneuvering in party internal politics on the other, resisting meaningful reforms but still being forced along in some important ways. Although the Democrats co-optations have mostly directed movements of resistance to capitalism into safe channels, this has necessitated them legitimizing, at least in abstract, the grand ideas of the protest movements, union campaigns, and progressive policies which challenge capitalism. And so they legitimize their own grave-diggers just to buy a bit more time.

This can be seen clearly in the 2020 protests, which enjoyed significant popular support which, even if few material reforms were won, nonetheless challenged the legitimacy of the police state in an unprecedented way.

This strategy can only delay for so long the material advances and organization strengthening of these forces, and it also serves to delegitimize the Democrats as they alienate more reactionary elements by moving rhetorically left, only to subsequently alienate progressive elements in their failures to carry through meaningful change. This was marked especially by Biden's approach to Israel's war on Gaza. The Democrat's criticisms of Netanyahu's conduct alienated them, to some degree, from the hardline Zionists, while Biden's failure to actually impose any material limitations on Israel meant he could not win over the majority of the anti-war movement despite having taken rhetorical stances which were far more critical of Israel than previous Democratic administrations.

Trump represents an attempt to roll back the advances made in this way by the progressive forces over the last decade, displacing the neoliberal co-opters in order to clamp down on the genuine progressive masses. For example, in response to the advances of the Black Lives Matter movement, Trump is now gearing up to "roll back" the reforms of 2020, which in fact means a further militarization and empowerment of the unreformed police, paired with an attack on civil rights and diversity initiatives.

Finally, since the crisis of 2007-2008, the relative economic and military supremacy of Western capitalism has seen a relative decline in strength due to the slow but steady rise of Chinese industrial and military capabilities.

Attacked by Trump's economic nationalism to the right, and Bernie's left-populism to the left, the defeat of Clinton's 2016 campaign meant the defeat of the planned advances of neoliberal policies. This was marked especially through the defeat of the Trans Pacific Partnership, the only credible answer neoliberalism had to challenge the rise of China.



The 2020-2024 Biden administration, facing the same pressures as Clinton, could only hope to carry out policies of temporary stabilization, but not advance. Caught between the interests of the domestic US capitalist class and the pressure from the progressive masses, Biden never had any hope of mounting a serious challenge to the economic threat from a rising global capitalist rival in China, and proved barely able to defend the neoliberal order from pressure from the left and the mass movements. Biden could only hope to keep the existing order on life support, maintaining the social structures which allow for the continuation of capital accumulation just a bit longer.

When Donald Trump stepped fully into the political field in 2016, he may not have had the long term goal of leading the militant wing of American capitalism against the growing threats of domestic unrest at home and Chinese capitalism abroad. But regardless of his intentions, over the last 8 years he has attracted these various forces to his banner, uniting an array of disparate discontents—from oil tycoons threatened by the green agenda to rust-belt workers agitated by harmful offshoring of jobs—into a united challenge to the Democratic-led neoliberal model.

As Engels' writes in *Ludwig Feuerbach And the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*,

When... it is a question of investigating the driving forces which consciously or unconsciously lie behind the motives of men in their historical actions ... then it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of people in each people.

So as much as Donald Trump's personal preferences play an outsized role, as the leader of the MAGA movement, we can best understand him by understanding the particular interests of the different forces within his coalition—Zionists, the Christian right, small business owners, anti-China hawks, domestic manufacturers, nativists, police boosters—and how he has successfully bound them into an alternative political project.

An Economic Nationalist Regime

Trump represents and is the leading champion for the revival of economic nationalism as a challenge to neoliberal globalization.

These two flavors of capitalist order—free-trade globalization and economic nationalism—are two tools by which a national capitalist class can pursue its interests, and national capitalist classes have historically switched between these two forms. Neoliberalism was just the latest iteration of a free-trade focused global order, but certainly not the first of its kind; nor is protectionism unique to Trumpism.

Both globalism and economic nationalism are promoted by camps which seek to pursue their unique interests by making a case that their model for organizing capitalism (which some call a 'social structure of accumulation,' and others call a 'hegemonic concept of control') is in the best interest of the US capitalist class as a whole. The two dominant camps are largely underlain by finance capital, which accumulates capital through lending, and productive capital, which accumulates capital more directly through production of commodities. Finance capital has a more global outlook, since it can move capital easily to different markets to seek the highest profit. Productive capital is more geographically and materially dependent, and therefore more dependent on specific government relationships, nation-state based privileges, and spheres of influence rather than a more uniform and impersonal set of international rules. But now China plays and wins by this very-same set of rules, challenging US capital.

In 2016 Trump campaigned on an economic nationalist platform. This was probably most clearly exemplified by Trump's rhetoric criticizing NAFTA and opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the US ruling class's strategy to confront China through trade liberalization of 12 Pacific nations to intentionally exclude China, which Obama signed in February of 2016. Trump withdrew the US from the TPP in 2017, three days into his first term, and launched a series of "trade wars" with China and the EU, implementing tariffs. This marked a break from the most hard-core tendencies of neoliberalism and the free-traders' strategy for confronting China.

However, Marxists should more so understand Trump's economic nationalism as a "bending of the stick" in the direction of protectionism rather than a full-on break with neoliberalism. This is most clearly demonstrated in Trump's 2018 re-negotiation of NAFTA in the US Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA), led by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer; USMCA actually upheld and extended the general principles of the original neoliberal NAFTA framework, except that it moved slightly back towards protectionism by increasing national production requirements in key areas including the auto industry. The archetypical neoliberal model of NAFTA actually already included these national production requirements, only at a lower percentage, highlighting how there has really never been a "pure" implementation of neoliberal principles.

But Trump and his camp were not the only ones who felt the need to confront China by pivoting from orthodox neoliberalism. With the attempt to confront China through neoliberal means dead from the unrevivable TPP, Biden actually kept many of Trump's economic policies in place, including several tariffs.

Furthermore, Biden did not attempt to pursue a resuscitation of the earlier neoliberal model, but instead put forward his own version of economic nationalism, again with the purpose of confronting the challenge from China, in the CHIPS act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This relative bi-partisan agreement on a need to revive protectionism to confront China shows that the need to confront the threat of Chinese capitalism is not a pet issue of one faction of the US capitalist class, but the class as a whole.

However, this does not mean that all sections of the US capitalist class desire to move towards an economic shift to the same degree and intensity. Rather, Trump clearly represents the sections of the US capitalist class which desire a far more radical confrontation with China.

The basis of this difference is the difference in how different sections of the US capitalist class accumulate their capital, and to what degree China represents a threat to that accumulation.

ECONOMIC NATIONALISTS



Stephen Miller

*Deputy Chief of Staff,
Policy and Homeland
Security*

Miller is a Trump speechwriter and was the architect of policies including the Muslim ban and the family separation policy. He is one of the few officials who served in Trump's first administration who is still close to Trump. Miller will continue to serve as Trump's right-hand man in orchestrating hardline policies which thread the overlap of corporate interests, right-wing populist politics, and administrative enforcement mechanisms.



Robert Lighthizer

Trade Advisor

Lighthizer's economic-nationalist agenda haunts the dreams of laissez faire die-hards and Chinese businessmen alike.

Lighthizer was Trump's US Trade Representative from 2017 to 2021, where he led the re-negotiation of NAFTA into the USMCA. He served as deputy US Trade Representative in the Reagan administration, and opposed the admittance of China into the WTO under the Clintons.

DONALD

TRUMP'S

SHOCK

TROOPS



Marco Rubio

Secretary of State



Tom Homan

Border Czar



Pam Bondi

US Attorney General



Elon Musk

Department of Government Efficiency

Although Marco Rubio is a familiar face of the Republican establishment, his appointment to the most powerful cabinet position does not represent business as usual for US foreign policy.

Rather, Rubio is one of the most hardline Senators on China, Iran, and Venezuela, and his appointment suggests an escalation of conflict with China as well as renewed meddling by the US in Latin America.

Although Trump is likely to move away from some US-backed conflicts, it would be naive to think he actually intends an isolationist strategy. Rather, whether escalating conflict with China or providing further support for Netanyahu's criminal regime, 'Little' Marco Rubio will be leading the charge.

Homan was the acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) during Trump's first term and will now serve as Trump's key advisor on border policy and Trump's planned deportations.

It is an open question to what extent Trump will actually follow through on deporting 10 million undocumented workers. Deporting that many workers would drive wages up for corporate America and curb demand - however the public deportation of 500,000 or 1,000,000 undocumented peoples would arguably help the ruling class by keeping immigrant workers in fear without actually decreasing the workforce they need.

Either way, Homan will be leading the political and administrative calculations on Trump's behalf.

Bondi served as the former Attorney General of Florida and as Trump's counsel during his impeachment trial, and has now replaced Matt Gaetz as Trump's nominee for Attorney General.

If confirmed as Attorney General, Bondi will be the chief law enforcement officer of the federal government. As AG, Bondi will carry out Trump's weaponization of the Justice Department against his enemies both in the Democratic Party and in the mass movements.

Bondi will also oversee Trump's efforts to "dismantle" the FBI. But we should be clear that Trump has no interest in dissolving the federal police force, but only in removing any independent legal mandate it holds, welding it closer to his personal rule.

Musk will lead the newly-proposed "Department of Government Efficiency," alongside Vivek Ramaswamy. Musk has extensive experience implementing brutal 'restructuring' campaigns, as he did when he took over Twitter and fired 80 percent of its workforce.

Musk's desire to "cut red tape" will help to free him and his fellow billionaires from important environmental and civil regulations. The impending mass-firings of public employees will be a massive attack on the labor movement, and will also be helpful for the Trump regime to create a culture of fear in the Federal government by targeting those who are willing to stand up to Trump's agenda within the government.

Although the US economy is the second largest exporter of goods and services after China and obviously a lynchpin of global production, US exports are actually a relatively small part of the US economy, accounting for only around 10 to 12 percent of the economy. In 2023, US exports amounted to some \$2 trillion, while German exports were some \$1.6 trillion, even though total US GDP in 2023 was \$27 trillion while German GDP was only \$4.4 trillion. These simple statistics show that there are vast differences in the extent to which national economies are dependent on trade and therefore reliant on free-trade policies. And more specifically, they highlight how the vast majority of the US economy is actually dependent on the domestic market, a fact which is only further exacerbated if we consider the domestic market to include Mexico and Canada.

There are many US capitalists who make their profits either investing overseas, or selling goods and services abroad. However, for most US capitalists this global trade and investment is a secondary consideration and the main source of profit-making is at home.

For this latter section, it makes sense to prioritize protecting dominance in the domestic market even if this means reducing opportunities for international profit-making. As Chinese capitalist production continues to increase on a quantitative and qualitative level, competing as a near-peer with US capitalist production and increasingly gaining US market share even in more advanced industrial fields, the domestic-reliant capitalists are forced to take protectionist measures.

Moreover, the different fractions of capital are not evenly impacted by this disparity of priorities. US based finance capital is less directly tied to the domestic market than is US productive capital.

The logic of the prioritization of the domestic economy over opportunities for foreign profit-making weighs not only on issues of industrial policy and trade, but also on foreign policy. The gains to US exports to be defended by supporting Ukraine in its war with Russia must be weighed based not only on the actual cost of aid, but also by the cost of driving Russia closer to China, thereby strengthening China.

For many US capitalists, the potential gains of expanding markets in Ukraine or securing the EU more comprehensively are simply not worth the cost of strengthening China.

The shift to economic nationalism is inherently a re-prioritization of US productive capital at the cost of finance capital. Trump's appeal to rust-belt workers hurt by free trade has been a rhetorical throughline of his last decade of political activity. The fact that confronting China requires reinvesting in American manufacturing allows Trump to present himself as a champion for manufacturing workers, and the actual investments in manufacturing provide Trump a set of juicy handouts by which to buy off important sections of the labor movement.

But just because Trump means to move more aggressively to shore up the prospects of the US capitalist class, does not mean that he will necessarily be able to overcome the serious crises it faces. Most importantly, the shift towards economic nationalism will not automatically overcome, and may exacerbate, the US government's growing debt crisis. If a tipping point is reached, as was by the UK in the 2022 mini-budget crisis, US government borrowing costs could increase dramatically virtually overnight, which would lead to an increase in the cost of all government services.

The Threat of Authoritarianism

The prospect of a real move towards authoritarianism is uncertain but a serious potentiality in Trump's second term.

Trump learned important lessons from his first administration about how the administrative state could block his policy rollout. Now, not only has the Supreme Court seemingly given him a free hand in ruling all "official acts" are granted immunity from prosecution, but Trump is this time stacking key posts in the administrative state with "yes men" loyalists whose careers are entirely reliant on staying in Trump's good graces. This stacking is not limited to cabinet posts; rather, Project 2025 outlines a plan to increase political appointees in the civil service 10 fold - from 4,000 to 40,000 - giving Trump far greater and deeper direct control over the levers of the state.

Removing obstacles to his rollout increases Trump's ability to wage authoritarian crackdowns on dissenters and mass movements which challenge his agenda and administration. The question of whether Trump will pursue suppression of dissent is only a question of degree. The recent settlement with ABC News for defamation is one end of the spectrum, where Trump uses 'light' lawfare to bring pressure on his critics. Legislation which would give the Treasury broad powers to remove the non-profit status of pro-Palestinian groups would be an even further step in this direction.

Finally, the far end of the spectrum is the more direct implementation of state repression to detain, persecute, and prosecute activists and dissidents. This is not science fiction but recent history; the Bush administration argued it could legally detain US citizens deemed "enemy combatants" and hold them indefinitely without charges, and also tortured detainees at "black sites" around the world with impunity. The FBI also surveilled meetings of anti-war activists, targeting the ISO in 2005, and as Edward Snowden revealed, the US basically monitors everyone all the time.

The US government already has broad powers to crack down on street protests and other forms of militant direct action, but far more could be done by Trump and his Department of Justice through escalating "lawfare." One possibility is that RICO charges, the law used to go after organized crime, could be brought against activist organizations like DSA which organize mass civil disobedience; such an approach would empower the government to bring charges against basically every DSA member.

Once the most militant layers are dispatched, the broader movement can be dealt with easily.

Politically, the suppression will almost certainly follow the traditional strategy of counter-revolution. In this strategy, the vanguard of the revolutionary forces are met directly with stiff repression, while the surrounding forces are cowed into silence in order to isolate the more militant layers from solidarity. Once the most militant layers are dispatched, the broader movement can be dealt with easily.

YES {WOM}MEN



Susie Wiles
Chief of Staff

'Super-Karen' Susie Wiles has worked her way up from a campaign scheduler on the 1980 Reagan campaign, to being Trump's right-hand lady since he left office in 2020. Wiles is a key power-broker in the Florida Republican Party, and has served as the head honcho of "Trump-Land" for several years.

As Chief of Staff she will be a key enforcer of Trump's will and his eyes on the ground supervising his White House staff.



Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense

Fox News host Hegseth was one of 12 national guardsmen prohibited from serving in defense of the January 2021 Biden inauguration, as he was deemed a potential insider threat.

Hegseth has campaigned for US war criminals, served at Guantanamo Bay, and led counter-insurgency training in Afghanistan. Hegseth was no doubt appointed to be a yes-man for Trump's wishes, helping overcome any internal resistance from military brass.

We have already seen how the US ruling class has sought to employ this method to defend Israel, bringing direct police repression against street activists, which is paired with a larger campaign to brand anyone who stands with Palestine in any way, or who doesn't join in the repression of activists, as antisemitic.

It is possible that Trump does not immediately pursue an authoritarian crackdown, but that such a crackdown is employed if street protests reach a threatening height. Another potential is that the authorities could allow the MAGA activist layers to intimidate the mass movements, looking the other way or even coordinating with them.

Another possibility is that suppression of dissidents could take place in line with a serious escalation of a conflict with China. Considering that fear-mongering around China has long been the bi-partisan approach, a conflict with China may initially have a much larger base of support among the population as opposed to escalations in the Middle East or with Russia. If there was widespread popular support, this would leave any anti-war activists highly isolated.

Overall, in the short term Trump has broad discretion and few obstacles as to how far to pursue authoritarianism, while in the more medium and long term the regime will follow what is in the best interest of the ruling clique of the American capitalist class assembled around Trump and the class as a whole. This will develop on three main axes—the extent to which authoritarianism is needed by the Trump clique to enforce its rule on the capitalist class as a whole (suppressing the Democrats and the rule of law), the extent authoritarianism is needed to discipline the nation in preparation for war or escalating proxy wars with China, and the extent authoritarianism is needed to suppress threats to key pillars of capitalism such as imperialism, white supremacy, and undemocratic political structures, or the capitalist system as a whole.

The last of these potentialities suggests that the greater our success in challenging Trump — that is, the more dangerous we become to his regime—the greater the danger of authoritarian suppression.

DSA is not yet prepared to wage large scale mass movements against Trump, and moreover is totally unprepared to take on any real steps in response to an authoritarian crackdown. If there is an attempt to suppress the left, including through lawfare and mass arrests, it will be crippling. If Trump sets out to suppress DSA, the pro-Palestinian anti-war movement, or other forces on the left in a real way, he will meet opponents hardly prepared to resist in any substantial way, or to carry forward and escalate mass resistance while operating in “underground” or “semi-underground” conditions.

Four Years Up; Four Years Down

Those organizing to defend the interests of the working class and advance the cause of socialism will face unprecedented challenges under the second Trump administration.

An approximate (admittedly ‘vibes-based’) read on the forces likely to move into struggle against Trump is that they are largely burned out, demoralized, and defeatist. Not only has Trump won, again, but all the mass movements of the recent period seem to have little to show for their work, as much of the reforms won through struggle are about to be rolled back and the corporate and conservative attack on working and marginalized people escalated.

The period from the launch of Bernie's first campaign in May of 2015 to the BLM uprising of May 2020 saw some 5 years of explosive and consistent growth and strengthening of the progressive movement in the United States. From the electrifying and unprecedented 2016 Bernie campaign through the large demonstrations under Trump—5 million took part in the Women's March, hundreds of thousands took direct action to block the Muslim ban, and labor threatened escalating labor action to end the government shut down—and to the second Bernie campaign, the movement seemed to grow from strength to strength. Even after Bernie's defeat to Biden and the demobilization of the pandemic, the momentum was yet to peak with some 15-24 million taking part in the George Floyd Uprising, the largest mass protest in US history.

But now it has been almost as long from the launch of Bernie's first campaign to the uprising of 2020, and our movement seems to have demobilized, lost energy and direction, and now is facing its greatest threat yet. Even as Biden's administration was moved somewhat to the left, the class struggle in the political field largely subsided. The movement didn't disappear overnight, with much energy moving to the labor movement, but the struggle was less and less a direct and militant confrontation with the capitalist system as a whole.

The anti-war movement since October 7 saw some 1 million moving into struggle by December of 2024. Maybe another million or two joined actions after this; for several months there was a sustained level of activity and strategic organizing among a large militant minority, and the movement saw a new peak in the spring of 2024 with the encampment movement. But the anti-war movement is smaller by a factor of ten than the uprising of 2020. So not only have we not surpassed the twin peaks of the Bernie 2020 campaign and the George Floyd Uprising, but since then we have not even come close in terms of mass participation.

Most of the reforms of the Biden administration will be rolled back under Trump. However, it is true that some long term power was built, especially through a revival of militancy and new organizing in the labor movement. The actual gains in terms of numbers or replaced leadership are relatively small, but the revival of a fighting spirit is incredibly important nonetheless. But in spite of the soon-to-be revoked reforms, the broader masses which took action over the last decade seem far less primed to launch sustained resistance than was the case when Trump first took office.

This shows that an ounce of active class struggle is worth more than a pound of reforms in terms of preparedness to face the forces of counter-revolution. But the class-struggle is not something willed into being, it is a contradiction which arises through the structural divisions within capitalist class society. So just because we may feel deflated or defeated now, does not mean that mass movements will not unfold, even in the very near term.

While it isn't possible to predict events in advance, an analysis of Trump's agenda does give us some indication of how things might develop. The most obvious provocations which could kick off mass resistance to the Trump administration are the carrying out of mass layoffs to the civil service, attempts to implement mass deportations, or any serious escalation of war, either in support of Israel, with China, or elsewhere.

Electric Shock; Electric Boogaloo

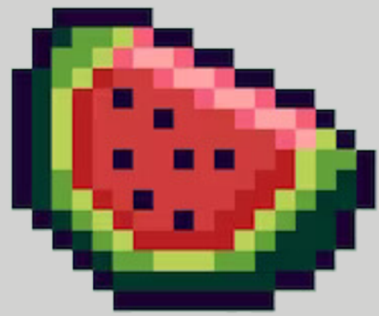
Almost certainly, we are not prepared to face Trump. Our organizations are too small, our methods are not professionalized, our political perspectives are underdeveloped, our strategy is too often self-isolating, and most importantly, our coherent vision of a positive alternative for society does not yet exist. ***The coming struggle will reveal the extent of our unpreparedness like a painful electric shock.***

But like any shock, if it does not kill us, our weakness in the face of Trump will jolt us awake. Trump's second term seeks to stamp out everything we have built over the last decade. Our task is not only to try to preserve the many important reforms which have been won. We must go beyond this, developing a movement against the right and for working people which is crystalized in serious efforts to launch a new political party, understood both as the best force to resist Trump and to deliver a positive agenda for working people.

This requires not only beating back Trump's attacks, but more importantly, shedding off our own limitations and limited outlooks. DSA must steel itself to dive confidently into mass movements and major confrontations with the government, bringing a strong Marxist program and a powerful, party-like organization. We will be fighting battles of a severity and intensity in excess of any work we have done before.

If we can succeed, our movement will be so energizing that it will electrify the working class into struggle against not only Trump but the capitalist system as a whole.





GREEN, WHITE, BLACK +

✓
The New Red Scare

BY WHITNEY KAHN &
HARRIS LIEBERMAN



The Ruling Class knows something you don't know...
that the facade of capitalism is crumbling around us.

The fight for Palestinian liberation — and the suppression it has faced — is not only about rights and freedom for the people of Palestine, but is a struggle against capitalist imperialism for the whole world. The ruling class are fighting the movement as if they know this — and we should fight back as if we do, too.

The Palestinian Scare

The Palestinian solidarity movement has rocked this country and the entire world over the past year. It's upended the pro-Israel consensus which the US has been able to steadfastly rely on for 70 years as the bedrock for pursuing its domination of the Middle East. And now the ruling class is fighting back in the best way they know how: a Red (Green, White, and Black) Scare.

For those who have been fighting with, for, and in Palestine for decades, most especially, Palestinians themselves, state repression is nothing new. But as millions of people in the U.S. have joined the struggle for Palestinian liberation since October 2023, they also have been exposed to the reality of media censorship, campus and workplace repression, surveillance, and protest illegalization that together belie the U.S. as a democracy.

On May 1st of this year, Congress voted to define 'antisemitism' to include the "targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity," over the objections of hundreds of thousands of anti-Zionist Jews. This has become the theoretical groundwork for mass censorship, as universities, companies, and local school districts use this to legitimize draconian enforcement against free speech criticism of Israel's war crimes.

Right now, thousands of people's jobs are in jeopardy for the crime of standing up for Palestine. CAIR marked the highest ever reported employer retaliations in its 30 year history since the attacks on Gaza began, logging 1,200 employer retaliations. These are some of the best relative numbers we have, but in no way captures the scale.

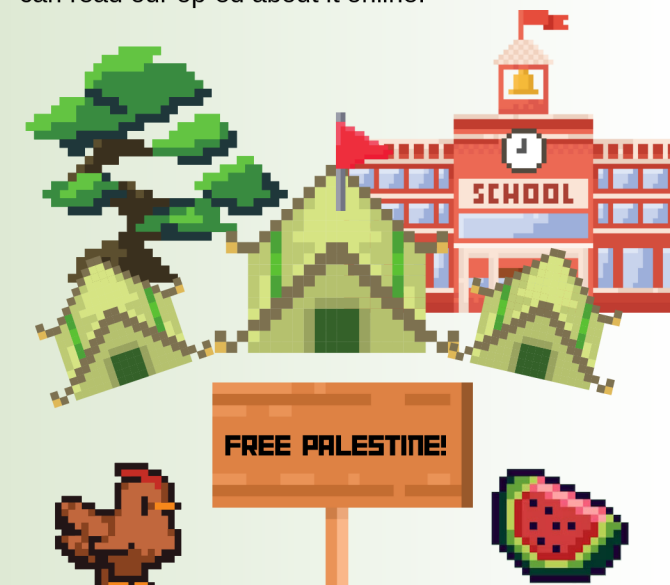
Education especially is in the crosshairs. The University of Texas dismissed two teaching assistants for sending a message to students titled "mental health and violence in Gaza." Jewish Professor Maura Finkelstein became the first tenured professor fired in this Red Scare for her personal Instagram posts. In December 2023, two university presidents resigned after being brought before Congressional hearings which accused them of not condemning students' chants of "intifada" (uprising) as calls for genocide.

The Red Scare is in full swing on college campuses across the country. In response to the wave of pro-Palestine protests in the spring, we have seen a brutal crackdown on campuses. Arrests of over 3,000 students and faculty, mass expulsion of students, and new policies that crack down on even tame protests such as vigils and treat anti-Zionist criticism of Israel as hate-speech.

Right now, thousands of people's jobs are in jeopardy for the crime of standing up for Palestine.

And education is especially in the crosshairs.

Even at the high school level, teachers and students have been targeted. In Seattle, where one of us teaches in public schools, one teacher, Ian Golash, was harassed by a right-wing vigilante who came to his school all the way from Florida with a mobile billboard that read "Public School Teacher & Seattle's Leading Antisemite." How did the supposedly progressive Seattle Public Schools respond? They removed Ian from the classroom. You can read our op-ed about it online.



Solidarity organizations, and even aid organizations, have been targeted as well. On October 15, just after the one-year anniversary of the ongoing brutal genocide in Gaza, the US government designated the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network as “a sham charity that serves as an international fundraiser for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist organization.” This effectively made it an illegal organization that had to be disbanded. Even Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) has been branded as antisemitic and, along with Students for Justice in Palestine, been banned from Columbia University and other campuses following the historic student uprising last spring.

UNWRA, the leading United Nations organization for delivering aid to Palestinians since 1949, had their funding cut off by the US and EU over shifty allegations of connection to terrorism where, at most, the actions of a few employees has been used to discredit the organization as a whole. This has given a green light for war crimes, and now the Israeli military has killed more UN workers in Gaza than there were hostages taken on October 7th. This left Palestinians without critical food and shelter, and meant Americans, already facing repression on the streets and at schools, had yet another vehicle for the most basic form of solidarity—material aid—cut off from them.

Moreover, there have been hundreds of anti-protest laws introduced since 2017, ramping up after the 2020 George Floyd uprising, and now even more in response to the Palestinian solidarity movement. These laws have made it a felony to “riot”, but given a definition so broad that any peaceful protest could be found guilty as even the perceived “imminent danger” of property damage is sufficient. If the protest is considered a “riot”, there are now laws in some states that protect drivers who run over protesters. They have overturned precedent to make organizers legally responsible for the actions of attendees. They can now charge nonprofit organizations with felony fines for “conspiring” with protesters. This is not to say that each instance will now be enforced. But they are effectively a climate of fear, which serves the purpose of keeping many people from participating.

It’s Happened Before

Red Scares can take different forms. But what they all have in common is that they are a response to the rise of a mass movement gaining steam, and create an atmosphere of fear that encourages people to distance themselves from these popular movements. By using labels like “terrorist,” “antisemitic,” “socialist,” or “communist”, and setting up spectacles of mass repression, the ruling class employs the powerful media to turn once-mainstream activists into pariahs that the general public fear being associated with.

By using labels like “terrorist,” “antisemitic,” “socialist,” or “communist”, and setting up spectacles of mass repression, the ruling class employs the powerful media to turn once-mainstream activists into pariahs that the general public fear being associated with.

The year 1920 was the height of what became known as the first Red Scare. The US ruling class were panicking over the mass upheaval that broke out following WWI. Credibility for the capitalist system was in freefall and the working class was getting massively organized — strikes swept across the country. The capitalist class feared that a revolution like what happened in Russia would spread to the US.

So with revolution on the agenda and the population radicalizing more and more against the robber-baron class, capitalism’s most aggressive defenders went after everyone who opposed their agenda. The New York Assembly expelled the elected members of the Socialist Party, the government discredited Black freedom efforts against segregation and Jim Crow as being puppets of nefarious communists, and US Attorney General Palmer used the Department of Justice to terrorize leftist organizations in high-profile raids across the country, deporting hundreds of foreign-born socialists. In cities that went on strike—including our home, Seattle, where workers took over the whole city—the government used brutal state violence, even military intervention to put the strikes down.



After the raids subsided, the damage was done. The Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party, the biggest radical working-class organizations of their time, were gutted and would never recover.

The mass labor movement which had come out of WWI emboldened was cut across, with the Palmer Raids paired with and enabling an “open shop” anti-union drive by employers in 1919 and 1920. This opened up a dark decade of capitalist free reign, rampant speculation, and stagnant union rates that lasted until the Great Depression.

Workers heroically organized throughout the 1930s and 40s, creating new fighting unions, forming a new labor federation based on inclusive unions willing to fight for everyone, and rose to the heights of taking over more cities with general strikes. Just like before, they developed incredible tactics such as the sit-down strike where workers would go on strike inside the factory, taking over the building rather than marching outside of it.

Then in the 1950s, during the height of the Cold War, we had another Red Scare, bigger and more successful. This time, instead of raids on meetings being the centerpiece, the big spectacle was a series of trials of federal employees and other workers led by Senator McCarthy. Their goal, just like before, was fear through mass repression.

The spectacle of the trials was important to drive it into the public consciousness that they must silence their criticisms or they could be next.

This had the effect of isolating individuals, destroying working-class organizations, and silencing any critiques. Ideas can be killed, at least publicly, and at least for a while. They used this witch-hunt to target the best fighters in the unions who had led strikes on scales never-before-seen.

It is also worth noting that Senator McCarthy’s chief counsel during these trials was Roy Cohn, who actually led most of the closed-door hearings. Cohn would later go on to serve as Donald Trump’s lawyer and mentor. There’s a direct continuity between the Second Red Scare and the current anti-Palestinian efforts, even down to being led by some of the same people calling the shots. With Trump returning to office, it is almost certain that Trump will escalate these attacks, going after pro-Palestinian organizations and potentially deporting foreign-born pro-Palestinian activists, as is laid out in Project 2025.

These Red Scares didn’t last forever, but tore mass movements apart like a tornado, leaving wreckage that would take far longer to repair than it took to do the damage, and some things were destroyed forever.

The Red Scare of the 1950s left us with a dark decade before the growing Civil Rights movement and anti-colonial revolutions led a new generation into the struggle to shake off the chains of the Red Scare. But the US labor movement has still not yet fully recovered from exorcising the activists and organizers who led to their biggest victories.

So, we're all completely doomed?

So, is there anything to take from this history other than that we're all doomed?

No, we're not doomed, and the ruling class is not all-powerful. We stand a chance, but only if we learn from those who came before us and gave their lives to the struggle. History is not linear. It is a dynamic push and a pull between those in power and those without it. Red Scares always come on the heels of mass movements that have successfully changed public opinion. The best way to wield power is to not use it for violent repression, but to keep it as a silent threat. That's the reason that, on the whole, the countries in the imperialist core get the benefit of a seemingly democratic government. If the people believe in the system, there's no threat that needs to be repressed. A strong system has no need to fire people for their beliefs, to brutally attack students on campuses, to censure and expel grassroots politicians, or to raid organizations and meetings.



These are the desperate mask-off flailings of a weak power structure that is losing the battle for ideas, and must resort to brute violence.

Create Independent Media To Challenge The Corporate Narrative

One of the biggest sectors of establishment reaction around Palestine has been over TikTok, which at the time of publication, is in its final countdown to being banned in the US. While politicians from both sides of the aisle have tried to point the finger at Chinese government surveillance, this is in fact, and ironically, U.S. government propaganda. The US version of TikTok is not owned by the Chinese government — but it is uniquely the only mass social media platform we have access to in the US that isn't censoring us on behalf of the US government. It has proved to be the essential way that millions of Americans found out about the realities of the genocide in Gaza and dove deeper to uncover how and why our government is ultimately responsible for it. As Senator Mitt Romney lays out in an interview with Secretary of State Anthony Blinken:

“Some wonder why there was such overwhelming support for us to shut down potentially TikTok or other entities of that nature. If you look at the postings on TikTok and the number of mentions of Palestinians, relative to other social media sites — it's overwhelmingly so among TikTok broadcasts.”

If this New Red Scare takes away the very minuscule amount of media we have that isn't owned by U.S. media conglomerates under heavy censorship by the U.S. government, then it's up to us to create new media. We are starting to see these crop up—from In These Times to More Perfect Union and Means TV. We need the People's TikTok, not owned by Chinese or U.S. companies, but independent and funded by unions, socialist and progressive organizations, and with transparent algorithms.

Build A New Political Party Of Solidarity As An Alternative To The Far-Right

Both Democrats and Republicans had nearly identical stances on Israel-Palestine in the 2024 presidential election. The DNC prohibited Palestinian organizers from speaking at the convention, even after the Undecided Movement's leaders promised support for Kamala Harris. Trump was able to pull votes from working-class voters by refusing to cheerlead the U.S. funded war efforts in Ukraine and Palestine. If we are to stop a right-wing populist political hurricane from tearing through this country any further, then we're going to need to build a left-wing working class party that is clearly independent from the Democrats. We can engage in infinite debates about timing and tactics, but at the end of the day, the longer people have no alternative to Trumpism as an alternative to the Democratic Party, the stronger the forces of fascism we will have to fight.

Organize, reform, and grow unions willing to fight for everyone

The Red Scare of yesterday lives on in our unions—organizations that are supposed to be on the working-class side of history through and through, but which over the course of decades of raids, purges and crushing defeats, have largely chosen a strategy of compromise with the ruling elite. One of the biggest ways this manifested is with the idea that unions shouldn't be political—as if our everyday lives can somehow exist outside of the political system we live in. The new Palestine solidarity movement has begun to challenge this notion in important unions, with unions representing over 4 million workers forming the 'Labor for Ceasefire' coalition and demanding that “the U.S. Government must halt military aid to Israel immediately”. This did not come automatically, but was hard-won by rank-and-file union activists organizing and networking across the country. This is an important next step in efforts to reform and rebuild our unions into the political organizations capable of truly challenging the agenda of the billionaire class in the international fight for peace and liberation.

The Palestinian solidarity movement alongside the genocide and escalating war being waged by Israel has caused the US government to lose the debate with the American people. They are using more and more tools of repression to try to destroy a population they can no longer convince—not just about Palestine, but about capitalism itself; about working long hours for not enough pay; about living in increasingly isolated and lonely conditions; about parasite healthcare, radicalized class disparity, and so much more.

Red Scares are inevitable, but they are not invincible. If we keep on getting more organized, if we take the leap and build our own party, our unions, our media, our mutual aid and solidarity groups, we will face more repression. This is something to both fear and prepare for. But we can also use it to gauge how organized we are, while fighting like hell against all repression.

We have a world to win, and if this past year is any indication, we can do it.



<title>

"TRUMP'S PLANNED ATTACKS ON UNIONS"

<h1> "Mass_Lay-Offs" </h1/>

<p1> "Trump Threatens to carry out mass lay-offs in the civil services. Spearheaded by his new advisory Department of Government Efficiency, Trump is posturing to make up to \$2 billion in cuts to the federal budget."

This would likely require using AI to replace government workers, who are largely represented by the American Federation of Government Employees. But cuts could also come through layoffs or the privatization of the postal service or the elimination of entire agencies including the Department of Education." </p1>

<h2> "Rollback Organizing Rights" </h2/>

<p2> "A Trump-appointed Department of Labor will not only undermine the rights of workers to form unions, but will lower basic standards. Trump's NLRB will do away with card-check provisions, and exclude graduate students, student doctors, and other grey-area workers from access to the NLRB. Trump will target DEI initiatives and mechanisms for enforcing civil rights in the workplace. He will also seek to empower states to exempt themselves from federal minimum standards like minimum wage, overtime, and workplace safety laws." </p2>

<h3> "Target Anti-War Activists" </h3/>

<p3> "Some of the most exciting and impactful organizing over the last year has been organizing for a ceasefire and against imperialism within the labor movement. Trump will likely target any anti-war activists, including in labor, who stand up for Palestine."

Any foreign nationals may have their visas revoked and be subject to deportation." </p3>



<h4> "Divide and Conquer" </h4/>

<p4> "The MAGA movement has developed a handful of fake 'pro-worker' champions, including Senator Josh Hawley and Trump's new pick for Labor Secretary, Lori Chaves-DeRemer. These politicians support a tiny portion of pro-union legislation to posture as friends of workers. Although their support is totally cynical and immaterial, it provides right-leaning labor leaders with an excuse to work with them."

This is crucial because it creates a bridge to buy off the right wing of labor, keeping the AFL-CIO from mounting a coordinated campaign against Trump." </p4>

<h5> "Legalize Company Unions" </h5/>

<p5> "Although company unions have been legally prohibited since the passage of the National Labor Relations Act, companies including Uber and Verizon have experimented with company unionism in recent years, redirecting worker energy for reform into employer-controlled channels, and thereby confusing unionization efforts."

Project 2025 lays out a plan for legalizing company unions which would set labor law back by a century." </p5>

<h6> "Expand Misclassification" </h6/>

<p6> "Misclassification, when a company pays core workers as independent contractors, helps employers avoid paying taxes and statutory benefits."

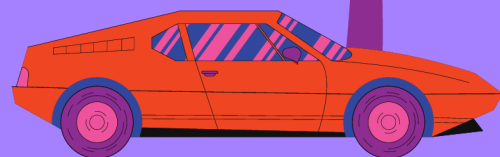
Trump plans to offer "safe harbor" to any gig companies which currently misclassify workers if they agree to offer token benefits programs."

Let the gamification of labor begin." </p6>

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

And the New Cold War

BY ROBERT SHIELD



There has been a lot of discussion in the past period on how chips have been the latest trade war among key economies and against China.

With Trump's re-election, these discussions are ramping up but most importantly around EVs (electric vehicles). Elon Musk has positioned himself to be Trump's loudest voice in his ear in regards to key decisions about policy and his cabinet picks. Why is Elon so involved this election cycle? Because he sees Tesla as a part of the global war on electric vehicle dominance and self-driving technology. He believes his \$118 million that he donated to support Trump will help increase his influence and help position himself in the upcoming trade wars.

比 亚 迪 The Current State of the Market - China Dominance

As you drive and live across the United States you won't go long without seeing a Tesla vehicle. In California the Tesla Model 3 and Model Y are among the best selling vehicles among all EV cars in 2024. Beyond the United States borders, it is a different story. Currently, China's EVs are outselling Tesla and other automakers by a wide margin. Roughly half of all EV sales globally come from Chinese automakers with BYD being the top selling worldwide.

In Europe, Chinese made electric vehicles already are on track to be 11 percent of all EV sales in Europe. There are plans to build factories in Spain, Poland, and Hungary from China based companies. As a result Europe has responded with 25 percent tariffs with tensions building for further clashes.

Tesla, which has been making inroads in Europe as well, has been feeling the pressure from Chinese EV companies and pushback from homegrown automakers like Volkswagen and Mercedes.

This has sparked a new battle among the United States and China. As a result of their growing dominance, in 2018 Trump instituted new tariffs on EVs from China set at 25 percent. In 2024, Biden raised the tariff to 100 percent to further stop China from selling their EVs that can be built for significantly less than in other parts of the world.

China's dominance really shows in its control of materials, the supply chain, and battery technology. Through companies like CATL (Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd.) China already produces 70 percent of the world's batteries, an astonishing amount in a young market. 85 percent of anodes and 60 percent of cathodes, a key battery component, are made in China. Furthermore, 75 percent of the cobalt materials in the world are produced by China but mined in countries like the DRC. China's strongest competitive edge is its reliance on cheap labor and its ability to lower costs on batteries which allows them to sell their cars 40 percent less than other manufacturers like in the United States.

Decline of the West

As the EV market heats up, this is occurring during a very difficult time for western auto manufacturers. Many of the American based auto manufacturers have never recovered from the rise of the Japanese auto manufacturers that flooded the US market with reliable and fuel efficient cars in the 80s and 90s.

Years later we have seen Ford stop selling most of their car portfolio, Chevy had to be bailed out in the Great Recession and in 2014 the Fiat Group bought out all of the Chrysler group which contains brands like Dodge and Jeep.

The issues extend to Europe. Volkswagen (VW) is facing significant labor unrest in Germany, with workers striking across several plants in protest against proposed layoffs, factory closures, and wage reductions. The company announced cost-cutting measures, including the closure of at least three factories, as part of its strategy to cope with declining demand for EVs and rising production costs. The strikes, organized by the IG Metall union, have escalated as workers demand better compensation and job security in light of VW's plans to restructure. Union leaders argue that the company's focus on cost-cutting is disproportionately affecting workers and propose alternatives like freezing executive bonuses and reducing working hours instead of layoffs.

Tesla and the tech sector saw the EV market as a new way to position the US auto sector as a leader in the world. Tesla in the past ten years has quickly built up their position by being early into the market. The rise of the Chinese EVs has put their dominance into question. Elon Musk and the United States would like to protect what is left of the auto industry. Self driving technology and artificial intelligence are positioned to be a major part of future economies. The United States does not want to miss out on dominating this market and is already falling behind.

Trump And The Oncoming Trade War

When Trump takes office he is poised to make more sweeping tariffs against trade partners. Current President Joe Biden has already increased the tariffs to 100 percent for Chinese EVs. In response, China is hoping to build factories in places like Mexico to get around the tariffs. If China can qualify under the criteria for United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). They can then send EVs into the US with no tariffs. It is very likely Trump is going to target USMCA to prevent EVs from Chinese companies entering the US.

This trade war is an example of the broader war between nations. China and the United States want control of the market and use emerging markets to expand their influence. Whoever can export more capital can end up influencing that country greatly. We have seen China aggressively move into markets in Latin America and Africa to broaden its influence.

Lenin talks in length in his book *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* about capitalism's need to expand. China and the United States use capitalism and state intervention to expand not only capital but political influence. These countries exploit other countries for their resources such as China exploiting Africa for its cobalt. Capitalism seeks never ending profit and influence to grow.

Electric Vehicles and a Socialist Solution

Let's not forget that electric vehicles are offered up to us as part of the solution to climate change. They don't rely as much on oil reserves which has been a great source of tension in the past few decades.

But we must remind ourselves companies like BYD and Telsa aren't just out to save the planet. They are for profit companies seeking to use their resources to dominate markets. This is part of the growing green capitalism movement.

The EV trade war is not a fight for a sustainable future, but a battle for market supremacy under capitalism. Sure there are benefits but it exposes the inability of capitalist powers to prioritize humanity's needs over their own economic and geopolitical ambitions. Workers in all nations whether it is Germany, the US, Mexico, or China are all exploited under this same system. A socialist approach to the climate crisis would reject nationalist competition in favor of an international plan to transition to renewable energy. **By placing the EV industry and the broader economy under workers' democratic control, humanity can prioritize sustainability, equity, and the survival of our planet over profit and power.**



Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, and the Digital Military-Industrial Complex

How a new generation of war profiteers are driving American politics in the 21st Century



BY HENRY DE GROOT

DEGREAT4

Eisenhower's Warning

On January 17, 1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower gave his last speech as president of the United States. Despite being himself a military leader, President Eisenhower warned of the growing influence of the growing nexus between the defense industry and the state, arguing that

“An immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist.”

In fact, Eisenhower was not merely warning about some abstract threat or a conception of a set of interests, but rather a very real and organized lobby. Although the concept of a military-industrial complex is widely understood, even accepted, the actual operations of these forces remain shrouded in mystery.

During Eisenhower's administration, the inarguable center of this lobby was the aptly-named National Military Industrial Conference. This annual conference brought together military and government officials, corporate representatives, academics, and politicians.

Employer associations, the chairmen of General Mills, Sears, and other major corporations were among its planning committee. These corporate interests were joined by various government agencies including the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor, as well as representatives from elite universities, the American Legion, and other civil society groups including labor. Certainly it was the NMIC Eisenhower had on his mind when he used the term “military-industrial complex.”

Of course, the military-industrial complex did go on to have an undue influence on government spending and upon society at large.

Some of this influence is straightforward and easy to understand. At the individual level, there has long been a revolving door between government and industry, where friends help friends, civil servants retire to lucrative job in the private sector, and government funds flow freely. Corporations lobby politicians for expansion of government spending in their industries, promise to build a plant in some key constituency, and receive juicy contracts in exchange. This is commonly understood.

But the forces arrayed in the NMIC played an even greater role in influencing US politics than they are given credit. Out of this conference formed private networks which self-consciously saw themselves as the vanguards of the American capitalist class, launching a multi-decades campaign which has impacted everything from labor-imperialism, to Nixon's Southern Strategy, to the rise of Neoliberalism, and even the “culture war,” the battle for influence within the institutions of civil society and the fight to bolster the ruling class by heightening polarization on cultural issues, as we explored in our last issue.

Journalist Jane Mayer tracks in her book *Dark Money* the rising influence of a small handful of billionaires within this network. For example, John M. Olin, a chemical and ammunition industrialist, used his foundation to support the development of pro-capitalist sentiments in the legal field, funding the right-wing Federalist Society and bankrolling the neoliberal “Law and Economics” legal theory, which have largely shaped the views of Trump's extremist Supreme Court nominees. And billionaires bankrolled CIA efforts including Iran-Contra.

The forces arrayed in the NMIC began as a tool of the capitalists directly involved in military production. But the forces arrayed very quickly took on a significance far beyond the narrow interests of their corporate profits. As we reconsider Eisenhower's warning in light of a new crop of politicized billionaire military industrialists, we will find that he profoundly understated the danger.

PETER THIEL

Spyware Profiteer

Godson of NeoConservatism

Although Peter Thiel has only more recently come into public consciousness, in fact he has been active in the right-wing culture wars since his time as a student at Stanford University.

While studying at Stanford, Thiel became a founder of the *Stanford Review*. This student newspaper was one of a number of right-wing student newspapers supported by the Madison Center, run by Irving Kristol. Kristol had earlier helped run the CIA's literary front group, the Congress For Cultural Freedom. On his death the New York Times dubbed him the "godfather of neo-conservatism," and he was key in directing working-class frustrations towards the 'cultural elite' instead of capitalists. By the 1990s Kristol had begun replicating many of the tactics developed at the CCF, this time focused on organizing a right wing on the American university scene.

While Thiel was at Stanford in the late 1980s, there was a fight over the decolonization of the campus curriculum. Seizing on this fight as an explosive wedge issue, Thiel promoted a visit by William Bennet, Reagan's former Secretary of Education and another protege of Kristol, to give a speech in defense of the old Western-centric curricula and against the activists seeking revision. Thus Thiel entered politics.

After leaving Stanford, Thiel went on to work as a lawyer and trader on Wall Street, working at Sullivan and Cromwell, a law firm with close ties to the intelligence community. During his time in New York, Thiel also worked as speech writer for Bennet, and co-authored *The Diversity Myth*, an attack on 'multiculturalism' and its impact on academic freedom, arguments that are still drummed up by right-wing culture warriors today.

The Business Of Spying

Returning to Silicon Valley, Thiel co-founded Confinity, a financial payments company. The company would soon merge with Elon Musk's original X.com, a digital financial services company, and change its name to Paypal.

Recent Russian intelligence targeting of Paypal's German rival, Wirecard, suggests that Paypal would have been an very worthy target for US intelligence in its early days. And certainly Thiel's proximity to US intelligence immediately before and after his time at Paypal suggests this is a reasonable area for further investigation.

Whether or not Thiel was involved with US intelligence while at Paypal, he was certainly involved with US intelligence when he used the proceeds of Paypal's 2002 sale to Ebay to found Palantir in 2003. Named after the Palantir seeing stone in *Lords of the Rings* (through which Pippin sees Sauron), Thiel's Palantir set out to sell data analytics to the intelligence community. The CIA's investment fund, In-Q-Tel, had been founded a few years earlier to help the CIA and State Department secure new advanced technology; Palantir originally struggled to secure funding, raising funds only from In-Q-Tel and Thiel himself.

Palantir quickly grew into a sprawling tech company, helping the US state combat Chinese spying networks, and eventually expanding its offerings to the public sector. The massive NSA surveillance system revealed by Edward Snowden, XKEYSCORE, which effectively tracks the online actions of every internet user all the time, uses Palantir's Gotham product to analyze the collected data.

Interestingly, Thiel was also the first outside investor in Facebook, purchasing 10 percent of the company for \$500,000 in 2004. Although Thiel sold his stock in 2012, he remained on the board of Meta through 2022 before announcing his plan not to seek re-election. Thiel's proximity to the social media giant is highly concerning and suggestive, as META was also a participant in another related NSA program, PRISM, which collects data from US technology companies including META, Apple, Google, and Microsoft. It would be incredibly naive to think Thiel had no role in this work.

But Thiel has not restricted his business ventures to facilitating the NSA's global spying network.

A report on the news website Unlimited Hangout recently detailed how a number of Thiel's companies are being employed by the NATO-backed Ukrainian military in the ongoing conflict in that country. Ukraine uses Palantir to assist with the identification of military targets, including through the employment of AI. Ukraine forces also employ the Thiel-backed Clearview AI to conduct facial recognition on and off the battlefield. "According to the Washington Post, Clearview AI told investors in 2022 that 'almost everyone in the world will be identifiable' through its system in 2023, with about 14 photos collected per person on earth," Unlimited Hangout reports. The facial recognition software is being used to identify potential Russian spies and infiltrators at checkpoints, and the war provides favorable PR for Clearview.

Another Thiel-backed company, Anduril, supplies Altius-600 drones to Ukraine, mini-planes which can be circle the battle-zone for several hours before firing themselves at a target. Anduril also provides other software and hardware to empower military surveillance and warfare.

If Strauss Had A Billion Bucks

While building out a business empire of digital weapons for the US security state, Thiel never forgot his roots as a political actor in the tradition of Irving Kristol.

Fortunately for us, it is not necessary to make claims on faith that Thiel is secretly some sort of authoritarian mastermind, since he has long expressed his disdain for democracy.

Following his intellectual writings on diversity and academia and in the wake of the "War on Terror," in 2004, Thiel authored an article, "The Straussian Moment," in which he draws on conservative philosopher Leo Strauss to draw authoritarian conclusions. He writes that,

"The awareness of the West's vulnerability called for a new compromise, and this new compromise inexorably demanded more security at the expense of less freedom."

And conveniently, "more security and less freedom" for the country means more profits and more power for Peter Thiel.

Thiel's views had progressed further by 2009, as evident in his article "The Education of A Libertarian" in 2009. He writes plainly, "**I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.**"

It was around this time, the Tea Party years, which Thiel escalated his political activity. He befriended Ann Coulter, and funded James O'Keefe, the man behind the fake sting video targeting ACORN and eventually Project Veritas, although Thiel denied funding the video itself. Thiel was a supporter of Ron Paul in 2007, and the single largest donor to the Club For Growth in 2012.

In 2016, Thiel first supported former HP CEO Carly Fiorina, and then moved his support to Donald Trump. This shows that Thiel was originally more aligned with the corporate-imperialist wing of the Republican Party than with Trump, with HP having provided biometric systems for IDF checkpoints as well as the servers for the IDF. But with Fiorina dropping out, Thiel quickly moved to support Donald Trump.

Once a Trumper, Thiel went big, donating more than \$1 million to the Trump campaign. He was rewarded for his participation, serving as one of around 20 persons on the executive committee of the 2016 Trump transition team.

Thiel was also an early funder of Missouri Senator Josh Hawley. In the 2022 race for Senator of Ohio, Thiel spent tens of millions to support the Senate campaign of JD Vance, almost single-handedly securing the election for the man who would go on to serve as Trump's vice president. And he spent that amount again in support of Blake Masters, the unsuccessful Republican candidate for Senator of Arizona. By February 2022, Thiel was one of the biggest donors to Republicans, contributing \$20 million to various races, although in 2023 Thiel allegedly stepped back from his financial support for Republicans because of their over-focus on the culture war.

But from what we know, this seems highly unlikely. More likely, **Thiel-ism** will only grow.



Elon Musk Militarizing Space



The Heir of Team B

Elon Musk, the world's richest man, has also built his fortune largely by providing the US security state with services which help to modernize it for the 21st century.

While Thiel used his proceeds from the sale of Paypal to found Palantir, Musk used his Paypal proceeds to move into the spaceflight industry. But just like Thiel, Musk was not entering this territory alone, but rather expanding on earlier developments of the neoconservative movement.

Because of the high cost of rockets, Musk traveled to Russia to attempt to secure his first space-flight using converted Russian ICBMs. However, he was rebuffed by the Russians and decided to manufacture the rockets himself, launching SpaceX in 2002.

Musk had been joined on his trip by Michael Griffin. Griffin was a veteran of the right-wing political efforts surrounding the space industry. He had served as Chief Engineer at NASA and then had as the Deputy for Technology at Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDI), known colloquially as the "Star Wars" program.

Star Wars was a key part of Reaganism with roots in Ford's administration. While the right wing sought to expand military spending, they faced the pesky problem that the CIA's analysis suggested that existing spending was perfectly adequate. But this was no use politically, so the right wing launched the "Team B" investigation to "prove" that the CIA was underestimating the threat of the Soviet Union. This empowered Reagan to campaign on the fictitious idea of the "missile gap," alleging the USSR had more ICBMs.

Part of the larger anti-detente effort known as the Second Committee on the Present Danger, this exercise was crucial to the conservative coalition, not because there was a genuine missile gap, but because it provided the basis for an escalation in great-power confrontation, and therefore an increase in military spending which could satisfy both arms producers and the AFL-CIO, since it meant an increase in union jobs.

Reagan's Star Wars was the culmination of the Team B effort. But although the initiative had succeeded politically in justifying a massive increase in military spending in general, the actual specifics of militarization in the space sector remained limited based on the current technology. Griffin left the SDI, entering the private space-launch industry in 1990s, and penning an update to the Team B analysis for the Heritage Foundation in 1996 in a report, "Defending America: Ending America's Vulnerability to Ballistic Missiles: An Update To The Missile Defense Study Team (Team B)." The report called for an escalation of the militarization of space, including through investment in space-based sensors as well as space-based defenses like space lasers.

By the 2000s the technology proposed by the Star Wars program seemed to be within reach, and so there was a renewed appetite in the space industry. After being rebuffed by the Russians, Musk turned to Griffin to lead SpaceX, but Griffin declined. Instead, Griffin took a job as CEO of In-Q-Tel, the CIA's venture capital fund which would go on to fund Palantir in 2003. This left Musk to found SpaceX on his own. But the two would not remain separated for long, with Griffin appointed as NASA administrator in 2006.

The goal in launching SpaceX was to provide space-launch services to the US government, beginning with shuttle service to the International Space Station (ISS). Griffin facilitated this by launching the Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS) program in 2006 upon his return to NASA, which set the goal of securing a commercial vendor for launches to the ISS. SpaceX succeeded in winning a spot in the COTS program to perform commercial orbital transportation services after its failed launch of Falcon 1 in 2006.

The COTS program provided a sustained revenue for SpaceX as it developed its technologies and eventually began launching successful flights to the ISS. In 2013, it also began winning contracts to launch commercial satellites, and in 2014 began providing satellite launch services for the Department of Defense. Then in 2015 it launched its Starlink program, launching its own satellites into orbit and beginning in earnest Griffin's 1996 proposal for expansion of space-based sensors, as it built an satellite network to cover the earth.

So although Musk is largely known as the head of Tesla, an investigation of his work at SpaceX reveals how his personal fortune has been built by facilitating the long-held ambitions of the neoconservative movement in regards to space-based warfare, in close collaboration with veterans of that movement. It is very likely that information not available to the public would only reinforce this direct connection.

The rise of SpaceX also illuminates how these conservative aims have been pursued more recently by way of the neoliberal privatization of NASA programs, while the importance of securing union support was less important, although this may not remain the case.

Buying Influence on the Cheap

SpaceX and Starlink are the clearest basis for understanding Musk as a military industrialist — that the interests of the world's richest man reflect the interests of capital involved in military production. However, there may be an argument that Musk's other holdings, including Tesla and Twitter, also align with the military-industrial narrative.

As covered in the article "Electric Vehicles and the New Cold War" in this issue, domestic production of electric cars highly relevant to the geo-strategic interests of the United States capitalist class in order to stave off Chinese competition. Furthermore, the related technologies including AI-enabled self-driving and batteries are also crucial as the US seeks to expand weaponization of drones.

It could also be argued that Twitter is a key tool for modern warfare, less so kinetic combat

and more-so information warfare, by way of influencing political and cultural outcomes favorable to imperialism.

Indeed, since purchasing Twitter, Musk has taken the leading role in the rise of the digital new right. Since Musk's takeover of Twitter, the platform has become both a cesspool of racist and extremist content as well as a key organizing ground for the global far right. The impact of Twitter was especially evident in the UK riots of July and August 2024, where far-right mobs rioted in Muslim neighborhoods in response to false stories spread online about Muslim involvement in the stabbing of three children.

And Musk not only gained the ability to foster this kind of environment, but he has also almost certainly gained access to the private messages of thousands of journalists, politicians, activists, and officials who use Twitter.

Truth is the first casualty of war, while data is essential ammunition in the construction of global surveillance networks.

The Musk-led \$44 billion purchase of Twitter has largely been seen as a financial and commercial failure, with Musk, by his own accounting, losing more than half of his \$20 billion personal investment.

But considering that the result of Musk's purchase is political conditions which support globalist-critical perspectives, anti-liberal right wing forces, and pull working class people towards the right on the basis of racism, xenophobia, anti-trans, conspiracy, as well as boosting Musk's personal power, it seems like \$10 billion well spent for a man valued at over \$400 billion. And Musk's transformation of Twitter is not just a boon for himself, but for the US capitalist class as a whole. The impending banning or forced acquisition of TikTok has revealed the US capitalist class's concern about Chinese-owned social media in the battle for attention and information.

Truth is the first casualty of war, while data is essential ammunition in the construction of global surveillance networks. Musk owns both.

Military-Industrial Capital In the Digital Age

How should we understand the role that Elon Musk and Peter Thiel play in the unfolding of contemporary events? What is the relation between their accumulation of inordinate wealth, their political activities, and their control of new digital industries crucial to the military ambitions of the US capitalist class?

As Marxists, we draw depth in our analysis by relating the actions of individuals to the larger economic forces at hand, trying to provide specificity at the various levels of agency, from individuals, through organizations, industries and sub-classes, to classes as a whole and onward to entire historical periods. Employing these lenses and layers sharpens our understanding of Thiel and Musk as representatives of military-industrial capital in the digitization of American imperialism.

The prominence of this new rank of digital military-industrial capital will only grow

The impact of military industrialists and military-industrial capital, and its integration into the forces of counter-revolution, has its first basis in the direct production of military hardware and services to meet the operational needs of the repressive state forces.

But it is hardly limited to this straightforward aspect; rather, military industrial capital tends to intervene more directly into political events in order to drive more favorable conditions for production, thereby reinforcing its relationship with the state. Simultaneously and in the inverse, actors in the government's military-intelligence apparatus take an interest in innovations in the defensive industry, actively spurring it along and partnering with key actors to secure provision of critical technologies and infrastructure.

The prominence of this new rank of military-industrial capital will only grow as the general repressive and military activities of the US capitalist class continue to expand and modernize.

Any escalations by Trump in the direction of authoritarianism will certainly rely both on Musk's Twitter to spread disinformation, and on Thiel's Palantir to surveil and target immigrants for deportation or activists for repression. Furthermore, escalations in the military conflicts between East and West will only mean the expansion of the US government's reliance on Palantir, Anduril, Starlink, and other military ventures in the digital industry.

Near the end of 2024, Palantir announced it is launching a new defense 'consortium' with Anduril, SpaceX, OpenAI, and more in order to compete more effectively with establishment defense contractors like Raytheon and Northrop Grumman for the \$780 billion dollar defense-contract market.

Fighting Back

Musk and Thiel's wealth and influence have only grown through the victory of the Trump/Vance ticket. The unprecedented amount of money spent by Musk and his leading role in Trump's second administration is a new peak for the influence of billionaires on American politics. Yet, the amount Musk spent backing Trump in the election - more than \$100 million - was equal to less than 1 percent of what he made in one day a few days before the election, where his calculated wealth rose by \$30 billion. His wealth rose again by more than \$60 billion in one day in December of 2024.

The amount Musk spent backing Trump in the election - more than \$100 million - was equal to less than 1 percent of what he made in one day.

Can we hope to stand against the digital billionaires, the very same who flood elections with money, buy out social media networks, and oversee globe-spanning spyware operations which track our every move.

We can and we must. Although the ever-growing power of the billionaires may seem insurmountable, socialist revolutionaries have always had to face down repressive police states, bought-and-paid-for elections, and politically-active industrialists.

The technology is new, but the strategy is largely the same.

The increase in mass-surveillance and the increased politicization of social networks raises important tactical and technical considerations for activists in how to minimize surveillance and repression while maximizing reach. This requires mutual education on best practices for limiting direct surveillance, and the development of alternative, "open source" channels for agitation and propaganda.

But even more so, the key to fighting back against this AI-operated, far-right-owned hellscape is primarily not tactical, but political.

In our basic approach, we want to unite broad layers of working people against billionaire politics, against imperialism, against the new military-industrial complex.

This requires us to lay out a majoritarian strategy and tactics for mass struggle, including through labor and electoral campaigns, as well as direct action, street protests, and political strikes. This is in contrast to individual acts of bravery and minoritarian politics which at best do not challenge the system as a whole, and at worst can lead to self-isolation from the masses. We also want to pair this oppositional organizing with a positive alternative, a vision of a socialism for the digital age.

A review of the strategy of Team B reminds us to focus not only on the broad masses, but also on specific sections of society. Labor is especially key not only for ourselves, but also for the capitalists, as one of their key tasks is building political legitimacy for expansion of military spending. They do this by expanding their hegemonic coalition to include sections of labor. Economically and industrially, this is facilitated by developing labor-management partnerships in the production of the key industries, in this case the digital industry - as juicy employment contracts distribute the bounty of imperialism in the classic formula for creating a labor aristocracy.

This raises resisting labor imperialism and raising an anti-imperialist wing within the US labor movement as an especially key strategic task for Marxists today.

And the fight against digital imperialism can be further waged form within the industry, by expanding unionization drives among key new industries, by the unionization of software developers and hardware production lines, etc.

In addition, building and maintaining popular legitimacy is especially important in terms of splitting the rank and file layers of the military from the worst expressions of Trump's second administration.

While AI and technology are increasingly powerful, widespread repression of mass movements would still require the active participation of a large number of police and military forces. Especially for rank and file members of the military, who are largely working class and did not enlist to suppress their own neighbors, in periods of mass upsurge it remains possible to undermine their compliance with orders or move them into defense of the masses if it is clear that one side represents the rich and the other represents working class people. At least for now, drones still require working class operators.

Ultimately, the noxious and obnoxious influence of this new generation of military-industrial capitalists personified by Musk and Thiel is just the tip of the larger system of capitalist-imperialism. We will not have peace from war or from right wing billionaires as long as the structural pressures of capitalism drive the world towards conflict.

The only solution is a socialist movement which seeks not peace but class war, and secures the overthrow and elimination of the billionaire class.

