The 2022-2025 Main Political Report of Liberation Road/*El Camino Para Liberacíon*

Drafted December 15, 2024

Revised April 15, 2024

Amended and Adopted June 1, 2025

Table of Contents

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose and Focus of this Report

We are living through a period of profound danger and possibility. The New Confederacy is advancing a coordinated authoritarian project, while the forces defending and expanding multiracial democracy remain fragmented and uneven, but in motion. This report offers Liberation Road's analysis of the current balance of forces as a foundation for our Strategic Orientation, where we outline the strategic tasks required to block authoritarian rule and build toward a Third Reconstruction.

In the political reports that we prepare before each of our triennial congresses, Liberation Road attempts to outline the major societal contradictions and developments of the political moment. The purpose is both to provide a retroactive assessment of the preceding period and to identify key developments that will impact the strategic orientation of our organization and the broader socialist, labor, and social movement left for the coming years.

Our last MPR was written in December 2021, in advance of Liberation Road's 13th triennial Congress in April 2022. This report seeks to assess developments from early 2022 through approximately March of 2025. While the Biden era already feels like it is rapidly receding into the distance, we think it is important to retroactively assess its contradictions. They provide key insights about the road that brought us here, and key lessons that we must wrestle with if we are to successfully resist and ultimately defeat the New Confederacy. In addition to outlining the emerging contours of our current moment, this report thus tries to provide a relatively comprehensive assessment of key developments over the preceding three years—both domestically and internationally.

1.1.1 Who this Document is For

This is a work of revolutionary theory, not agitation. Its purpose is to explain many ideas to (comparatively) few people, rather than a single idea to a large number of people. Its audience is active revolutionaries of three sorts:

1. **For cadre and members**: This is an orientation guide—providing shared analysis to align our work across mass work units, geographic districts, and movement sectors.

2. **For close allies and partners**: This is an invitation—to engage deeply with our strategic perspective, sharpen collective understanding, and identify points of alignment.

3. **For the broader movements**: While written from within a cadre organization, we hope this document can contribute to wider strategic conversations among our movements.

The rest of this executive summary outlines the key arguments of our Main Political Report. Each subsection of the summary corresponds to a full section of the more detailed analysis that follows. For the fuller analysis, see the corresponding sections, below.

1.2 Summary: International Developments

Globally, the past three years saw soaring inequality, populist discontent, and a world at war, with a record 59 simultaneous state conflicts. After briefly rebounding from the 2020-2021 COVID crash, global GDP growth declined to historic lows, while record inflation led to a worldwide cost-of-living squeeze. These dynamics contributed to a heterogeneous populist backlash, with voters around the world revolting against sitting governments to the benefit of both left- and right-wing populist parties.

These global trends both occurred within and contributed to an ongoing three-fold crisis of "economy, ecology, and empire." Economically, neoliberalism continued to unravel, yet no other economic paradigm has assumed its place. Geopolitically, the US-led international order has foundered, but no new order has emerged. Environmentally, the current "solutions" to the climate crisis fail more deeply by the day, but no alternatives have secured consensus.

The simultaneity of these three intersecting crises of ecology, economy, and empire have produced a deep threat, not just to the world's people, but also to the ruling class's ability to secure stability. We are in an interregnum, where the old hegemonic order has been shattered, but no new one has been born. The defining characteristic of this period is thus its volatility, as differing factions and forces struggled to establish a new hegemonic order under conditions of deep uncertainty.

Amid this flux, multiple imperial projects and emerging alternatives vie for position in a global order increasingly marked by instability, contradiction, and opportunity. In the Middle East, Israel continues a genocidal war on Gaza, abetted by US military and financial support, that threatens to spiral into a broader regional conflict. In Europe, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has begun the largest military conflict on the continent since World War II. In Mexico, the deepening transformation under Morena offers a rare example of progressive national development in the Global South, positioning itself against both neoliberalism and US domination. In Asia, China's economic power makes it a cautious challenger to US influence.

In the US, the election of Donald Trump has upended a longstanding US foreign policy consensus, with major consequences that are still playing out. Trump envisions a multipolar world divided among rival empires—each controlling its own sphere of influence. His approach prioritizes resource acquisition and sovereign power, discarding any moral or legal pretense to promote democracy or global stability. Trump's admiration for authoritarian leaders, calls to dismantle global institutions, and proposals to double military spending reflect a vision of the US as the most powerful empire in a world of empires, unbound by international norms and accountable only to itself.

1.3 Summary: Balance of Power in the US Political Context

In the US, the 2024 elections swept the New Confederacy back into power at the national level. This victory, while wide, was shallow; rather than a dramatic realignment of the electorate, it represented a reactionary backlash in the context of a society that remains deeply polarized. However, the New Confederacy's trifecta control of federal government has dramatically shifted the balance of power, increasing the risk that they will consolidate an authoritarian regime. Trump now seeks to replace US democracy with patronal autocracy—an intermediary regime between democracy and dictatorship, in which a corrupt "patron" governs the country as an extension of his business interests. This project does not have a popular mandate, and can be resisted through coordinated defensive and counter-offensive social and political struggles, which we will discuss further in our Strategic Orientation.

Prior to the 2024 elections, the Biden era had witnessed an intensifying stalemate at the federal level, as both sides attempted major advances, with contradictory results. Biden's attempt to chart a post-neoliberal economic course—initially ambitious and redistributive—was steadily narrowed into a more corporate-friendly framework under the pressures of inflation, corporate opposition, and intra-party conflict, all compounded by the weakness of organized labor and the social movements. At the same time, the Supreme Court pursued an aggressive, MAGA-aligned agenda to "repeal" the 20th century, overturning *Roe v. Wade* and attacking other longstanding civic, social, and workers' rights. This volatile and inconclusive period set the stage for Trump's return to power.

At the state level, this period saw widening divides between red and blue states, with regional polarization hitting its highest levels since 1932. The New Confederacy doubled down on its state power strategy qualitatively but hit a limit quantitatively, moving an aggressive policy agenda in states under its control but holding steady at 23 state government trifectas (a slight decrease from a pre-2020 high-water mark of 26). Democrats began to catch up on state government trifectas, rising from a low of six to a brief high of 17 before dropping to 16 after losing Michigan, and likewise pursued a bolder policy agenda in states under their control. Increasingly, Americans living in red and blue states experienced fundamentally different social, political, and economic realities.

At the local level, this period saw an intensification of struggle over electoral power, as formerly low-salience offices like county clerks and school boards became sites of intense contestation. Urban and rural regions continued a long-term trend toward increasing geographic polarization along partisan political lines. Blue cities in red states faced increased repression from state governments.

1.4 Summary: Developments in the New Confederate Front

Over the past decade, the New Confederacy has undergone a historic realignment, as Donald Trump displaced the traditional conservative establishment and consolidated leadership over a

restructured political coalition. What began as a populist backlash against neoliberal elites evolved into a full-scale reordering of the party's internal balance of power, sidelining the old fusionist alliance between economic libertarians and religious conservatives. In its place, a new triad emerged: MAGA populists, Christian nationalists, and techno-capitalists—each claiming greater ideological and institutional influence within the Republican Party, and each contributing to a broader reactionary project.

This reconfigured coalition represents not a continuation of conservative politics, but a rupture—a turn from conservatism to right-wing revolutionary transformation. Where previous Republican agendas focused on defending the existing order, the New Confederate front now seeks to overthrow it. All three dominant factions reject liberal democracy and egalitarian pluralism, but differ in what they seek to replace it with. The MAGA faction envisions a nativist ethnostate, rewarding a narrowly defined in-group of "real" Americans while targeting immigrants, racialized communities, and dissenters for exclusion. Christian nationalists pursue a Dominionist state rooted in patriarchal family structures and biblical law. Techno-capitalists promote a CEO state, a privatized regime of corporate sovereignty.

While these projects differ in substance and strategy, they are bound by a shared enemy in liberal democracy and a shared commitment to the reproduction of racial, gendered, and class domination. Yet the coalition is not without contradictions. MAGA's welfare chauvinism and economic nationalism clash with the deregulatory agenda of techno-capitalists. Christian moralists push for state-enforced restrictions that disrupt market norms. Tech elites reject religious and populist demands for state intervention in favor of corporate autonomy and global capital mobility. These internal tensions are temporarily held together by shared enemies and by Trump himself—a figure who transcends ideological divisions by offering each faction symbolic victories, institutional access, and the promise of domination over a common opposition.

Trump's role is not merely that of a populist strongman, but that of a patronal autocrat—at the center of a loyalty-based political network that fuses the machinery of the state with personal power. Under his leadership, the New Confederate front functions less like a traditional party coalition and more like a syndicate: a flexible, opportunistic power bloc animated by grievance, bound by patronage, and oriented toward the destruction of democratic accountability.

At its core, the New Confederacy remains an alliance between the most reactionary segments of capital and a predominantly white social base animated by racial and patriarchal grievance. While often mischaracterized as a working-class movement, its true base lies in the anxious middle strata—small business owners and other petty-bourgeois sectors—who, in times of instability, have historically served as the backbone of fascist regimes. This bloc has been reinforced by a rightward shift among some white sections of the multiracial/multinational working class, disorganized by decades of neoliberal deindustrialization, as well as by a small section of the oppressed nationalities. Above this social base stands a bloc of capitalist elites, long anchored in fossil fuels and agribusiness, but now joined by sectors of tech and finance increasingly hostile to liberal democracy.

1.5 Summary: Developments in the Pro-Democracy Front

As the New Confederacy has consolidated around an increasingly ethno-nationalist and fascist agenda, the front opposing it has broadened to include all those opposed to this project. This Pro-Democracy United Front is heterogeneous, encompassing disparate forces with contending social, political, and economic agendas. On the front's left are progressive forces strongly committed to racial, gender, and economic justice; on the front's right are a dwindling number of conservative Democrats and a few Republican defectors. Between them stands a wide array of moderate forces, most visibly represented by the establishment wing of the Democratic Party.

Over the past years, the Pro-Democracy United Front has undergone internal shifts marked by both opportunity and fracture. The initial post-2020 period saw a relative strengthening of the progressive wing, reflected in the Biden administration's unexpectedly ambitious domestic agenda and its tentative progressive pivot. This leftward opening, however, proved fragile: key legislative defeats and the absence of sustained mass mobilization led to strategic retrenchment. The Israeli genocide in Gaza triggered a deeper rupture between progressive and establishment forces, while the 2024 election defeat and subsequent polarization reignited internal debates over strategy, leadership, and direction. For now, establishment forces remain institutionally dominant, but progressives have emerged relatively more organized and ascendant.

The social base of the Pro-Democracy United Front includes oppressed nationality communities across class lines, some (especially unionized) white sections of the multiracial/multinational working class, and white professional and semi-professional strata. Within each of these groups, its strongest base of support comes from oppressed gender people. Post-industrial restructuring has splintered the working class: sectors like logistics and construction lean right, while care, service, and public-sector workers increasingly support the Democratic coalition. Young voters—especially women and queer youth—are the most progressive generational cohort, though a growing gender divide among young men poses emerging challenges.

Ideologically and programmatically, the Pro-Democracy United Front's direction remains contested. The front's center-right faction upholds many core tenets of neoliberalism while embracing limited forms of welfare chauvinism. The establishment center has begun to shed some neoliberal orthodoxies in favor of a hybrid model of state-managed capitalism—expanding government intervention without directly challenging corporate power. In contrast, the progressive left calls for a transformative break with neoliberalism, which we conceive of as a "Third Reconstruction" agenda rooted in racial, gender, and economic justice. These three ideological orientations represent not just policy disagreements, but fundamentally divergent visions of democracy, the economy, and the role of the state.

1.6 Summary: State of the Movements

While social movements have played a crucial role in shaping the pro-democracy front's progressive edge, they remain fragmented and strategically divided—prone to both left and right

errors. To win a Third Reconstruction, our movements need an inside/outside orientation that balances independent left initiative and a united front orientation. In the face of both internal contradictions and external challenges, the development of this orientation was uneven across social movement sectors during this period.

The last several years have brought both historic mobilizations and deep crises across oppressed nationality movements. The 2020 Black-led uprising sparked the largest protest wave in U.S. history, forcing shifts in public discourse, local policy, and federal investment. Since 2023, the mass protests in solidarity with Palestine—triggered by Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza—have brought unprecedented visibility to U.S. complicity in apartheid and catalyzed a generational surge of internationalist consciousness, particularly among youth of color. Yet these gains have been met with fierce backlash: censorship, criminalization,and efforts to roll back racial justice advances. Internally, ON movements face fragmentation, underdeveloped infrastructure, and strategic disorientation. The challenge remains how to rebuild political organization, leadership and strategic alignment so that the oppressed nationality movements can play a leading role in the fight for a Third Reconstruction.

The labor movement has experienced a resurgence in worker militancy, organizing, and political engagement. Strike activity has reached new highs, organizing efforts have expanded into the South, and a growing number of unions have taken bold stances on issues like Palestine and reproductive justice. A new layer of progressive union leadership and rank-and-file insurgency is taking shape. Yet union density remains stagnant, organizing uneven, and coordination across the movement underdeveloped, with national leadership largely unprepared to fend off the attacks—especially on the public sector—of the Trump regime. The emergence of a labor left current—anchored in key locals and national unions—offers promise, but it lacks infrastructure and contains multiple contradictions undermining its ability to consolidate into a strategic force capable of anchoring a multiracial/multinational working-class bloc in the fight for democracy.

Gender justice has been a critical frontline of repression and resistance. In the face of increasing attacks on gender rights and bodily autonomy, abortion and reproductive justice groups have worked collaboratively to continue providing services, trans-led grassroots networks have organized sophisticated mutual aid work, and the small but growing housing justice sector is leading many important local fights. Across all these efforts, however, the urgency of immediate needs can detract from longer-term organizing and power- building. There is also a disconnect between large, well-resourced nonprofits that frequently make pragmatist errors and often lack accountability to a mass base, and smaller grassroots groups that have a more radical power analysis, but are often ambivalent about base- and power-building and prone to left sectarianism. An exception is militant unions with a majority oppressed-gender membership; at their best, they combine political clarity with clear structure-based organizing, making them among the most effective, if often overlooked groups in the fight for gender justice.

Since 2016, climate and ecological justice movements made a strategic leap forward, aligning around the Green New Deal and securing partial victories through the Inflation Reduction Act. But these gains have been thrown into crisis by the return of Trump domestically and increased

geopolitical instability internationally. The CJ/EJ movement now faces the challenge of recalibrating strategy in a context where federal policy is foreclosed and the window for coordinated international action is rapidly closing. In this new period, frontline community fights at the local level—like the Black-led campaign against Elon Musk's data center in Memphis—and state-level wins like New York's Build Public Renewables Act offer a potential path forward. But the next phase of climate justice organizing will depend on whether these movements can weather the current storm—and rise to meet the next ones.

Within and across these social movements, many sectors of the US left have come to embrace an inside/outside orientation rooted in independent political organizations (IPOs). Many exciting IPOs have developed, primarily at a local and state level, generally adopting one of two models: "stand alone" organizations, or "umbrella" coalitions of existing labor and social movement groups. IPOs have had some success electing candidates and winning issue fights at a local and state level, but more mixed results federally—helping elect a number of progressive house candidates, but failing to protect Squad members Cori Bush and Jamal Bowman. Nationally, coordination remains weak, even as the Working Families Party has emerged as a vital if still contradictory embryo of a national political vehicle. While our most advanced IPO projects have led exciting wins inside the terrain of the state, the "outside" component of the strategy—rooted in building organs of direct democracy—remains less developed.

Across sectors, our movements continued to face three interlocking challenges:

1. There are too few mass membership groups organizing at scale
2. There is still too little coordination, collaboration and connective tissue across groups
3. There is too little strategic consolidation around an inside/outside strategy

To address these challenges, Liberation Road set itself the task across the past three-year period of helping to build a stronger, more coherent socialist "core." This has not meant consolidating all who self-identify as socialist, nor excluding aligned forces who use other labels. Rather, the task has been to help bring together those advanced forces who are rooted in mass organization, committed to left coordination, and strategically clear on the tasks at hand.

Efforts to cohere this core have made some significant advances in terms of strategic alignment, if not yet programmatic and organizational coherence. While no single organization has cohered our inside/outside trend, there is increased alignment among formations like Liberation Road, North Star Socialist Organization (NSSO), Convergence, Rising Majority, Grassroots Power Project, and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA's) Socialist Majority Caucus (SMC) and Groundwork. What's needed now is not just shared vision, but shared practice, structure, and initiative to strengthen our movements' ability to move from strategic defense to a coordinated counter-offensive. The question is whether we can forge a coherent, self-conscious "bloc" that doesn't just resist New Confederate autocracy, but builds the power to defeat and unseat the New Confederacy and begin a process of structural transformation—both inside the terrain of the state and across civil society. The Third Reconstruction will not build itself. But it can be built—if we do the work to build it.

SECTION 2: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Global Trends: Soaring Inflation, Populist Discontent, and a World at War

At a high level of generality, below are some key trends we witnessed in this three-year period.

A slowing global economy, soaring inequality and a cost-of-living squeeze
The economic rebound after the COVID pandemic was short-lived. What looked like a quick recovery turned out to be a "sugar rush"—a brief spike followed by slowing growth. In 2023 and 2024, global GDP growth dropped to just 2.6%, well below the pre-pandemic average of 3.5%, which itself was already down from pre-2008 norms. Despite faltering growth, financial markets soared: the Dow Jones bounced back from a dip in 2022 and continued hitting record highs. At the same time, global inflation jumped to nearly 8%. While it has since come down somewhat, it remains above pre-pandemic levels. Rising prices for energy, food, and other basics have caused a cost-of-living crisis, with three-quarters of people worldwide reporting concern about rising costs.[1] According to Oxfam, nearly 800 million workers have seen their wages fall behind inflation, losing the equivalent of a month's pay. Meanwhile, the very rich got even richer: the world's five richest men have doubled their wealth since 2020, even as 5 billion people became poorer.

Increasing geopolitical tensions, state conflict, and extra-state violence
This period saw a sharp increase in war, conflict, and violence. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II. Israeli's ongoing genocide in Gaza now threatens to expand into a broader regional conflict amid escalating tensions with Iran. In Ethiopia, the Tigray War led to the deaths of an estimated 300,000-600,000 people. Globally, the number of active state conflicts rose to 59—a record high. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the world has never experienced so many state-based conflicts at once. Deaths from conflict reached their highest levels since the 1994 Rwandan genocide, with civilian casualties making up an increasing share. Non-state violence—committed by rebel groups, militias, and organized crime—also remained at historic highs. The increasing use of drone attacks, including robotic and autonomous systems, is transforming the nature of modern combat. Meanwhile, in the South China Sea, disputes between China, the Philippines, and Taiwan raised fears of US-China tensions escalating into outright war.

Resurgent migration, hardening borders, and regional blocs
After falling sharply during the early COVID years, migration has returned to historic highs. While economic opportunity remains the main driver, forced displacement is also at record levels: by 2024, more than 120 million people had been forcibly displaced. Seventy-five percent

[1] Source: Euromonitor International Voice of the Consumer: Lifestyles Survey, fielded January to February 2023 (n=40,691)

of them came from just five countries—Afghanistan, Venezuela, Syria, Ukraine, and Sudan. In wealthy countries with aging populations and low birth rates, immigration has helped stabilize economies. But right-wing forces continued to weaponize immigration to promote racism and nativism. For the first time, money sent home by immigrants (remittances) became the largest financial flow into low- and middle-income countries, surpassing even foreign investment. In general, borders hardened between global regions but lessened within them, as the European, Caribbean, and African Unions all took steps to increase internal freedom of movement.

Populist discontent with heterogeneous political results

Political developments at the level of the nation-state have been complex and contradictory. On the right, neofascism continued to grow as a powerful international trend. While each national variant has its own contours, common elements include claims of racist and ethnic superiority; xenophobia; anti-immigration propaganda; attacks on the gay and trans community; and attacks on democracy, civil society, and human rights. On the left, the new idiom of radical politics continues to be left populism, generally characterized by calls for social justice, democratization, popular sovereignty, anti-globalization, and to a certain extent anti-capitalism, but with less of an explicitly socialist character than traditional left-wing parties.

Right-wing authoritarian regimes consolidated power in Russia, Turkey, and Hungary. But they were weakened in India and defeated in Brazil and Poland. In Latin America, the left regained power in Brazil, Chile, and Colombia, and retained it in Mexico, but lost ground in Ecuador, Argentina, and Paraguay, while Venezuela faced deepening crisis. In South Africa, the ANC lost its majority for the first time since the end of apartheid, only to form a coalition government with the majority-white Democratic Alliance. The far right continued to grow in Western Europe, while the left won victories in the Nordic countries and the Iberian peninsula. In many places, we might generalize that populist discontent with the failures of neoliberalism contributed to gains for “anti-establishment” forces on both the right and left. Elsewhere, however, the establishment clung to power.

Contradictory developments around gender and sexual equality

This period saw both progress and backlash around gender and sexual rights. Globally, there were small gains in gender parity across education, employment, and political participation, according to the Global Gender Gap Report. But the UN warned that “patriarchy is regaining ground,” citing rising rates of sexual violence, rape, and femicide—especially in war zones. Abortion rights were rolled back in the US, Poland, and Nicaragua—but expanded in Mexico, India, and Indonesia. Gender apartheid deepened in Afghanistan and continued in Iran, despite the 2022 “Women, Life, Freedom” uprising—the largest challenge yet to that country’s Islamic regime. On LGBTQ+ rights, some progress was made: colonial-era anti-gay laws were repealed in Singapore, Namibia, and parts of the Caribbean. Marriage equality was legalized in Cuba, Greece, Thailand, and seven other countries—bringing it to 36 countries and 20% of the global population. But at the same time, persecution of LGBTQ+ people intensified in Russia, the Middle East, and much of Africa—often fueled by a transnational “anti-gender” movement backed by US-based Christian fundamentalist groups.

.

2.2 Structural Dynamics: Escalating Crises of Economy, Ecology and Empire

Liberation Road has long argued that we are in a period of structural instability. We believe the developments listed above both reflect and are related to deeper structural crises of economy, empire, and ecology. We outline these three crises below.

2.2.1 Economically, neoliberalism has faltered, but no new paradigm has emerged

Neoliberalism is a hegemonic project that emerged in response to the crisis of Keynesianism in the 1970s. Using the powers of national and international institutions (like the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and World Bank) it eradicated barriers to the free flow of capital, attacked the power of organized labor, shrunk and privatized social services, and deregulated the corporate sector. These policies devastated the world's working class and poor, but resolved the crisis of profitability for the capitalist class, creating the conditions for a new cycle of accumulation that lasted for several decades.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, however, neoliberalism has itself entered crisis. Growth rates have been anemic, with an increasing divergence between faltering profits in the real economy and record returns in financial markets. Wealth has become concentrated in fewer hands, while debt has ballooned for individuals and governments. Waves of protest and anti-establishment populism have followed. Even former champions of neoliberalism—from the IMF to economists such as Jeffrey Sachs—have begun questioning its core ideas.

Yet no new economic model has taken its place—and most of the old models have been discredited. On the left, most 20th-century developmentalist and state socialist models have declined or disappeared, while attempts at building 21st-century socialism have struggled. Center-left efforts to revive the old Keynesian model have mostly failed. Right-wing nationalist models have run into the reality of a globalized economy, where even powerful countries have limited room to maneuver. Margaret Thatcher once famously argued that "there is no alternative" to neoliberalism. Today, there are many competing alternatives, but none has yet managed to secure hegemony.

2.2.2 Geopolitically, the US-led world order has foundered, but no new order has replaced it

By 1945, the US had become the hegemonic power within the capitalist world system, with two-thirds of the world's industrial capacity and three-quarters of invested capital. This position was threatened in the 1970s by the success of decolonial movements in Asia and Africa, economic rivalry with Europe and Japan, and the collapse of the gold standard amid the economic crisis of Keynesianism. However, the US was ultimately able to reconstitute hegemony by maintaining the (decoupled) dollar as the global reserve currency, assimilating economic rivals into new institutions like the Trilateral Commission and the Group of 7, and

using the Third World debt crisis (itself brought on by US monetary tightening) to impose austerity on the Global South. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the hegemony of this new US-led “Washington Consensus” appeared absolute.

Today, however, US hegemony has deeply faltered. Immanuel Wallerstein argued that a state is hegemonic when it possesses productive, trade, and financial dominance. The US no longer leads in industrial production and has run a trade deficit for decades. Financial dominance remains, but it's increasingly fragile—and backed by massive debt.To these economic factors one might add military and ideological dominance—the twin weapons of coercion and consent. But while US military spending still surpasses that of all others, the US’s ability to control global conflicts has declined. Ideologically, the US pretense to act as the global defender of “freedom” and “democracy” has been shattered—by the Iraq and Afghan wars, by Biden’s failure to stop atrocities like the genocide in Gaza, and above all by Trump’s rise. While the US remains disproportionately powerful compared to other countries, it no longer truly leads them ideologically, politically, or economically.

Still, no new world order has replaced the old one. In the past, global hegemony passed to ever-larger economies—from the Dutch to the British to the US. Today, only China is large enough to potentially step into that role. But it’s unclear whether it can—or even wants to. Meanwhile the ongoing transnationalization of the circuits of production, along with the gradual emergence of a transnational capitalist class, have reduced the power of *all* nation-states relative to an increasingly global economy, albeit unevenly. Yet, however much capitalism has gone global, no effective system of global governance has replaced the nation-state.

Some now speak of a return to “multipolarity,” with competition between different “poles” that represent fundamentally different systems. But renewed inter-state conflict and competition should not be confused with a struggle between distinct “systems” representing alternative social, political, and economic “worlds.” In the mid-20th century, the capitalist and socialist blocs represented two such different “worlds” while at various points the more progressive leaders of the formerly colonized countries attempted to form a third one. Today’s rivalries look more like incoherent internal struggles within a shared (if collapsing) capitalist world system than battles between coherent alternatives.

2.2.3 Environmentally, the current “solutions” to the climate crisis have been discredited, but no rival option has secured legitimacy

The faltering of neoliberalism and US hegemony occurs as climate change is accelerating and the impacts of climate catastrophes are becoming more frequent. Wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters are becoming more frequent and destructive. At the same time, biodiversity is collapsing, threatening ecosystems, natural carbon sinks, and food security around the world. Temperatures are rising fast, heat records keep breaking, and by the end of 2024 the world had passed the 1.5°C threshold set by the Paris Agreement. We are also rapidly approaching—or may have already crossed—other key climate tipping points. These are thresholds in earth systems (like polar ice sheets, ocean currents, or permafrost) that, if breached, could trigger

large, irreversible shifts in the climate system. Once these changes begin, they can accelerate on their own, even if emissions are reduced later.

Nowhere are the failures of the current order more manifest than in its inability to address this crisis. Since the 2015 Paris Agreement, most international climate action has focused on neoliberal market-based strategies—particularly incentives for renewable energy investment. In recent years, enthusiasm for "green capitalism" has declined sharply. Financial elites once interested in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing are pulling back, due to falling returns and rising pressure from fossil fuel lobbies. ESG itself has come under attack from both right-wing culture warriors and sections of capital who see decarbonization as a threat to profits. Globally, the extraction economy continues to expand.

At the same time, geopolitical conflict is undercutting global cooperation. The nations most responsible for historic emissions—wealthy countries of the capitalist core—have repeatedly failed to meet their own reduction targets. Rising powers often rely on fossil fuel-based development to grow, while underdeveloped countries are being told to "go green" without receiving the investment or infrastructure they would need to make that shift. The war in Ukraine and Israel's expanding war in the Middle East have made things worse. Global energy markets are in turmoil, and the US has ramped up fossil fuel production—especially liquified natural gas exports to Europe—as a way to isolate Russia. This has further locked in fossil fuel dependency, at the very moment when rapid transition is most urgent.

All of this feeds a growing disbelief that current mechanisms can realize the emissions reductions required to meet international goals. And yet, no alternative model has been able to consolidate mass support or institutional power at scale. The global system is running out of legitimacy and time.

2.3 Hegemonic Interregnum and Instability

2.3.1 Cyclical, structural, or systemic crisis?

How deep is the three-fold crisis we're in? Under capitalism, there are different types of crises—some that resolve on their own, and some that don't:

- **Cyclical crises** are recurring economic downturns that happen often and act as self-correcting mechanisms; that is, they largely resolve "automatically."
- **Structural crises** go deeper. They reflect major contradictions in the system that don't fix themselves and require big changes to the way capitalism is organized.
- **Systemic crises** are even more profound. These call the entire system into question—raising the possibility that capitalism could be replaced by a new system (revolution) or collapse outright.

So are we in a cyclical, structural, or systemic crisis?

After the 2008 financial crash, many people thought we were facing a **structural crisis**—that the global economy would have to be fundamentally restructured to recover. But no major restructuring took place. At the same time, we weren't just facing a small, self-correcting **cyclical crisis**, because the situation has not restabilized; instead, the deepening economic, political, and environmental challenges have only gotten worse.

Some theorists now argue that we're entering a **systemic crisis**—a turning point where the survival of capitalism itself is uncertain, and a revolution might take place. But replacing an entire system isn't easy. As William I. Robinson notes, the ability to replace one system with another requires "a widespread belief that system change is attainable and worth fighting for, a revolutionary ideology and program, and organizations capable of leading the struggle for such change."[2] Right now, none of these things exist in a consolidated way. That's one of the defining features of our current moment.

To make sense of this confusing period, we find it helpful to utilize a concept first developed by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, called *interregnum*. The word comes from a Latin phrase meaning between regimes or "reigns," and originally referred to the gap between the death of one monarch and the coronation of the next—an ambiguous period during which it was not clear where power and authority resided. Gramsci repurposed the term to refer to a period when the existing hegemonic structures had failed, but it was not yet clear what new ones could take their place. In his words: "the old is dying but the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

That's where we are now. The old structures are no longer working for capital—but no new ones have taken their place. And until that changes, instability and confusion will continue to define the terrain.

2.3.2 Interregnum: the "blocked" crisis of neoliberalism

Drawing on Gramsci, Rune Møller Stahl distinguishes the concept of interregnum from our usual use of the word crisis.[3] A crisis typically represents a turning point—something that forces change. For example, in medicine, a crisis is the decisive turning point in a disease, when it either starts to heal or leads to death. But an interregnum is different: it has no natural ending point. It is a time when a crisis remains unresolved for a long time, and no clear solution is in sight. In other words, an interregnum occurs when the resolution of a crisis appears *blocked.*

As Marxists, we understand that capitalism is unstable and full of contradictions. Still, we sometimes imagine history as moving neatly from one stable era to the next, with short periods of disruption in between. In contrast, Stahl points out that prolonged periods of *non*-hegemony have been almost as common as stable, hegemonic ones. He identifies the period 1930-1945

[2] William I. Robinson*, Global Civil War: Capitalism Post-Pandemic* (PM Press, 2022), p. 100
[3] See Rune Møller Stahl, "Ruling the Interregnum: Politics and Ideology in Nonhegemonic Times," Vol. 47, Issue 3 (2019) pp. 303–332

as one such era, and the period between the 1971 collapse of the Bretton-Woods system and the early 1980s consolidation of neoliberalism as another.

Our current era is a period of interregnum in this sense. It is a crisis—or series of crises—that won't end without major changes. But what those changes will be remains unknown. This framework helps us understand why the current conjuncture feels so murky. Struggles have intensified, and yet their contours remain unclear and their outcome is deeply uncertain.

2.3.3 The deeper nature of our structural crisis

Compared to the interregnum of the 1970s, today's instability runs deeper. Back then, the economic dominance of Keynesianism was collapsing, but US global political dominance remained intact. Our period is closer to the deeper interregnum of the 1930s, which saw both economic collapse and the crisis of Britain's global political hegemony. At that time, however, the environmental crisis was not yet apparent. Today, by contrast, we face three major crises at once:

- The *economic* crisis of a neoliberal cycle of accumulation that began in the 1980s
- The *political* crisis of a period of US-led hegemony dating to 1945
- An *ecological* crisis driven by industrial expansion and energy use that began in the late 1700s

Together, these overlapping crises make it much harder to imagine a new system that can bring lasting stability.

Importantly, we only recognize these interregnums as "turning points" in hindsight. In the moment, they feel chaotic and confusing. No one knows how or when the crisis will end. Different political forces offer different—and often conflicting—ideas about what's broken and what should replace it. That makes politics more fluid than usual. Alliances shift rapidly. Strategies change. In hegemonic periods, by contrast, coalitions are usually more stable and differences among them are less meaningful because they operate within a shared framework, even when they disagree.

That's why the political disruptions we see around the world should be understood as *experiments*. These are not fully formed orders competing for dominance; they are evolving efforts—some progressive, many authoritarian—to define what kind of order should follow the current crisis. Their internal logics are still being worked out, their alliances shifting. But the directions they take will help shape the next political era.

2.4 Situational Analyses: Ukraine, Palestine/Israel, Mexico, China

The above provides a very broad overview of some general global trends, as well as the overall structural dynamics they both reflect and reinforce. Below we briefly analyze a few specific

international situations of particular significance to the US left, given direct or indirect US involvement in each: the Israeli genocide in Gaza, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Mexico's deepening transformation under the left-wing Morena government. These should not be taken as the sole or even the most significant events on the world stage; the sheer breadth of global affairs precludes us providing detailed analysis of many developments which merit further study.

2.4.1 The Israeli genocide in Gaza

More than a year after the Hamas-led October 7 attacks, in which just under 1,200 people were killed—most of them Jewish Israeli civilians—Israel's war on Gaza continues, with full backing from the US. As of mid-2025, Israeli military operations have killed at least 50,000 Palestinian civilians—a figure widely considered to be an undercount. While Israeli officials claim the war's aim is to eliminate Hamas, the broader goal appears to be the forced removal of much or all of Gaza's population, through a combination of both direct genocide and displacement. In addition, Israel is now escalating ethnic cleansing efforts in the West Bank. This strategy reflects an intensification of the longstanding Zionist project of erasing Palestinian presence from the land—a campaign that has been ongoing since before the Nakba of 1948.

The US has played a central role in enabling this violence, providing financial, political, and military support with little meaningful constraint. That support has continued under both Biden and Trump, despite growing domestic opposition. Mass protests led by students, Arab and Muslim communities, and segments of the Jewish left have galvanized millions, and a majority of the US population now disapproves of the war. Yet this pressure has not significantly changed US policy. Since the war began, US military aid to Israel has reached a record $18 billion. At the same time, the Netanyahu government has acted with increasing autonomy—suggesting that Israel is no longer merely a US proxy state, but an emerging regional power pursuing its own agenda within a shifting global order.

Internationally, Israel's legitimacy has eroded, especially in the Global South. In June 2024, South Africa filed a case with the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide. Fourteen other countries—primarily in Africa and Latin America, but also including Belgium, Spain, and Ireland—have since joined the case. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and several members of his cabinet. This marks the first time a sitting leader of a US-aligned government has faced such charges—further underscoring the changing landscape of global power, and the declining ability of the US to unilaterally define the moral and legal terms of international politics.

2.4.2 The Russian invasion of Ukraine

In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, in clear violation of at least two treaties with Ukraine and of international law, escalating a conflict heightened in 2014 by the invasion and annexation of Crimea. Russia falsely claimed this was an act of preemptive self-defense against an "aggressive" Ukrainian government set on eradicating the country's Russian-speaking minority, allegedly abetted by Western countries. In fact, it was Putin who had repeatedly made clear that

he views Ukraine as a "national fiction" that has no right to exist. The invasion was thus an act of imperialist aggression with the aim of de facto or de jure annexation of Ukraine and the genocidal erasure of Ukrainians as an independent people with their own culture, language, and history. It is true that NATO expansion into eastern Europe over the past 30 years was a secondary factor in the conflict, and that the US's invocation of anticipatory self-defense to justify its own invasion of Iraq created an unfortunate precedent that Russia could point to as cover for its aggression. But there was simply no imminent threat of Ukraine's incorporation into NATO, and one imperialist war of aggression does not justify another.

After almost three years, the war has become a brutal one of World War I-style trench warfare, but with the addition of robotic and artificial intelligence systems that are rapidly transforming military operations. Russia has had the advantage in terms of its willingness to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of lives. Ukraine has had the advantage of popular opposition to the invasion along with (until recently) support from the US and most NATO countries. Although international sanctions have had only limited impact on Russia's economy, the invasion has drained Russia of material resources and weakened Putin's influence over post-Soviet states and other former regions of influence, such as Syria.

In the aftermath of his reelection, Trump's extraordinary pivot on Ukraine has threatened an end to continued US military assistance. While European allies are increasing financial and material support, they are unlikely to be able to make up the gap in the short to medium term, jeopardizing Ukraine's ability to continue fighting. One possibility is a negotiated settlement in which Ukraine is compelled to accept at least some components of Russia's land grab. Whether Ukraine subsequently joins NATO is now almost irrelevant, as Putin's belligerence has all but guaranteed ongoing Ukrainian opposition to Russia, precluding anything like the 1948 Finland-Soviet neutrality agreement in practice (even if Ukraine finds itself compelled to claim neutrality in theory).

2.4.3 The "Fourth Transformation" in Mexico

In 2024, Mexico's left-wing Morena party won decisive national majorities and nearly every governorship, deepening a process of transformation that began with the 2018 election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) after 82 years of right-wing rule. Under AMLO and his successor, Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico has pursued a national developmentalist model which has reversed the excesses of neoliberalism by bringing the energy sector back under public control and using public entities for large construction projects and state contracts, rather than contracting to the private sector. This has allowed the government to control prices and to use savings rather than new taxes to fund massive new benefits to the working class, such as doubling the minimum wage, raising pensions for the elderly, building new public hospitals and universities, and much more. Alongside these domestic advances, Mexico has laid down specific challenges to US imperialism, using trade with China and US reliance on Mexican goods as bargaining chips with the US, while gradually leading other Latin American countries towards the formation of their own independent economic bloc.

The reelection of Donald Trump increases the threats of US imperialism towards Mexico. Mass deportations, apart from their cruelty, scapegoating, and vicious racism, represent a real threat to the living standards of Mexican families who rely on remittances from family members working in the US. Many of those workers are former peasants, forced off the land and driven to seek work north of the border when the Mexican market was flooded with surplus US corn under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Should Trump's policies result in a US-Mexico trade war, the impact on the living standards of the Mexican people will be equally serious. As access to US markets is curtailed, Mexico is likely to see capitalist disinvestment and mass layoffs. But workers in the US will not be spared. Millions on both sides of the border who earn their living in export industries could see their jobs placed in jeopardy.

Mexico's success and the enormous popularity of Morena have been a bright spot on the international stage. Amid intensifying global contradictions, the Mexican model shows that right authoritarianism is not the only or inevitable reaction to escalating crises of economy, ecology, and empire. As a relative newcomer to the Latin American Pink Tide, Mexico now is its leader, since it alone has the overwhelming support of its people, and has the economic power to be able to withstand Trump's bullying. More broadly, Sheinbaum has emerged as a widely admired leader in Europe and across the Global outh, boldly putting forward a vision diametrically opposed to Trump's.

There are more than 37 million Chicano/Mexicanos in the US—a conservative estimate that does not include many without documents—one of the largest oppressed nationalities in the country. A large majority live in the areas of their historic concentration in the US Southwest that shares a border with Mexico. Liberation Road upholds the Chicano Liberation Movement as one of the key components of our strategy, guided by our line on self-determination for the Chicano Nation. Chicanos have deep historic and cultural roots with Mexico and continue to have direct connections with families and communities in that nation. Strengthening ties between Chicanos and movements in Mexico is a very important component of our internationalism. As Mexico's fate is intimately bound up with the political and economic life of the US, defense of Mexico's sovereignty and support for its progressive government is a crucial task for the US left.

2.4.4 The Complex Role of China

The following section examines China's interactions and position within global affairs. We have refrained from commenting on China's internal social, economic, and political system—about which there are a variety of positions inside Liberation Road, which merit further analysis and debate.

Often, the role of global hegemon has passed progressively to the largest capitalist powers, as in the transition from British to US global political and economic dominance. While China is already a major global power, and may achieve or aspire to greater regional hegemony, at present it seems unlikely that China will become *the* global hegemon, nor is it clear that it seeks that position. It has already achieved the level of productive dominance analogous to that of the

US at the height of its post-war power. However, it is unlikely to achieve a level of hegemonic military dominance, and the non-convertibility of the renminbi (China's official currency) means it is unlikely to achieve the kind of financial dominance the US has long held on the basis of the role of the US dollar. Amid escalating trade wars, the Chinese and US economies remain interdependent even as the US seeks to limit China's growth and global influence.

China's role in international affairs has been complex. Drawing on a long history of fostering south-south solidarity efforts, they continue to foster many important global peace settlement initiatives, as in their recent convening of many factions of the Palestinian liberation movement. At the same time, they have cultivated alliances with right-authoritarian regimes, like that of Putin, which has caused them to vacillate on other questions, and undercut the self-determination of Ukraine. The belt-and-road initiative is in some ways a classic example of soft power. Unlike US-backed neoliberal investment, this has been generally non-coercive: not imposed on countries, but offered to them on a voluntary basis. At the same time, these initiatives are undeniably capitalist in orientation—making use of cheap labor and exploiting extractive industries, but also building much-needed infrastructure.

While Chinese financial investments have recently exacerbated the debt burden of some recipient countries, China has not leveraged its position to impose IMF-style structural adjustments, distinguishing their policies from the neo-imperialism of much Western financial investment. Globally, they are not an aggressive military power. Regionally, there are tensions and contradictions where they seek to assert their might, particularly within the South China Sea. Of great concern is the risk of military conflict with the US. The most active flashpoint has been around Taiwan. Trump's position has been erratic: on the one hand, he has escalated anti-Chinese belligerence, while on the other, he appears to be considering abandoning the longstanding US commitment to Taiwanese sovereignty as insufficiently critical to US interests.

2.5 Trump's Emergent Foreign Policy

At the time of writing, Donald Trump is breaking with longstanding US foreign policy positions, with enormous implications for the global order. This situation is still dynamic and uncertain. But some contours are becoming apparent.

Donald Trump's foreign policy vision seems less a throwback to the 1950s Cold War order than a regression to the early 20th century—a revival of the stark, unrestrained imperialism that characterized the era before World War I. At the core of this vision is a rejection of the neoliberal, "rules-based" international order that successive US administrations helped construct over the past decades. Rather than global hegemony built on alliances, soft power, and multilateralism, Trump promotes a more primal and transactional model of empire—one grounded in domination, competition, and brute economic and military force. Yet paradoxically, Trump and his allies have flirted with building a different kind of transnational bloc—an alliance of illiberal, authoritarian regimes, a sort of "Fascist International."

In Trump's view, international relations are inherently transactional. Alliances and treaties are seen not as enduring frameworks but as temporary deals that must yield immediate, tangible benefits to the US—or be discarded. Under this logic, international institutions like NATO, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization are considered obsolete unless they deliver short-term gain to the US. Trump's approach calls not just for withdrawal from these bodies, but for their outright dismissal as constraints on American power. The very idea of a "rules-based" international system is rejected outright—there are no higher norms, only sovereign interests, with US sovereignty placed above all others.

Trump's neo-imperial doctrine also revives older US expansionist ideologies, including Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, applied on a global scale. He asserts the US's right to dominate the Western Hemisphere, including acquiring strategic territory and resources wherever necessary. But unlike earlier phases of US imperialism, this vision dispenses with any pretense of spreading democracy or modernizing foreign societies. Trump explicitly rejects the liberal imperialist notion of occupying and transforming nations "for their own good." Instead, conquest is framed as a raw assertion of power.

Trump envisions a multipolar world composed of a few dominant empires—Russia in Eastern Europe and parts of West Asia, the US in the Americas, and China in East Asia—each surrounded by vassal states that serve their respective imperial centers. While Trump no longer imagines a unipolar world led by the US, he does insist that the US remain the largest and most dominant of the imperial states: the "biggest dog" in a world of rival empires. China is singled out as the principal threat to this position, especially in the Global South, where Trump views the struggle for influence as a zero-sum contest of economic and military domination. This helps explain Trump's consistent overtures to Vladimir Putin, which may not only reflect ideological affinity but also a strategic effort to drive a wedge between Russia and China by realigning Russia with the US-led bloc.

SECTION 3: BALANCE OF POWER IN THE US POLITICAL CONTEXT

3.1 The New Confederacy: The American Form of Fascism

A decade ago Liberation Road identified what we called the “New Confederacy” as “the main enemy in this period” and “the dominant force shaping the US political terrain in this moment.” We argued that it was “composed of the most reactionary factions of capital allied with racist/nativist, right-wing populists,” and described the Republican Party as “the political expression of this alliance.” This analysis has been confirmed by the further growth and consolidation of the New Confederacy, its merger with the MAGA movement, and its complete takeover of the Republican Party as its political instrument.

We call this coalition the New Confederacy to highlight the American lineages of its DNA: elite rule, violent exclusion, and rebellion against egalitarian democracy. The Confederacy was built on the defense of slavery, justified by a belief in racial hierarchy, patriarchal authority, and the sanctity of private property. Similarly, today’s New Confederacy is a coordinated effort to capture and transform the government—and broader society—into something that serves the interests of a narrow, privileged few. Then, as now, its leaders used the language of “freedom” to defend systems of domination. MAGA populists echo the Confederacy’s nativism and defense of white identity, Christian supremacists revive its theocratic order and repressive gender roles, and right-libertarian capitalists replicate its plantation logic through modern forms of corporate control and labor exploitation.

Opposed to this dangerous reactionary front is a big-tent coalition, which we have termed the Multi-Racial Pro-Democracy United Front. The latter is a loose and uneasy coalition, including the advanced forces of the people’s movements and a growing progressive political faction, but still led by centrist forces, as represented by the Establishment wing of the Democratic Party.

The following section outlines important developments and dynamics concerning the balance of power between these two contending fronts at the national, state, and local level. But it also explores the changing contours of attempts by each front to secure a new alternative hegemonic project to replace neoliberalism—a process that is still open and indeterminate. Following this, the subsequent sections explore internal changes and mutations within each front.

3.2 Federal Balance of Power: Post 2024 Election

3.2.1 The New Trump Era: MAGA unleashed

Liberation Road has argued that the New Confederacy is attempting a “slow-motion coup” to cement America as a fascist authoritarian state. The November 2024 election brought it dangerously closer to achieving this objective. Trump’s threats to deploy military units against civilians, construct mass detention camps, weaponize the judiciary to attack his “enemies,” and invoke broad emergency powers are all signals of an attempted authoritarian takeover.

Narrow House and Senate margins will place some hurdles on the GOP’s legislative agenda. We already saw in the last session that the unruly and divided Republican House majority had trouble unifying to pass legislation, and a shrunken majority will pose even greater challenges. More importantly, the lack of a 60-vote, filibuster-proof supermajority will constrain the GOP in the Senate, as most major legislation will require the support of at least seven Democrats, as well as the full GOP Caucus. However, Senate Republicans can pass tax, spending, and debt limit bills through budget reconciliation; we can thus expect dramatic cuts to taxes and, perhaps, entitlement programs.

But Trump will face few formal checks on his use of executive powers. In 2016 Trump was caught off guard; this time he and his transition team are more prepared. Trump has used the powers of the executive immediately and aggressively, and we must be prepared to counteract grave abuses that could escalate the slide into fascism. We have already seen him attempt to increase his control over the Department of Justice, the intelligence community, and the US military—precisely the components of the repressive state apparatus whose loyalty would be needed in order to facilitate a broader authoritarian takeover.

3.2.2 Not realignment, but reaction

Despite Trump’s claims to a popular mandate, the November 2024 election did not represent a fundamental political realignment. Realigning elections are ones that bring sharp changes in the regional and demographic power base of party coalitions, resulting in a new political power structure that lasts for decades. Examples include the 1932 general election, when Roosevelt won 89% of the electoral college and gained his party 101 seats in the House and 12 in the Senate, ushering in a period of Keynesian hegemony that lasted until the crises of the 1970s; and the 1980 election, when Reagan won 91% of electoral college votes and gained his party 34 seats in the House and 12 in the Senate, ushering in the era of neoliberalism.

In contrast, Trump’s win—while wide—was shallow. Although he swept the seven swing states, he secured less than 50% of the popular vote and his margin of victory was one of the lowest in US history. His party gained only four Senate seats (on terrain considered very unfavorable to Democrats) and lost two net seats in the House. While the *breadth* of MAGA’s victory reflects the structural crisis of neoliberalism, its weakness shows that MAGA has not yet consolidated a new hegemonic bloc around an alternative political power structure.

Rather than the electoral realignments of 1932 or 1980, the better parallel for this attempted takeover is Redemption—the reactionary movement by post-Civil War Southern elites to "redeem" the South and overturn mulitracial democracy through propaganda, voter suppression, state repression, and paramilitary vigilantism, the climax of which was the violent 1898 coup in Wilmington, North Carolina. We should recall that Trump himself facilitated an attempted coup in the 2020 elections, the results of which he continues to deny, and has faced no repercussions for these actions due to legal delays and his successful right-wing stacking of the courts.

3.2.3 A fascist ruler… but not yet fascist rule

While MAGA forces have won trifecta control of the federal government, they have not yet consolidated a hegemonic bloc around their social, political, and economic agenda. Many of their ideas are deeply unpopular, and the "common sense" remains highly contested. With full control of the levers of the federal government, they may be able to impose major portions of their agenda by force and fiat, but without the consent of key social forces, they will not be able to consolidate their control.

Nevertheless, the components of this attempted right-wing takeover bear the key characteristics of fascism, including centralized autocracy, militarism, forcible suppression of opposition, belief in a natural social hierarchy, and suppression of individual interests to a perceived notion of the national good. There has been a tendency to view the politics, ideology, and program of both Donald Trump and the broader MAGA movement as erratic, incoherent and unserious. To call these "fascist" is to insist that we take the right's attempts to cohere a new hegemonic bloc—as they do—deadly seriously. This does not mean that their project will succeed, but it does mean that we must adequately understand what they are trying to construct if we are to defeat it.

3.2.4 Patronal Autocracy

If the New Confederacy is able to consolidate an authoritarian regime, it will likely be a "hybrid" regime-type that centralizes power in the executive branch of the state, but maintains some formal features of democracy, including semi-competitive elections, nominal (if weak) civil liberties, a legal political opposition, and the absence of widespread, overt state terror. Some call this "competitive authoritarianism" or "illiberal democracy." A simpler term is "autocracy," understood as a stable regime type distinct from both democracy and dictatorship.

A Trump-led autocratic regime will be *patrimonial*, which refers to regimes where a corrupt "patron" governs the country as an extension of his business interests and those of a network of loyalists, using discretional rewards and punishments to establish unconstrained, informal power over the state, economy, and civil society. The nominally ruling party does not actually govern, but rather rubber-stamps decisions made by the patron's "court," an informal body of close decision-makers. As a patronal autocrat, Trump's approach to governance is ideologically cynical, with politics instrumentalized primarily to advance his direct self-interest. However, there are deeply committed ideological factions within his coalition, which we discuss in Section 4.

The complexity of the United State's federal political system and the breadth and depth of US civil society pose many impediments to the New Confederacy's ability to consolidate autocracy. Absent exogenous shocks, pro-democracy forces will have many opportunities to refuse, resist, and contest autocracy; defend democracy; and coordinate a social and political counter-offensive. We outline these efforts in depth in our 2025-2028 Strategic Orientation.

3.2.5 On the Use of "Fascism" in Our Analysis

We recognize that within the Left—and even within sectors of our own organization—there is ongoing debate about whether "fascism" is the appropriate term to describe the current trajectory of the US right wing. Some argue that the term risks confusion, either by invoking historical analogies that don't fully fit, or by failing to resonate with broad sectors of the working class.

Too often, objections to the fascist label have focused on overly precise comparisons with the specific fascisms of 1930s Europe, forgetting that the US has its own native-born forms of fascism (which Hitler and other European fascists looked to for inspiration). Like capitalism itself, fascism exists nowhere in the abstract, but rather only in particular social formations, conditioned by historically evolved characteristics. Fascism in the US will not come with brown shirts and jack boots, but carrying a cross and cloaked in a Confederate flag.

We use the term "fascism" not as rhetoric, but as a strategic clarification:

- To name the **qualitative shift** from authoritarian conservatism to a counter-revolutionary project aimed at dismantling multiracial democracy.
- To highlight the fusion of reactionary state power, extralegal violence, and revanchist mass politics.
- To foreground the necessity of a united front strategy capable of blocking this advance—not through moral appeals, but through organized power.

Whether or not every comrade or allied formation adopts this term, what matters most is shared clarity on the nature of the threat: that we face a coordinated attempt to impose minority rule through a racialized, gendered, and economically restrictive authoritarian project. Our analysis—and our strategy—flows from that understanding.

3.3 Federal Balance of Power: 2021-2024

Understanding the political terrain of the Biden era is crucial to making sense of the current moment and the conditions under which Trump has returned to power. This was not a period of paralysis, but of contradictory motion: Democrats made limited but significant advances in economic stimulus and industrial policy, while the far right made major gains through judicial assaults on abortion rights, racial justice, and federal regulatory authority. Looking back at this

contested and volatile period is essential to grasp how the structural openings for Trumpism were widened by the contradictions, limits, and missed opportunities of the preceding period.

3.3.1 The Biden Era: Intensifying Stalemate

Biden's presidency was characterized by an intensification of the strategic stalemate at the federal level. Until the end of 2022, Democrats held a narrow governing trifecta but were constrained by razor-thin legislative margins. In November 2022 Democrats narrowly lost the House but held the Senate, overperforming expectations for midterm elections, which typically see a large backlash against the party in power. In effect, the expected "red backlash" against Biden was largely balanced by a "blue backlash" against MAGA—a double-sided movement that reflected an ambiguous, contradictory conjuncture in which both sides intensified struggle.

After 2022, Biden was compelled to govern through executive order, continuing a long-term trend towards increasing use of the executive to bypass a legislature ever more frequently gridlocked by partisan polarization. This dynamic allows for changes that are potentially deep but also precarious, as sweeping reforms instituted by one administration can just as easily be swept away by the next. Alongside and counterbalancing such "governance through the executive," this period saw an unprecedented rise in "governance through the judiciary," as a super-majority far-right Supreme Court moved increasingly aggressively on multiple fronts.

"Stalemate" should not be confused with "paralysis." In fact both sides made major forays and advances in this period, as Democrats passed what was arguably the most significant stimulus package since FDR, while the far-right Supreme Court secured strategic victories on long-term right-wing goals—most notably the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Yet these victories proved contradictory for both fronts, as major advances on some fronts were matched by defeats on others, while each side confronted intensifying backlash precisely over those areas where they had advanced the most decisively.

3.3.2 Democratic Maneuvers: Bidenomics

In its initial version, Biden's economic agenda proposed a potentially decisive break with neoliberalism in favor of levels of federal investment not seen since the FDR era. This was a sea change for Democrats, reflective of the increased strength of the party's left, but also of an emerging new consensus within the still-dominant centrist wing that neoliberal trade and economic policies had eroded Democratic support, necessitating a change of course to strengthen the power of the party's working-class voting base.

As first formulated in "Build Back Better," this new governing agenda had three parts: 1) historic infrastructure spending and an industrial jobs program focused on green energy projects, 2) major investments in education and the care economy, and 3) higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy. Collectively, these policies sought to tackle widening inequality from both sides:

reducing the power of capital through increased taxation and regulation, while increasing that of labor through increased federal spending and full employment policies.[4]

Ultimately, only the first, infrastructure component of “Build, Back, Better” passed in its entirety, while other components were significantly weakened in the face of major challenges. These included intense pushback from corporate interests, opposition from the Democratic Party’s shrinking but disproportionately powerful conservative “Blue Dog” wing, and soaring inflation rates that quickly dominated media discourse, shifting public focus from tackling inequality to tamping down (labor) costs. Meanwhile strong support from a coalition of unions, environmental organizations, and advocacy groups was not matched by mass mobilization at the base.

Curbed in his initial efforts, Biden sought new means to pursue full employment strategies and government-led industrial policy, but with a changed coalition, focus, and framing. Ideologically, the rationale for increased government intervention shifted from a left-populist defense of the middle class to a right-Keynesian defense of national interests. Practically, government investment increasingly concentrated on the military and technological sectors, rather than education and social services. Gradually the contours of Bidenomics began to assume the form of an uneasy new compromise, not between labor and capital, but between capitalists and the state. Government would play an increased role in the economy, but through corporate incentives rather than regulation—a fiscal policy of all carrots, no sticks. Full employment policies could be pursued, but within a persistently two-tiered economy where job growth remained split between high-wage and low-wage sectors.

The contradictory results of Bidenomics reflected the challenges of trying to impose mid-20th century Keynesian policies on the altered terrain of the 21st. Economically, both the chronic weakness of the global economy and the (relatively) weakened position of the US within it narrowed the window within which reforms were tolerable to the corporate class, while gridlock and paralysis narrowed the political margin of maneuver. Politically, the weakness and fragmentation of US social and labor movements meant Biden’s initially bold agenda lacked a social base capable of pushing past these barriers. This reflected a key difference between the context of the proposed “Green New Deal” and that of the original New Deal of the FDR era. The latter had been fueled by a strong, growing, and increasingly militant workers movement that it tried to both appease and contain. In contrast, Biden’s agenda was formulated as a response to the historic weakness of the working class, which it sought to partially restore and rebuild.

Meanwhile, Biden’s expansionary policies confronted one of the classic problems of mid-20th-century social democracy, as increased wages and welfare expenditures barely managed to keep up with inflation. The bargaining position of workers was indeed strengthened, and the labor movement saw the biggest upsurge in union activity in at least a generation (although union density failed to increase). But these gains were insufficiently attributed to

[4] This analysis draws on that of Andrew Yamakawa Elrod, “What Was Bidenomics? From Build Back Better to the national security synthesis,” *Phenomenal World* (September 26, 2024) https://www.phenomenalworld.org/analysis/what-was-bidenomics/

Biden, while the pains of steeply rising costs were pinned on him, producing a counter-reaction that contributed to Democrats' 2024 electoral defeat.

3.3.3 MAGA Maneuvers: The Supreme Court

In this same period, an expanded, emboldened, and increasingly radicalized right-wing Supreme Court majority issued a series of sweeping decisions that abandoned settled law, stripped away workers' and civil rights, and laid the legal groundwork for the creation of an autocratic "illiberal democracy." In 2022 the Court reversed *Roe v. Wade* (1973), ending nearly 50 years of federal abortion rights. This decision returned the power to regulate abortion to individual states, leading to a patchwork of state laws, with many conservative states enacting near-total bans. The Court also overturned the *Chevron* doctrine, a 40-year old precedent that granted federal agencies regulatory power and discretion to interpret ambiguous laws. And it ended affirmative action in college admissions, striking down a 60-year old program to redress systemic racial discrimination.

Simultaneously, the Court moved to expand the rights of Christians and gun owners, striking down a bump stock ban and other gun regulations, declaring school prayer a constitutional right, and expanding the "right" of private citizens to discriminate against LGBTQ+ communities on the basis of religious belief. It also strengthened the *personal* power of the presidency, expanding presidential immunity from criminal prosecution, but otherwise moved consistently and aggressively to curb the policy-making and regulatory powers of the executive branch and of federal agencies.

Collectively, these decisions increased the power of the judiciary over the other branches of the federal government, narrowed the overall extent of federal power (but increased the personal power of the presidency), expanded corporate power while entrenching the privileges of wealth and whiteness, and restricted the powers and freedoms of oppressed genders and nationalities.

While the right-wing majority succeeded in reshaping key aspects of American law, it also intensified debates about the role of the judiciary. Calls for court reform intensified, while trust in the courts dropped to historic lows. Backlash against these decisions contributed to Democratic overperformance in the midterm elections, but failed to produce an equivalent effect in the 2024 general election, even as voters continued to pass ballot initiatives protecting or expanding abortion access, public investment, and workers' and civic rights.

3.4 State Level Balance of Power

3.4.1 Widening divides between red and blue states

This period saw intensified struggle at the level of state government. According to Michael Podhorzer, the political polarization between states has hit its highest level since 1932.[5] After a period of convergence across the 20th century, the states appear less and less like a unified nation than a federated republic of two very different nations, restoring something like the sectional split that divided the country in the antebellum period and the era of Jim Crow. Federal politics increasingly mirrors the faultlines of state governments. The parties' federal House and Senate caucuses have become more regionally sorted than at any time since 1932.

Demographically, "red" states grew increasingly rural while "blue" states are increasingly metropolitan, mirroring an ongoing generalized trend of urban-rural polarization. Blue state residents are wealthier and more educated, with more high-wage job opportunities, while red states have a greater concentration of low-wage employment, but also a lower cost of living. Blue states are overall more racially diverse; however, the majority of Black people live in red states, and Latine communities are also concentrated in the Southwest and South.

The few contested "purple" states were of two kinds: in the Midwest, formerly "blue wall" states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin presented opportunities for the New Confederacy amid declining population rates and union density, while in the Sunbelt, changing demographics produced new opportunities for pro-democracy forces in states like Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, and Arizona.

3.4.2 MAGA trifectas reached quantitative limits

The New Confederacy has long pursued a state-based strategy focused on seizing governing trifectas at the state level and using them to advance its agenda, rapidly expanding the number of states under its control, particularly after 2010. In the most recent period, however, this strategy reached a quantitative limit. At 23, the number of states under one-party Republican rule remains unchanged from 2020 and has slightly declined from a high-water mark of 26 in the 2016-18 period.

Within those quantitative limits, the New Confederacy has increased its position qualitatively, implementing anti-democratic policies such as gerrymandering that entrench its control over state government while strengthening its position at the national level (given the strong role the states play in federal elections). Simultaneously, the New Confederacy has aggressively pursued a far right policy agenda in states under its control, while working to restrict the ability of both federal and local governments to chart a different course. From abortion access, to LGBQT+ rights, to social services, to labor rights, to racial equality, red states have increasingly

[5] Michael Podhorzer, "The Two Nations of America," *Weekend Reading* (December 3, 2023) https://www.weekendreading.net/p/the-two-nations-of-america

rolled back or undermined the gains made by workers, the oppressed nationalities, and oppressed gender people across the 20th century.

However, in many cases the aggressive policies pursued by the New Confederacy are well to the right of a majority of the population in red states—an overextension that has produced substantial pushback. This is particularly notable around abortion access, with a record number of abortion-related ballot initiatives introduced at the state level since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, with large majorities of voters opting to protect or expand abortion access when offered the possibility to do so, even in deep-red states like Kansas.

3.4.3 Democrats began to catch up on state-based strategy

Pro-democracy forces have begun to catch up to the New Confederacy's state-based strategy. In 2016, Democrats controlled only 6 governing trifectas; this number almost tripled to a high mark of 17 following the 2022 midterms, declining to 16 in 2024 as Democrats lost trifecta rule in Michigan. In states under their control, Democrats have likewise pursued a bolder and more ambitious policy agenda, contributing to the widening difference between conditions in blue and red states. In some cases, this was in response to aggressive moves by the New Confederacy at the state or national level—for instance, measures to expand and protect abortion access and gender-affirming care.

In other cases, pro-democracy forces took advantage of newly achieved governing trifectas to proactively advance a bold agenda. The most ambitious example may be Minnesota, which used a narrow one-seat legislative majority to pass a raft of progressive legislation in just four months, including 12 weeks paid parental leave, child tax credits, free public college tuition for most families, free lunch in schools, stronger support for unionization, universal drivers license access regardless of citizenship status, and an expanded public healthcare option. These sweeping achievements were made possible, not just by a governing trifecta, but because of a decade-long state-based organizing strategy by a coalition of independent political organizations and strong, progressive unions.

3.5 Local Balance of Power

This period saw an intensification of struggle over local electoral power, as formerly low-salience offices like county clerks became sites of intense contestation and polarization. This was particularly notable around school board races, as "Critical Race Theory" and the rights of trans youth in schools became fiercely contested, as well as around offices that had control over the running, monitoring, and certifying election results.

This renewed focus on local electoral power mirrored an overall intensification of political polarization at all levels, but also compensated for diminished opportunity at the state and national levels. With federal politics at a stalemate and the vast majority of states under relatively static one-party rule, local races offered both fronts opportunities to make quantitative electoral advances in a context where this was otherwise increasingly difficult.

Urban and rural regions continued a long-term trend toward increasing geographic polarization on partisan political lines, notwithstanding renewed focus from pro-democracy forces on small town and rural areas (where the same small-town/rural divides played out in miniature). Metropolitan suburbs remained fiercely contested, with increased focus on exurbs and so-called “countrypolitan” counties proximate to major metros but possessing a rural character.

Blue cities in red states faced intensifying struggle and repression from state governments. In Texas, for instance, the state legislature passed a “death star bill” that blocked local governments from regulating in eight different areas, including labor, finance, and the environment, although this has subsequently faced legal challenges. To a lesser extent, parallel struggles played out between red localities and blue state governments, as in California Governor Newsom’s struggles with the Temecula Valley Unified School District Board over implementation of the new state curriculum.

SECTION 4: THE NEW CONFEDERATE FRONT

4.1 From Conservatism to Right-Wing Revolution

4.1.1 Factional Balance of Power

On the right, this three-year period saw Trump’s near-total consolidation of leadership over the New Confederate front. Following the failed January 6th insurrection, the Republican old guard made a brief attempt to reclaim control, and the underperformance of MAGA candidates in the 2022 midterms led some to speculate that Trump’s influence might wane. But these hopes quickly faded. Trump’s decisive victories in the 2024 primaries, his ability to block a bipartisan immigration deal, and the elevation of Lara Trump to RNC chair confirmed his dominance—over the Republican voter base, elected leadership, and institutional machinery.

This consolidation marked the final stage in a broader realignment that had been reshaping the GOP since the early 2010s. For decades, the party had been governed by a “fusionist” pact: economic neoliberals and foreign policy hawks held power, while the religious right provided mass electoral support from a junior position. This balance began to fracture with the rise of the Tea Party, a populist rebellion against the party establishment. Over time, that populist energy radicalized into the MAGA movement, whose focus shifted from constitutional conservatism to reactionary nativism and cultural grievance. Simultaneously, the religious right evolved from a politically subordinate force into a core ideological engine of white Christian nationalism, increasingly aligned with MAGA’s militant posture. These two factions gained more and more power, especially after Trump’s 2016 election, and by 2024 they had nearly completed their takeover. Most establishment Republicans have now either been pushed out, silenced, or forced to fall in line with MAGA’s agenda.

At the same time, Trump and MAGA's political domination of the New Confederate front sits uneasily alongside the continued economic dominance of the network of billionaires whose contributions underwrite the Republican Party. This right-libertarian faction of the capitalist class seeks the same agenda they had pressed for under the Republican old guard: lower taxes, fewer regulations, free trade, privatized services, and a smaller government—except when it comes to defending military power, property rights, and business interests. A segment of this faction, led by techno-feudalists like Peter Thiel, now pursue an even more radicalized version of this right-libertarian project.

4.1.2 Ideological Radicalization

As these factions displaced the Republican establishment, the ideological character of the right underwent a profound transformation—from a conservatism that sought to preserve the status quo to a revolutionary project intent on overthrowing it. The New Confederate front no longer primarily defends inherited institutions; it seeks to reshape the political and social order. Its ideological center has fractured into three increasingly radical and assertive currents: ethnonationalism, Christian fundamentalism, and techno-authoritarianism. Each one grew out of tensions and contradictions within the old fusionist coalition, and each represents both a continuation and a negation of that tradition.

In the heyday of neoliberalism, efforts to protect racial, gender, and class privilege were usually framed as defending "freedom" against government overreach. Since many oppressed groups—like women, LGBTQ+ people, people of color, and working-class communities—had used the federal government to push for justice, those trying to protect the status quo claimed they were simply standing up for individual rights and limited government. Class, race, and gender hierarchies were rarely explicitly advocated. Instead, the right argued that efforts to address inequality were "unnatural" and interfered with personal liberty and the free market—which, it just so happened, "naturally" reinforced these hierarchies. In reality, their aim was to protect corporate power, white supremacy, and male dominance. But all of this was hidden behind the language of neoliberalism: "limited government, free markets, and individual freedom."

That façade has now largely fallen. As the promises of the fusionist pact unraveled—particularly the idea that neoliberal capitalism would preserve traditional hierarchies of race, class and gender privilege—each of the emerging factions began to embrace more direct, and often authoritarian, methods. MAGA populists, once suspicious of federal power, now call for using it to crush political enemies, punish "woke" corporations, and impose their values on blue states and marginalized communities. Christian nationalists have shifted from advocating religious liberty to demanding Christian dominance, openly pursuing theocratic goals. And techno-capitalists, who once cloaked their ambitions in libertarianism, increasingly envision a future in which democratic governance is replaced by corporate sovereignty.

What unites these differing ideological projects is their shared opposition to (neo)liberal democracy. No longer a conservative program seeking to defend the status quo from change, all

three have become right-wing revolutionary projects seeking to transform or overthrow the social, political, and economic order as reflected in the existing balance of power within the state. However, they don't all want the same kind of future.

4.2 Three Revolutionary Projects: MAGA Ethnostate, Dominionist State, and CEO State

While the factions of the New Confederate front remain internally diverse, each is increasingly defined by its own vision for replacing (neo)liberal-democratic governance. These visions are not merely ideological—they are organizational and strategic, with distinct goals for state power, economic policy, and social order. What follows is an outline of the three major projects within this coalition: the MAGA ethnostate, the Christian dominionist state, and the techno-capitalist CEO state. Each of these seeks to construct a radically different future, but all rest on shared foundations within an integrated system of cisheteropatriarchal racial capitalism.

4.2.1 A MAGA Ethnostate: Economic, Welfare, and Symbolic Nativism

The populist wing of the New Confederacy seeks to create an exclusionary ethnostate, where the rights and benefits of full citizenship—material, legal, and symbolic—are reserved for a narrow definition of "real Americans." At its core, this vision is driven by white supremacy, building on a long history of favoring white, US-born people over both internal oppressed nationalities and new immigrant groups (including many who would later "become' white). But while white supremacy remains central, this project is not strictly racial. Instead, it creates an idea of a national identity—an American "ethnos"—that combines racial, religious, cultural, political, gendered, sexual, and other markers. This flexible definition helps MAGA populists both shore up and grow a white united front, centered around (straight, Christian, conservative) white people, but selectively inclusive of non-white or immigrant individuals who conform to its values.

This nativist politics relies on both punishment and reward. Immigrants, racialized communities, and other groups are targeted through restrictive policies, including mass deportations, attacks on birthright citizenship, and the rollback of anti-discrimination protections. Simultaneously, "deserving" Americans—especially rural and white working-class communities—are rewarded through welfare chauvinism, support for protectionist labor policies, and occasional gestures toward economic populism.

4.2.2 A Christian Dominionist State: Reproducing the Patriarchal Christian Family

The Christian nationalist wing seeks to transform the US into a Dominionist state—one governed by biblical law and patriarchal authority. Their vision extends beyond government to include total control over cultural and civil society institutions: schools, media, medicine, the arts, and the family. Their organizing principle is the cisheteropatriarchal family, modeled on a strict, authoritarian structure where the father rules, the wife obeys, and children are molded into

“right” citizens. Significantly, the first “promise” of Project 2025, highlighted as the foundation of its entire political project, was to “restore the family as the centerpiece of American life and protect our children.” This is indeed a restorationist project, which seeks to use government power to reward and incentivize traditional, heterosexual, patriarchal families—and to punish or exclude anyone who doesn’t fit that mold.

The disciplinary components of this cisheteropatriarchal program include aggressive rollbacks of reproductive rights, gender-affirming care, and legal protections for LGBTQ+ people; censorship of public education; and criminalization of what they call “gender propaganda.” Meanwhile, they envision increased financial and symbolic rewards for married, heterosexual families: expanded child tax credits for middle-class couples (but not single parents, unmarried couples, or low-income families), subsidies for stay-at-home spouses, and workplace policies designed to reinforce traditional gender roles and religious observance.

4.2.3 CEO State: Techno-Authoritarian Capitalism

The techno-capitalist wing of the New Confederacy wants to reshape the US into a “CEO state”—a country run more like a private corporation than a democracy. This faction is made up of ultra-wealthy entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and libertarian tech elites who believe government should be stripped down to its bare minimum, or even replaced by corporate rule altogether. At the heart of this vision is the idea that markets are better than governments, and that billionaires and tech CEOs should run society instead of elected leaders. Privileged citizens are treated more like shareholders or consumers than active participants in a democracy; less privileged groups are viewed merely as an exploitable workforce.

Their agenda includes dismantling the regulatory state, lowering or eliminating corporate and income taxes; weakening labor protections; and privatizing education, healthcare, and social welfare. In its most extreme form, the project envisions dismantling the government entirely, replacing it with unfettered corporate rule, or carving out autonomous “charter cities” and “innovation zones” where corporate law overrides democratic accountability.

4.3 Internal Contradictions

What unites these forces is not a coherent ideology but a set of enemies and a common rejection of egalitarianism. Each faction sees the expansion of civil rights, pluralism, and democratic participation as threats to their vision of a properly ordered society. In this sense, they all share a fascist impulse. Fascism, at its core, is not just about authoritarianism, but about violently reordering society around a mythic past, enforcing rigid hierarchies, and fusing state and corporate power. Each faction contributes a piece of this puzzle. Yet serious contradictions remain beneath this surface unity.

One of the most glaring contradictions concerns the role of the state. MAGA populists and Christian supremacists increasingly embrace a powerful, interventionist government to enforce

their cultural and moral agendas, from banning abortion to censoring education. Techno-capitalists, by contrast, are ideologically committed to shrinking the state, dismantling regulation, and replacing public governance with private, corporate control. On immigration, MAGA populists are vehemently nativist, but the techno-capitalist faction relies on immigrant labor and prefers open borders.

Economically, the techno-capitalist wing of the Trump coalition prioritizes a hyper-libertarian economic agenda—favoring deregulation, privatization, low taxes, and unrestricted capital flows—that serves the interests of global finance and the top 1%. In contrast, the MAGA populist faction seeks to protect domestic jobs, reward “deserving” families, and selectively redistribute resources, creating deep contradictions in their economic visions. While some Christian fundamentalists support the idea of shrinking government, believing that churches or private groups should take over social services, others are increasingly interested in an expanded pro-natalist welfare state and see unfettered corporate power as a threat to their vision of the family.

In terms of social policy, contradictions exist with the fundamentalist vision and regressive patriarchal values of the Christian right. MAGA populists often align with these priorities rhetorically, but their cultural worldview is more fragmented: some celebrate restrictions on abortion and LGBTQ+ rights, while others promote a libertarian masculinity that is hostile to state-imposed moral discipline. In the techno-capitalist wing, attitudes are even more ambivalent or contradictory; while some embrace reactionary anti-woke branding, others support policies like drug legalization, sex work, or biotech that challenge the religious right’s “traditional” values.

These contradictions are often papered over by shared enemies and short-term gains, but as each faction pushes to realize its version of “revolution from the right,” they risk undermining one another’s priorities—setting the stage for internal conflict as much as for external conquest.

4.4 Trump’s Patronal Project: A Mafia State

Donald Trump functions as both the unifying symbol and operational core who fuses the three factions of the New Confederacy into a shared political force, despite their contradictions. MAGA populists see in him a voice for white grievance and national restoration; Christian nationalists embrace him as a flawed but effective vehicle for advancing theocratic goals; and techno-capitalists view his presidency as an opportunity to slash regulations, lower taxes, and weaken public institutions. Trump’s strength is not ideological coherence—it is his ability to fuse these agendas into a single, compelling narrative of grievance, domination, and restoration.

Under Trump, the fusion of right-wing populism, Christian nationalism, and techno-authoritarian capitalism has produced not an ideologically coherent regime, but something more fluid and adaptive: a personalistic regime structured around power for its own sake. Policy commitments are flexible, discarded or revived depending on how well they serve the consolidation of control. Loyalty is the supreme currency. Trumpism is not bound to any consistent ideology because its core function is not ideological—it is relational. It is about control, protection, and domination.

In this way, Trump is attempting to build what some political scientists call a **patronal autocracy** or **mafia state**—a system in which formal structures like elections and law remain, but real power flows through informal networks of loyalty, patronage, and coercion. The state ceases to serve the public interest and becomes an extension of the ruler's personal authority. This does not just centralize power, it privatizes it—replacing governance with loyalty, public interest with personal vendetta, and democratic negotiation with a leader's whims. In this patronal autocracy, Trump is not simply a president; he is the **patron**, the boss at the center of a pyramid of loyalty, fear, and reward. The system functions less like a democratic republic and more like an organized crime syndicate—where allegiance to the Don guarantees protection, advancement, and impunity, and where betrayal is met with retaliation.

4.5 Social Composition

At its core, the New Confederacy remains an alliance between a portion of the capitalist class and a predominantly white social base animated by racial and patriarchal grievance. In broad strokes this resembles the class composition of most authoritarian and fascist regimes, which combine the most reactionary sections of a divided capitalist class with the most reactionary sections of the popular classes. As the Comintern had noted in 1933:

> Fascism is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital. Fascism tries to secure a mass basis for monopolistic capital among the petty bourgeoisie, appealing to the peasantry, artisans, office employees and civil servants who have been thrown out of their normal course of life, and particularly to the declassed elements in the big cities, also trying to penetrate into the working class.[6]

While often mischaracterized as a movement of the "white working class," the New Confederacy's core base is more accurately located within the middle strata, including groups like small business owners, skilled tradespeople, independent contractors, and salespeople, particularly in industries like real estate, insurance, and auto sales. Note that none of these sectors require a college degree—a metric that is often used in the US as an unreliable proxy for class status. A sociological analysis of participants in the January 6th insurrection is illustrative: although a majority lacked four-year college degrees, the largest single employment group was small business owners; meanwhile, a significant minority were highly credentialed professionals (doctors, lawyers, architects, etc). Only 17% were blue-collar workers—less than the 18% with a background in military or law enforcement.[7] This data can be taken as a rough snapshot of the hard core of the New Confederacy, which like many reactionary movements, draws on the status anxieties of middle strata in the face of pressures from above and channels them towards those below.

---

[6] "Extracts from the Theses of the Thirteenth ECCI Plenum on Fascism, the War Danger and the Tasks of Communist Parties (December 1933)," The Communist International, vol. III, p. 296.

[7] See Michael Ricciardelli, ""The January 6 Insurrectionists: Who They Are and What They Did," *Seton Hall Law School Legal Studies* (2023) https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4512381

However, it is true that decades of neoliberalism have contributed to a rightward drift among some white sections of the multiracial/multinational working class, particularly among disorganized workers and workers deskilled through offshoring and automation, a phenomenon that has intensified in the Trump era. As union density declined and industrial jobs were hollowed out, many white workers—especially in deindustrialized regions—faced economic precarity without the collective infrastructure to interpret or resist it through a class lens. In the absence of strong labor institutions or left political alternatives, right-wing narratives filled the vacuum, redirecting economic anxiety into cultural grievance and racial resentment. While some of these workers continue to support populist economic policies—such as tariffs or opposition to free trade—their incorporation into the MAGA bloc has largely occurred through the idioms of race, gender, and national identity rather than class solidarity. As a result, this rightward drift has reinforced the broader architecture of the New Confederate front, even as it reflects unresolved contradictions within it.

In recent years, this gendered and racialized base has been selectively expanded through backlash politics. By preying on backlash to the #MeToo movement and artificially stoked "trans panic," the New Confederacy has drawn in some individuals who might otherwise support reproductive or women's rights, consolidating a broader "gender revanchist" front. Similarly, anti-immigrant politics have deepened fractures within and between communities of color, pitting documented immigrants against undocumented ones, and older immigrant populations against newer arrivals. This dynamic has enabled the selective incorporation of some non-white voters—most notably a growing segment of Latino men—into a reconfigured racial hierarchy, echoing earlier moments when previously racialized immigrant communities were invited into whiteness to preserve social order.

Above and behind this social bloc is a class project driven by key segments of the capitalist elite. Not all components of the owning class belong to or support the New Confederacy, but its agenda has long been driven by a network of capitalists of whom the Koch Brothers are only the most prominent. The latter made their fortune in petroleum, and extractive (oil, gas, and mining) capital is a core force within the New Confederacy, alongside agriculture, petrochemicals, and the construction industry. But the recent period has seen a decisive shift among sectors of tech and finance, as figures like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Mark Zuckerberg—who once stood apart from partisan politics—have increasingly aligned with the far right. This shift has been partly driven by backlash against D.E.I. programs and cultural liberalism, but also by mounting resistance to regulatory efforts, including antitrust action pursued by the Biden administration.[8] In effect, tech sector titans are now in open revolt against democracy, with worrying consequences for the coming period.

[8] See for instance Charles Duhigg, "Silicon Valley, the New Lobbying Monster," *The New Yorker* (October 7, 2024) https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/10/14/silicon-valley-the-new-lobbying-monster

SECTION 5: THE MULTIRACIAL PRO-DEMOCRACY UNITED FRONT

The Multiracial Pro-Democracy United Front comprises the totality of forces united by their opposition to the New Confederacy. We use the term “united front” to refer, not to a formal pact among organizations, but rather to an objective social phenomenon uniting all those opposed to a common enemy. As the New Confederacy has consolidated around an increasingly ethno-nationalist and fascist agenda, the front opposing it has broadened to include all those opposed to this project; simultaneously, its unstable unity has narrowed to a minimal commitment to pluralistic, democratic society and the defense of the “the three civils”: civil society, civil liberties, and civil rights.

This breadth is both a strength and weakness for the front. On the one hand, it suggests a latent anti-MAGA majority who can be mobilized to oppose the authoritarian project of the New Confederacy, which remains deeply unpopular. On the other hand, this is an extremely heterogeneous front that lacks a common politics or platform, precisely because the only thing uniting it is opposition to MAGA. Thus, the unity of this front does not extend beyond being “pro-democracy,” with several competing versions of what “democracy” means and for whom, and a wide range of positions on other social, political, and economic issues.

The heterogeneity of today’s pro-democracy front echoes the broad and often uneasy coalition that came together to oppose the Confederacy during the US Civil War and Reconstruction. That earlier front included radical abolitionists, moderate Republicans, free-soil farmers, pro-Union industrialists, Black people—both enslaved and free—who fought for their liberation, other people of color whose fates were bound up in the struggle, and even some former slaveholders who opposed secession. Though united primarily by their opposition to the Southern slave power, these forces held sharply divergent views on race, labor, and the meaning of democracy. Similarly, today’s pro-democracy coalition brings together forces who differ significantly on economic, social, and foreign policy questions but remain provisionally united against the authoritarian threat posed by the New Confederacy. As in the 19th century, the durability and direction of this front will depend not just on shared opposition, but on which vision of democracy ultimately leads.

5.1 Progressive, Establishment, and Center-Right factions

We can roughly group the Pro-Democracy United Front into three camps: progressive forces, establishment forces, and center-right forces—the latter at the rightmost end of our united front, but still “centrist” relative to the overall balance of power between our front and the New Confederacy. The electoral reflection and expression of these forces is represented by (respectively) the social-democratic, establishment, and Blue Dog factions of the Democratic Party, which like its Republican counterpart we conceive not as a singular entity but a multi-tendency coalition. However, in contrast to the Republican Party, which has largely

consolidated into a party for fascism, the factions operating beneath the Democratic “umbrella” remain more deeply divided, with competing platforms and objectives.

Schematically, we can define these three social blocs by the extent of their opposition to the three pillars of the New Confederacy’s illiberal project: race, gender, and class hierarchy. To generalize:

- **Progressive forces** within our front oppose all three of those pillars and are strongly committed to racial, gender, and economic justice. They include left and progressive oppressed nationality, women’s, and LGBTQ+ organizations with an intersectional analysis; progressive sections of labor committed to “social justice unionism”; independent political organizations like the Working Families Party; and the organized socialist left. The electoral expression of these forces is a **social democratic bloc** working within the Democratic Party coalition, but with an inside/outside orientation towards the Democratic Party narrowly and electoral politics broadly; at a federal level, examples include Bernie Sanders and “the Squad.”

- **Moderate forces** are more weakly committed to racial, gender, and economic equality, or else strongly support some of these aims but do not support others. These include mainstream, middle-class women’s and LGBTQ+ organizations that lack a class and racial justice analysis; moderate sections of the oppressed nationality movements, such as the NAACP; and the majority of organized labor. Their electoral expression are the **establishment Democrats** who have long held leadership within the Democratic coalition; examples include Joe Biden, Chuck Shumer, and Nancy Pelosi.

- **Center-right forces** in our front weakly support our position on some pillars but actively oppose our agenda on others. This includes socially conservative sectors of the labor movement (such as some building trades) and Democratic-leaning sections of the capitalist class. Within the Democratic coalition, the electoral expression of this bloc are **Blue Dog Democrats**; examples include Henry Cuellar and former senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. The right-wing radicalization of the New Confederacy has caused small sections of the (former) Republican establishment to decamp to this faction, although so far this has been restricted to former GOP leadership rather than the mass base.

5.2 Developments in the Factional Balance of Power

5.2.1 The Post–George Floyd Moment: Opening and Retrenchment

The initial phase of the Biden period reflected the heightened strength of the social-democratic wing of the united front, powered by the George Floyd uprisings, a youth-led climate movement, and rising electoral support for progressive candidates. This translated into an unprecedented opening for progressive influence on the early Biden administration. Early appointments and the

sweeping “Build Back Better” legislative agenda reflected an attempt to forge a tentative alliance between progressives and the establishment that preserved the latter’s dominant position, but pivoted away from longstanding party orthodoxies. Astonishingly, establishment forces appeared willing, at least briefly, to consider breaking with key tenets of neoliberalism, and to attempt to consolidate a new long-term alternative.

But this early momentum quickly encountered structural limits—both internal and external. Legislative defeats—including the collapse of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and most of the original “Build Back Better” provisions—marked an early turning point. These setbacks revealed not just the limitations of progressive power within the Democratic coalition, but the constraints facing the entire front in a polarized and institutionally gridlocked system. With internal opposition from Manchin and Sinema, unified GOP obstruction, an emboldened far-right judiciary, and razor-thin Democratic margins in Congress, even modest reforms became vulnerable. These failures demoralized social movements, deepened mistrust between progressive and establishment forces, and disillusioned portions of the electorate—especially as the most tangible material benefits for working-class communities were the first to be sacrificed.

5.2.2 The Gaza Rupture: Fragmentation and Authoritarian Drift

The outbreak of the Israeli genocide in Gaza following the October 7 Hamas attacks widened these cracklines into serious fissures within the front. The Biden administration’s uncritical support for Israel—militarily, financially, and rhetorically—ignited widespread outrage across the progressive wing, particularly among Arab and Muslim communities, students, and the broader antiwar left. The administration’s backing of campus protest suppression, often with support from establishment Democrats, was perceived by many as a betrayal not just of progressive values, but of democratic principles themselves, creating a dangerous authoritarian precedent the Trump administration would later seize upon.

The backlash was swift and tangible. AIPAC-funded primary challenges targeted progressive incumbents, including key Squad members, further destabilizing the coalition. The Uncommitted movement, which emerged in Democratic primaries as a protest against Biden’s handling of Gaza, drew hundreds of thousands of votes in key states and signaled the scale of disaffection among progressive voters. The rupture was not only ideological but demographic, with Arab and Muslim voters deserting the Democratic Party in significant numbers. This rupture revealed the establishment wing’s willingness to prioritize longstanding geopolitical alliances over its tentative alliance with the progressive wing. By the end of the Harris campaign—which pivoted decisively toward the center and even the center-right in an effort to court swing voters and appease donor pressure—it appeared that the establishment had largely abandoned that alliance altogether.

5.2.3 The 2024 Electoral Fallout: Polarization and Realignment

The defeat of the Harris campaign unleashed a new wave of recriminations and strategic debate within the pro-democracy front. While many progressives pointed to disillusionment with Biden’s foreign policy and lack of tangible gains for working people as key reasons for voter

demobilization, moderates countered that progressive “overreach” had alienated swing voters. These divergent diagnoses reflected deeper strategic fractures: whether to rebuild the coalition by mobilizing the base with bold, justice-oriented politics, or to recapture the center through triangulation and policy retrenchment.

At the time of writing, the internal balance of power within the pro-democracy front remains uncertain and contested. One revealing indicator of the front’s internal alignment was Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s bid to chair the House Oversight Committee, which was defeated by a vote of 131 to 84. More than just a symbolic contest, the vote revealed the balance of influence and internal discipline within the Democratic Party apparatus: establishment forces retained majority control (with about 60% of House Democrats), but the progressive bloc commanded a sizable and increasingly cohesive minority. Meanwhile, with Manchin and Sinema gone from the Senate and the Blue Dog Caucus down to just eight members in the House, the center-right faction has virtually disappeared at the federal level—though it remains potent in some state legislatures.

5.2.4 Lessons in Fragile Unity—and Left Opportunity

The onslaughts of the incoming Trump administration may minimize those divisions or widen them, depending on the extent to which forces within the front unite in opposition to the New Confederate agenda or fracture amid different approaches to resistance and accommodation. Yet in this moment of crisis, the relative quiescence of the Democratic establishment has created a notable opening for the progressive wing to assert greater leadership. With many establishment figures demoralized, disoriented, or politically cautious in the early days of Trump’s return, progressives have stepped into the breach. High-profile rallies organized by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders across the country signal a growing appetite, not just among progressives, but also among moderates, for a bold, principled alternative.

This is not new terrain. The progressive wing has historically played a leading role when the Democratic Party is in opposition, drawing on deeper experience in protest, movement-building, and crisis response. The challenge, however, will be to build that oppositional energy into durable infrastructure and governing capacity. The Biden era revealed the limits of progressive influence when our front holds power, especially in the absence of sufficient leverage, mass mobilization, and a unified strategic vision. If the progressive bloc is to lead the Multiracial Pro-Democracy United Front not only in moments of resistance, but also in moments of governance, it must develop the organizational strength and political clarity to avoid repeating the pitfalls of the past period—and to anchor a more transformative vision of democratic renewal in the face of rising authoritarianism.

5.3 Social Composition

The social base of the Pro-Democracy United Front remains demographically broad and ideologically diverse, anchored by oppressed nationality communities of all classes, organized sections of white workers, and college-educated white professionals and semi-professionals. Within each of these bases of support, its strongest and most consistent support comes from

oppressed gender people who are often the first to feel the threat of authoritarian rollback and the most mobilized to resist it. That is, among any given demographic group, more women and LGBTQ+ people will support our front than will cis straight men, and will support it more strongly.

Oppressed nationality communities continue to form the front's most reliable base of support. This is especially true for Black communities, which remain the most consistently Democratic-aligned demographic across class lines. Majorities of Native, Latine, Asian American, Arab American, and Pacific Islander communities also remain within the front, though 2024 revealed both volatility and unevenness. Arab and Muslim voters, in particular, defected in significant numbers in protest of Biden's support for Israel's genocidal war on Gaza—though this likely represents a tactical rupture rather than a durable realignment. More lasting may be the rightward drift of at least some segments of the Latine electorate—especially some male Latino voters—a shift that underscores how racial and ethnic identity interacts with class, gender, and geography in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

The class composition of the front has been significantly reshaped by the long-term decline of the industrial working class. As unionized manufacturing jobs disappeared, seniority rules intended to check management power and provide a measure of job security also intensified contradictions between white and oppressed nationality workers. Black and brown workers in basic industry, "last-hired and first fired," were the first to feel the impact of mass layoffs. In the past, strong industrial unions did not eliminate divisions among workers of different nationalities, but it did provide a common cause and organizational power that delivered generations of voters in Midwestern states like Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania reliably into the Democratic column. The decline of these unions dramatically shifted the political landscape, sharpened divisions within the working class, and brought new challenges to the struggle for a united front.

As Chris Maisano has pointed out, post-industrial economic restructuring has splintered the working class into distinct occupational blocs.[9] These are defined by demographics no less than by income and skill level. One bloc—centered in logistics, construction, extractive industries, and some sectors of manufacturing—has become increasingly drawn into the New Confederacy, especially where union power has declined and racialized narratives fill the political vacuum. But other blocs, such as social "semi-professionals"—composed of nurses, teachers, nonprofit workers, social service providers, and other public- or care-sector workers—are now central to the base of the pro-democracy front. Nursing and teaching in particular are skilled jobs requiring years of training that have become increasingly proletarianized and seen the rise of militant unionism in response.

Educational polarization reflects, but also distorts, this occupational divide. While voters with college degrees now form a majority of the Democratic coalition, education is an imperfect proxy for class. Among college-educated voters, support for Democrats is consistent across income levels. Among non–college educated voters, however, a clearer class split emerges according to income: lower-income voters lean Democratic, while middle- and upper-income non-degree

[9] Chris Maisano, "Is This Really the 'Age of Class Dealignment?'" *Jacobin*, March 28, 2025, https://jacobin.com/2025/03/class-dealignment-occupation-progressive-electorate

holders—often found in small business, sales, law enforcement, and the trades—are more likely to support the GOP. This divide helps explain the differing bases of support for the front's progressive and center-right factions, as each draws from distinct layers of a splintered class structure.[10]

The non–college educated workers most likely to vote Democratic include those in low-wage, low-autonomy service-sector jobs—such as home health aides, childcare workers, food service workers, custodians, retail clerks, and warehouse employees. Women, oppressed nationalities, and immigrant workers menaced by Trump's policy of mass deportations are heavily represented in these jobs and often find themselves pitted against capital at its most predatory. An aging population, in a society whose social safety net for seniors is woefully inadequate, has made the nursing home industry a magnet for private investors attracted by lax regulation and a pool of low-wage workers drawn largely from the ranks of women, immigrants. and oppressed nationalities. The explosive growth of the health care sector, characterized by a large and parasitic insurance industry and the steady replacement of public and charity hospitals with market-driven corporate hospital chains, has likewise given rise to a highly exploited workforce pitted against some of the nation's wealthiest corporations.The economic precarity of low-wage service workers, and their daily exposure to exploitation, often heighten receptivity to redistributive and rights-based politics. These voters form a crucial—if often overlooked—component of the working-class base for progressive politics.

This complicates claims that the party's progressive wing is "out of touch" with the working class. Without denying real fault lines and fissures, it is clear that progressive politics resonate with significant sectors of the working class—particularly those whose labor is undervalued, care-oriented, and structurally precarious. These workers often share material interests around wages, housing, healthcare, and public investment, as well as lived experiences of exploitation that shape a collective, if uneven, consciousness around social justice. The progressive wing's challenge is not a lack of relevance to working-class life, but the need to deepen its organizing presence among disorganized sectors, translate moral alignment into durable political infrastructure, and overcome barriers of geography, race, and narrative that have been skillfully exploited by the right.

Generational and gender divides further shape this terrain. Young voters are the most progressive generation in US history, but the 2024 election revealed a growing gender divide: while young women continued to move left, a majority of young men under 30 voted for Trump. This reflects a global trend of anti-feminist backlash among young men in response to gains by women and queer people, compounded by economic insecurity and cultural alienation. For the pro-democracy front, this is both a danger and an opportunity: building a durable coalition will require explicitly addressing the alienation of young men without capitulating to reactionary

[10] See Pew Research Center, "Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation" (April 2024), Chapter 6. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/04/09/changing-partisan-coalitions-in-a-politically-divided-nation/

tropes, and developing organizing models that offer belonging and dignity without hierarchy or scapegoating.

5.4 Ideology and Program: Competing Responses to the Crisis of Neoliberalism

At the heart of the pro-democracy front lies not only a shared opposition to the New Confederacy, but an unresolved contest over what should replace the collapsing neoliberal consensus. While the right has largely consolidated around a clear, authoritarian project rooted in patriarchal racial capitalism, the pro-democracy front remains ideologically heterogeneous. These differences reflect not only factional competition, but deeper strategic tensions among competing views about the meaning of democracy itself, the role of the state, and the future of the US political economy.

5.4.1 Center-Right: Soft Nationalism and Neoliberalism

On the front's rightmost flank, Blue Dog Democrats and other center-right actors represent the forces most ideologically adjacent to the New Confederacy. Though they have generally shifted to the left on certain social issues like gun control and LGBTQ+ rights in response to changes in public opinion, they continue to uphold many of the core economic tenets of neoliberalism, particularly in their skepticism of public investment and redistributive policy. At times, especially at the local level, this faction supports limited forms of economic populism—but often in the form of culturally conservative, nationalist welfare chauvinism. They have veered sharply right on immigration—as has a significant section of the moderate centrist establishment—and are the most likely within the front to move rightward on trans rights and other emerging cultural fault lines. These actors remain the most likely within the front to pursue compromise or accommodation with the authoritarian right. In essence, their program reflects a desire to preserve or restore the neoliberal status quo.

5.4.2 Establishment Moderates: State-Managed Rainbow Capitalism

The dominant ideological current within the pro-democracy front is that of the establishment bloc. Previously, we called this the "Third Way" bloc, referring to a brand of politics that emerged among center-left parties around the world in the 1990s to triangulate between traditional center-left policies and the rightward pull of neoliberalism. In recent years, however, this faction has distanced itself from some core neoliberal doctrines, embracing a more active role for government in infrastructure, climate adaptation, and industrial policy. This shift—driven by both electoral necessity and grassroots pressure—has not produced a full rupture with neoliberalism, but rather a still-uneven hybrid model in which the state plays a larger role in managing and subsidizing private enterprise, without significantly expanding the public sector.

Under Biden, this still-uneven "hybrid" shifted from initial aggressive action against corporate monopolies towards forms of accommodationism. That said, the Biden administration did take notable steps to empower organized labor—through pro-labor NLRB appointments, vocal

support for union drives, and investment programs that favored unionized and domestic manufacturing. These measures marked a meaningful break from the anti-labor posture of previous Democratic administrations, even if they stopped short of directly confronting capital or shifting structural power toward labor.

Often described as a return to New Deal-era Keynesianism, this orientation is better understood as a hybrid between neoliberalism and a technocratic, state-managed capitalism. It seeks to restore faith in US leadership through selective state intervention, protectionist industrial policy, and renewed investment in national infrastructure—while remaining firmly committed to US imperial leadership abroad. In this emerging consensus, we can see the outlines of a “multicultural nationalism”: a pluralist but bounded vision of American identity, paired with a market-friendly welfare state and continued commitment to global capital dominance.

5.4.3 Progressive Left: Third Reconstruction and Democratic Transformation

On the front’s left flank are progressive and social-democratic forces seeking a much deeper transformation. This wing calls for a decisive break from neoliberalism in favor of a "Third Reconstruction"— a bold, transformative agenda to tackle corporate power; rebuild the social welfare state; expand the rights of workers, women, LGBQT+ people, and people of color; and complete the unfinished work of American democracy.

We call this a “Third Reconstruction” because it builds on the unfinished work of America’s First (1865-1877) and Second (1954-1971) Reconstructions, each of which represented a period of dramatic expansion of rights and freedoms for the oppressed. Like those earlier periods, today’s Third Reconstruction vision links racial, social, and gender justice to economic transformation, and insists that democratic reform cannot succeed without both.

But it also goes further—calling for a reconstruction of US democracy itself, from its foundational structures to its global role. That includes overhauling an undemocratic electoral system, reining in judicial supremacy, demilitarizing public life, and replacing US imperialism with a foreign policy grounded in justice, peace, and global solidarity. It envisions an economy where democratic ownership and public goods replace corporate monopolies, and a state accountable to the many, not the few.

5.4.4 Strategic Implications: The Struggle for Leadership within our Front

These ideological divisions within the pro-democracy front are not simply matters of policy—they reflect competing answers to the central political question of our moment: What new hegemonic order will replace a faltering neoliberalism? Whether the front can move from resistance to renewal depends in part on which of these visions gains strategic coherence and political leadership. The establishment’s hybrid “compromise” may offer institutional continuity, but risks reproducing the very conditions that enabled the rise of the New Confederacy domestically, while also attempting to shore up US imperial hegemony globally, while the center-right's drift is

a gateway to authoritarian capitulation. Only a Third Reconstruction led by the front's progressive wing can address the root causes of democratic decline—and offer a transformative social, political, and economic alternative capable of defeating authoritarianism not just at the ballot box, but at the level of structure, culture, and power.

The stakes are high. What's at issue is not just who governs, but *how* we govern—and whether democracy itself will be redefined, rebuilt, or rolled back. But even as we debate, challenge, and organize around these different visions, we do so within the context of a shared existential threat: the rise of the New Confederacy and its open assault on multiracial democracy. The ability of the front to hold together—and to grow in clarity, coherence, and collective power—will depend on our capacity to balance principled struggle within our front, with unshakable unity against the authoritarian right.

SECTION 6: THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

If Section 5 traced the broad factions within the Multiracial Pro-Democracy United Front, Section 6 turns to the social movements that have powered its base and tested its strategic clarity.

A note about tone and intent: at various points, this section offers critical assessments of contradictions, weaknesses and challenges within our movements. We intend these assessments in the spirit of constructive criticism—and, in many cases, self-criticism, as they are often critiques of organizations and movement sectors our members are deeply involved in. We offer these assessments in the spirit of unity-struggle-unity, with the aim of strengthening our collective capacity to defeat the New Confederacy, advance a Third Reconstruction, and help advance the longer-term struggle for racial, gender and class liberation.

6.1 Strategic Fault Lines in the People's Movements: the Left Sectarian, Pragmatist, and Inside/Outside Trends

To strengthen the leadership of progressive sectors of our Pro-Democracy United Front, left and progressive forces must balance competing imperatives: struggling against moderate establishment forces to strengthen the left's position within the pro-democracy front, even as we cooperate with these same forces in the shared struggle against our common enemy, the fascist New Confederacy. Balancing these competing imperatives requires strategic dexterity and discernment, and it is easy for left and progressive forces to make both left and right errors.

Left errors overemphasize our struggle against moderate establishment forces and underemphasize our need for unity of action with them to defeat the right. Such errors can isolate the left from the rest of the Pro-Democracy United Front, alienate the masses from our positions, and weaken our collective capacity to fight the New Confederacy. Underlying such left errors is a rejection of the notion that the left needs centrist and center-right forces as even temporary or tactical allies in our shared fight against the New Confederacy, instead advocating for complete left independence. This exaggerates the size and strength of the left, misreads the level of consciousness among the people, and misdiagnoses the current stage of political struggle. When left forces repeatedly commit left errors, we refer to this tendency as "ultra-leftism."

Right errors *under*emphasize our struggle against moderate establishment forces and *over*emphasize our need for accomodation with them. If left errors push for a "purist" position that is too far ahead of the current stage of struggle, right errors commit the opposite, tailist mistake of simply following the establishment, underestimating the readiness of the masses for more radical demands and bolder left leadership. Such errors neglect opportunities to win more people over to left and progressive positions, reinforcing the leadership and political dominance of the center and center-right and sacrificing independent left initiative. When organizations and individuals repeatedly commit right errors, we refer to this as "pragmatism."

Given the overall weakness, fragmentation, and underdevelopment of the US left, it is understandable that our movements make many errors that are both right and left in nature. Over the past decade, however, the most grounded and strategic sectors of the progressive people's movements have gradually been aligning around a balanced approach to unity of action with the center and independent left initiative—what we have elsewhere referred to as the "inside/outside" trend. This refers to the need to organize inside the terrain of electoral politics and the state as well as outside it in the realm of civil society, and to work inside a united front with centrist forces while building independent left infrastructure and organization outside of it. With origins extending at least as far back as the 1980s Rainbow Coalition, this inside/outside trend has especially gained strength since 2016.

The past three years, however, have reignited old tendencies towards both left sectarianism and right pragmatism. In particular, the complicity of the Biden administration and the centrist Democratic Party establishment in the Israeli genocide in Gaza gave fuel to left sectarian tendencies toward abstentionism, third-partyism, and electoral rejectionism. The sharp, ongoing battles within DSA are illustrative of these errors. While caucuses like SMC and Groundwork organized electoral deployments through *Socialism Beats Fascism* and worked closely with movement forces in critical swing states, DSA as a national formation failed to offer strategic leadership in 2024—declining to make an endorsement or articulate a unified electoral strategy. And DSA's national leadership has largely stood aside from mass-based resistance efforts since the election, apparently for fear of ideological contamination. As a result, the largest nominally socialist organization in the country was and remains a wildcard— potentially powerful, but ideologically ambivalent, factionally divided, and structurally weakened.

At the same time, the failure of left and progressive forces to even attempt to find a credible progressive primary challenger to Biden was undeniably a "right error" that over-capitulated to the failing centrist establishment, with disastrous consequences. And especially in the aftermath of the 2024 elections, there has been a troubling resurgence of a class reductionist error that is "right in content, left in form." Notably articulated by Jacobin's founding editor Bhaskar Sunkara, this position advocates for a form of politics exclusively focused on narrow economic demands with ostensibly "universal appeal," downgrading other issues and dismissing demands for racial and gender justice as supposedly "divisive" and "particularistic." Framed as a radical left stance, this position in fact aligns with centrist, center-right, and even right-wing political ideas, underestimating both the importance of racial and gender justice and the left's ability to unite the (multiracial, multinational, multi-gendered) working class around these demands.

And yet, in the face of both resurgent left and right errors and increased strategic confusion among our movements, those sectors of the left that *were* strategically aligned around an inside/outside framework acted with greater collective clarity and coordination in this period. In 2024, the emergence of the "Block and Build" framework functioned as an effective rhetorical articulation of the inside/outside strategy, whose widespread adoption pointed to a greater degree of strategic clarity and coordination across our "trend," even amid strong political headwinds. The Uncommitted Movement was another example of an organizing effort that

worked with great skill and discipline, in the face of unconscionable inaction from the Biden administration and Harris campaign, to carry out a set of objectives consciously articulated as an inside/outside strategy.

While promising, however, the organizing efforts of inside/outside forces remained too small in size and scale—relative both to other tendencies within our movements and, especially, beyond them. Meanwhile, increasing strategic alignment did not translate into sufficient practical and programmatic coordination across organizations and movement sectors. The task of cohering a stronger, more coherent inside/outside trend within our movements remains outstanding.

Below, we will analyze more detailed developments within a number of key social movement sectors: the oppressed nationality, labor, oppressed gender, and climate and ecological justice movements. Across the movement sectors surveyed in these subsections, all three of the trends outlined above can be found: left sectarianism, right pragmatism, and an inside/outside orientation. Following these subsections, we will zoom in on the inside/outside trend itself, as well as the particular organizational form we have called for to help cohere it: independent political organization (IPO). We will assess key developments related to the growth and cohesion of IPOs and related components of independent political infrastructure—understood not as a movement "sector" distinct from the other sectors assessed here, but as a political strategy to help cohere those movements and advance their demands.

To increase strategic, programmatic, and organizational alignment of IPOs, we have further argued that we need to build a socialist core within the inside/outside trend and the broader organized movements of the oppressed nationalities, oppressed gender people, and the multiracial/multinational working class.The final component of this section assesses developments connected to cohering such a socialist core over the past three years.

6.2 Oppressed Nationality Movements: Between Uprising, Genocide, and Repression

The last several years have brought both historic mobilizations and profound fragmentation across the movements of oppressed nationalities. From the 2020 Black-led uprising to the unprecedented explosion of Palestine solidarity organizing in 2023–24, oppressed nationality movements have been central to the terrain of struggle in this period. But they have also been subject to intense repression, internal contradictions, and strategic disorientation. In the aftermath of historic mobilizations, these movements are today in a defensive posture—searching for new forms of organization, coordination, and strategic clarity.

The most explosive development of the past 18 months has been the eruption of the US Palestine solidarity movement in response to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. The scale of this level of mobilization around Palestine is unprecedented in a US context: tens of thousands mobilized, hundreds of campuses involved, and a level of visibility that shook the legitimacy of US complicity with Zionism. The movement achieved significant breakthroughs in public

discourse and consciousness, forcing open mainstream critique of U.S. complicity with Israeli apartheid. Yet the movement has also faced serious challenges. Demands were often unclear or unevenly articulated. Coordination was limited. Most critically, the movement was unprepared for the scale and intensity of the right-wing counterattack—framed around allegations of antisemitism and tied to broader efforts to criminalize protest. The repression has been fierce: suspensions, arrests, funding threats, and a new wave of legislative assaults and deportations.

There was also difficulty building a united front around the politics of the Israeli genocide. While members of the Squad, including Black leaders like Cori Bush and Jamaal Bowman, stood firmly in support of Palestinian liberation, they faced intense attacks from the Israel lobby. Efforts by Jewish Voice for Peace, Sunrise, IfNotNow, DSA, Seed the Vote and others were insufficient to defend their seats against AIPAC-funded primary challenges, sending a chilling message to the broader movement. Uncommitted coordinated impressive grassroots efforts in multiple swing states and led a disciplined strategic intervention at the DNC, but were unable to budge Harris. And while much of the Palestinian solidarity energy targeted Biden and Harris, there was less clarity on how to relate to Trump and the far right. This left the movement divided on how—or if—to prevent Trump's reelection, and unprepared for the intensified repression of his second term.

The 2020 Black-led uprising was the largest protest wave in US history, which fundamentally reshaped the national conversation on race, policing, and public safety. It forced mainstream institutions and much of white America to reckon with legacies of structural racism—leading to school curriculum changes, cultural rebranding efforts, and shifts in media and corporate discourse. A legitimate and winnable alternative electoral program to the "law and order" politics which dominated municipal politics for 40 years has resulted in the election of dozens of reform district attorneys and sheriffs. Significant victories were won around criminal justice policy, primarily at the municipal and county level, but also in some states with Democratic trifectas—from establishing unarmed crisis response units, to expanding diversion programs, limiting money bail, reducing the use of three strike and mandatory minimums, and enacting prosecutorial policy that takes a more rehabilitative and health focused approach. At the federal level, the movement helped push the Biden administration to include significant carve-outs for oppressed nationality communities, most notably through the Justice 40 initiative.

And yet today, much of its organizational infrastructure has either disappeared or been absorbed into nonprofit policy initiatives. The movement made a sharp pivot from rebellion to reform—from "abolish the police," which proved not to be the unifying slogan intended, to policy platforms. In some ways that has been a good thing—getting serious about concrete impacts, and forging unity of thought, but coordinated, strategic campaigns at the national level have been lacking. Some gains were made, but national coordination broke down, and many local chapters of Black Lives Matter dissolved or went dormant. M4BL remains one of the national formations articulating a racial justice agenda, but its reach is limited. The broader Black left—organizations such as Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Community Movement Builders, and Cooperation Jackson—remains largely active at the very local level, and is also in a period of regrouping. A Black radical unity convening is scheduled for 2025.

The Chicano, Mexicano and Latine movements have faced a different set of contradictions. Deportations and immigration raids escalated under both Biden and Trump, fueling resistance but also deepening fear and repression. The rise of AMLO and now Claudia Sheinbaum in Mexico has created a new binational dynamic: many Mexican immigrants in the US view Mexico's progressive government as a source of support, especially in contrast to the threat posed by US immigration policy under Trump. Organizing for reform has continued in many immigrant communities, particularly around deportation defense and labor struggles, with increasingly widespread resistance to aggressive ICE tactics. Yet voter turnout in US elections has been low, and enthusiasm split, including a movement of some sectors toward Trump. The weakening of the Black/Brown alliance has also undercut broader unity, as anti-immigrant sentiment has grown in some parts of the Black community.

The decline of the Puerto Rican movement in the US has been a significant factor that has frequently been overlooked. The gradual reemergence of the left in Puerto Rico itself (after the crisis and collapse of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in the early 1980s) has not resonated within the mainland left. This is something that must be noted particularly given Puerto Rico's colonial status and the relative disintegration of ties between the island left and left and progressive forces—including but not limited to Puerto Rican--on the mainland. Recent efforts to unite progressives with *independistas* to win the governorship, while unsuccessful, resulted in a second place finish in the election, and a not insignificant gain in votes, hopefully presaging greater unity and collaboration across the landscape of left and progressive electoral parties.

Among post-1965 immigrant communities, the terrain is even more complex. Right-wing nationalist forces, such as the Hindu right, have gained traction among segments of the Indian diaspora. Anti-communism remains strong among some Vietnamese and Cuban Americans, and right-wing Chinese-American organizing played a significant role in the anti-affirmative action campaign. Yet at the same time, many youth from these communities have been active in Palestine solidarity organizing, labor campaigns, and local mutual aid work. These generational splits have opened new space for youth-led organizing and political education efforts.

In all communities of color, there has been a change in class structure over several decades, with both more new migrants coming from professional and entrepreneurial groups, and a growth of these classes among existing communities due to past civil rights gains. These changes in class composition have affected both the tenor of social movements and the broader electoral terrain.

Electorally, the experience and leadership of oppressed nationality communities has gained increased prominence within the Democratic coalition on the level of messaging, capacity-building, and funding priorities. Simultaneously, many IPOs have developed as expressions of national character—including national organizations like Black Voters Matter and Mijente, as well as state and local groups like PA BLOC, Siembra NC, Western Native Voice, LUCHA, and many more. At the same time, there remain significant ultra-left, anarchist and anti-electoral components within ON movements. Many ON organizations are highly visible and culturally influential, but lack consistent and disciplined base-building that contest for power.

They also tend to be led by college-educated personalities who live in big cities and are disconnected from a working-class base.

Taken together, these developments underscore both the enduring political significance of oppressed nationality movements and the depth of the challenges they are facing. The left must take seriously the challenge of rebuilding oppressed nationality organization and leadership—not just as a moral imperative, but as a strategic necessity. No anti-fascist united front or Third Reconstruction project is possible without the organized, leading participation of the oppressed nationality movements—whose histories of resistance remain one of our greatest sources of strength and possibility.

6.3 The Labor Movement: Resurgence, Resistance and Challenges

The last several years have seen a surge of worker militancy, renewed organizing, and growing popular support for unions. A new generation of organizers and leaders has emerged, animated by a class-consciousness shaped by racialized economic precarity, pandemic exposure, and political polarization. The resurgence of labor has been particularly visible among workers in education, logistics and delivery sectors, health care, and fast food. The labor movement is in motion—but not yet aligned, scaled, or consolidated enough to fully meet the moment.

The period from 2020 to 2024 produced more strikes than in any year since 2002, along with a series of highly visible labor actions that reshaped public discourse—from the UAW's "Stand Up" strike against the Big Three automakers, to the mass organizing efforts at Amazon and Starbucks, to successful public sector campaigns across the South and Southwest. There has been a dramatic increase in NLRB petitions for union representation—up 35% between October 2023 and April 2024—reflecting a trend that has been growing for the past three years. Surveys suggest that 70% of the US people have a favorable view of unions, and national polling has found that nearly half of all nonunion workers (an additional 60 million) say they would join one if they could. The rising level of economic insecurity faced by younger workers, coupled with an improved legal environment for union organizing under Biden and several high-profile strikes, have led to organizing initiative coming largely from below.

Despite the headlines, union density (the percentage of the workforce that is unionized) has remained largely stagnant. Yet absolute membership has grown, and more importantly, labor's strategic imagination has begun to expand. Efforts like Bargaining for the Common Good, rank-and-file-led strikes, and increasingly popular calls to organize the South show that sections of labor are experimenting with a more insurgent, social justice-oriented model of unionism. The UAW's new leadership has launched an ambitious organizing drive targeting Southern auto and battery plants and is organizing for nationwide Mayday 2028 strikes. AFT and NEA's alliance in the Fairfax Education Unions' Virginia campaign led in 2024 to the largest public sector union victory in 25 years. CWA has expanded its "United Campus Workers" model into a Southeast mega-local. SEIU's Union of Southern Service Workers is attempting to blend pre-majority organizing with worker center-style strategy. In the Twin Cities, SEIU Local 26 has anchored a

community-labor front that combines political education, mutual aid, strike support, and multiracial coalition work in one of the most ambitious regional efforts to date. And SEIU, with its two million members and aggressive organizing program, rejoined the AFL-CIO. In addition, there is continuing organizing outside the framework of the National Labor Relations Act, especially among oppressed nationality and undocumented workers, through organizations such as the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and the Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN).

Labor's role in responding to broader political crises has also begun to shift. In the wake of the Gaza genocide, unions including UE, UAW, APWU, NNU, IUPAT, AFA-CWA, and large SEIU and UFCW locals signed on to Labor for a Ceasefire—a major breakthrough in anti-imperialist labor organizing that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier.

Nevertheless, the labor movement will be seriously tested in the coming period. The National Labor Board's *Cemex* decision, a major boon to organizing, may not survive Trump-friendly federal courts, and unions cannot expect the same kind of sympathetic treatment from an NLRB dominated by Trump appointees. More serious is the impact of the Trump/Musk regime's drastic downsizing and headlong privatization of the federal government, at a cost of tens of thousands of union jobs along with the (attempted) elimination of collective bargaining rights for nearly a million federal workers. When coupled with cuts to health care and higher education and Republican-proposed cuts to Medicaid, these actions will have significant downstream effects on state and municipal public sector unions (especially in bargaining over health care costs), on the working class as a whole, and especially on Black workers (and Black women workers in particular), who are historically overrepresented in public sector jobs.

In response to the breathtakingly broad attack on federal workers, we've seen growing public support for them and their unions. There has been mounting labor resistance, including the rapid growth of the Federal Unionists Network and increasing militancy among some federal unions. Yet despite these strong reactions, some labor leaders have sought accommodation with the Trump administration, while others remain cautious or ambivalent about public confrontation. Many national unions remain risk-averse, bound by internal bureaucracies, legal constraints, or alignment with centrist political actors. Union organizing remains disproportionately centered in the public sector, with limited inroads in private industry. Coordination across states and locals is inconsistent. Few unions are investing deeply in cadre development or long-term political education. Labor's engagement with reproductive justice and queer and trans rights has remained uneven. And labor's internationalism is being sorely tested by Trump's tariffs. At the same time, we've seen a ramping up of immigrant worker defense by SEIU, UNITE HERE, UAW, and many other unions. And we've seen many unions rise to defend the civil rights of their LGBTQ members, even as some union leaders advise us to avoid so-called "cultural" issues.

To address these contradictions, we need to strengthen a left labor core. Within left labor, there are many, often competing strains: the Labor Notes/Kim Moody "rank and file strategy" caucus-building approach, the Jane McAlevey structure-tested deep organizing model, Eric

Blanc's "worker to worker" theory, the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee's (EWOC's) "distributed grassroots organizing program," the Bargaining for the Common Good labor-community framework, the social justice "political power unionism" model, and more. There are overlaps and tensions among all these tendencies, and each approach has something to contribute to the rebuilding of the labor movement and a viable left within it.

But for those who seek to build a Third Reconstruction bloc with an engaged, fighting labor movement at its core to contest for leadership of our multiracial pro-democratic front, the social justice "political power unionism" approach is essential. Social justice-minded forces critical to cohering such a bloc are organized and active within the CWA, the UAW, SEIU, the Painters (IUPAT), UNITE HERE, the UE, the USW, the APWU, NUHW, NNU, the AAUP, the AFT, the NEA, and others. In particular, advanced forces include (but are not limited to) SEIU 1199NE (healthcare, higher ed and nursing homes), the San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel, SEIU Local 26 and Twin Cities teachers unions, Chicago Teachers Union, United Teachers of Los Angeles, sections of UAW and UNITE HERE, United Campus Workers (CWA), North Carolina Association of Educators, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and UFCW 3000. Since early 2024, we've also seen the emergence of labor-based efforts such as the National Labor Network for Ceasefire and Standing for Democracy.

Since mid-2023, there has been an ongoing attempt to pull many of these forces and others into a new labor left formation. It has worked on a number of projects, including Labor for Ceasefire, an anti-authoritarian education curriculum, activities at the Democratic Party Convention, and nationwide community-labor organizing for Mayday 2028. It is a promising effort which deserves support and participation and also requires much greater strategic direction and infrastructure.

Many on the left look to the labor movement to anchor the nationwide resistance to the ascendant authoritarian rule of the New Confederacy. Unions, by and large, are where many of the most progressive sections of the multinational working class are found. The labor movement alone—whatever its weaknesses—has the numbers, diverse membership, infrastructure, self-funding, and strategic capacity required to provide the kind of mass anchor necessary to defeat our enemy. The left must take seriously the need to deepen strategic clarity, infrastructure, and alignment within labor. Only then can labor move from symbolic resistance to strategic leadership in the fight against the New Confederacy. We must help build the connective tissue between organizing drives, develop shared political analysis, and advance union leaders and staff who can help cohere a democratic, militant, multiracial/multinational labor left capable of leading the front to defeat autocracy, deepen democracy, and win a Third Reconstruction.

6.4 Oppressed Gender Movements: Resilience and Retrenchment in a Revanchist Era

Over the past years, the terrain of gender has become one of the most active and contested sites in the authoritarian project of the New Confederacy—and one of the most important fields of resistance. Gender liberation struggles include a variety of movement sectors and a wide

range of actors: from small, militant grassroots networks to large, well-funded nonprofits; from unions and mutual aid groups to legal organizations and electoral coalitions. This diversity reflects real reach and potential—but also significant fragmentation. Below we outline some specific developments by movement sector before attempting to generalize a few common themes and trends.

Queer and trans organizing. Few social groups have made as rapid a set of advances as LGBTQ+ Americans did in the 2010s, and few have faced as swift and relentless a backlash. Queer and trans movements are grappling with that reality. There is a deepening divide between large, grasstops LGBTQ+ organizations stuck in outdated advocacy frameworks and small but resilient grassroots networks primarily focused on care and community defense, Mainstream LGBTQ+ groups like the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) remain focused on lobbying and litigation strategies that—while successful at helping win major legal victories in the 2010s—are inadequate to combat the counter-assault on trans and queer communities today. These groups largely lack a power-building strategy and have been ineffective at organizing rallies, protests, mass mobilization, or effective communications. Legal groups like Lambda Legal and the ACLU are fighting important court battles against anti-trans laws and executive orders, but these defensive legal efforts are not accompanied by an organizing strategy. Meanwhile grassroots networks are practicing strong mutual aid work within trans and queer communities, with a focus on providing DIY medication, gender-affirming care, and material support. The scale of this grassroots organizing is all the more impressive given these networks typically lack mainstream institutional and financial support. But the focus of these efforts, too, is largely defensive. In an earlier era, radical groups like ACT UP connected advocacy efforts, grassroots community care, and militant direct action. Today, there is a deeper division between the advocacy and mutual aid “arms” of the queer and trans movements; even more notable, however, has been an overall decline of direct action, mass mobilization, and militant organizing across the entire sector, amid general demoralization.

Abortion access. Abortion funds exemplify how to build out infrastructure for mass mutual aid that is autonomous from the state. Almost every state in the US has one or more abortion funds, which have formed a strong network with a long history of inter-organizational connection, collaboration, and resource-sharing. In the aftermath of the Dobbs decision, these funds have responded creatively in navigating an increasingly oppressive legal landscape while working together to ensure continued medical and material support. However, funding challenges have intensified, as risk-averse foundations have divested from abortion care in general and from states under GOP control in particular, with devastating impacts, especially in the South. This was partly balanced by a surge in individual donations in the immediate aftermath of Dobbs; in the years since, however, that upswell has ebbed significantly. Long deprioritized by institutional funders, abortion funds have benefited from individual financial support from many middle class and wealthy white women; however, this has frequently caused mainstream abortion access organizations to shy away from more “radical” positions in favor of ones more palatable to the white liberal feminist mainstream.

Reproductive justice. In response to the limitations of such mainstream white liberal feminism, women of color-led organizations launched the “reproductive justice” (RJ) movement in the 1990s to combine struggles for reproductive rights with the fight for racial justice. Subsequently, younger generations of RJ activists have expanded the framework to incorporate a deeper understanding of gender and sexual diversity and a clearer anti-capitalist politics (although the movement has always included a class analysis). A strength of the RJ movement is its radical analysis and ideological clarity, connecting bodily autonomy to racial, social, and economic self-determination within frameworks that are analytically rich, yet popularly accessible. Notable RJ organizations like SisterSong, ARC Southeast, and SPARK are rooted in and/or prioritize the US South—a region home to more than half of the US Black population and one of the key frontlines of racial, gender, and social justice struggles. As other sectors of both the progressive and radical left tend to write off the South, RJ groups have often found themselves isolated. Historically underfunded and marginalized, RJ groups gained more prominence in the wake of Black Lives Matter. Their influence grew both relative to and within more mainstream, white-led reproductive nonprofits like Planned Parenthood, and benefited from increased funding—which has, however, operated on a boom-and-bust cycle, creating new challenges.

Gender and Housing justice. Another important sector of oppressed gender struggle is the small but growing housing justice movement. Like the reproductive justice movement, the housing justice movement is grounded in inclusive, intersectional feminist principles and led by those most impacted by US capitalist, white-supremacist, and patriarchal land and housing policies. Nationally, the Right to the City Alliance and its Homes for All campaign anchor a growing network of grassroots housing groups that engage in tenant organizing, eviction defense, and popular education. These groups often connect their work to broader movements for racial, environmental, and economic justice, and in some cities, partner with labor unions in the fight for housing for all. In some areas, RTTC has played an active role in left inside/outside organizing, through an affiliated 501c4 that can take advantage of electoral cycles to foreground housing justice issues and to elect allies to local and state office. However, in the face of compounding crises like COVID, soaring inflation, and rising evictions, housing justice groups are continually pushed towards mutual aid, eviction defense, and members’ other immediate survival needs, sometimes at the expense of longer-term organizing and power-building. Many groups lack formal structures, operate without nonprofit status, or struggle to sustain long-term organizing, and in some cases are resistant to adopting formal structures that could help them be more effective.

Gender and labor. Some of the most powerful but underappreciated organizations in the struggle for gender liberation are unions whose membership is majority women and gender-oppressed people. As MAGA attacks and undermines the social safety net, workers in care-related fields including teaching and healthcare are on the front lines facing the impacts of those attacks and defending against them. These workers have the potential to be among the largest and strongest organized forces fighting back against attacks on the social safety net and fighting for the society we envision. Key sectors of the workforce are highly segregated by gender, and national and local unions and workers’ centers in highly feminized sectors are among the most progressive and forceful in the labor movement. Among these are the

AFA-CWA representing flight attendants, NNU and 1199SEIU representing nurses and other healthcare staff, NDWA representing domestic workers, and segments of the teachers unions, especially UTLA, CTU, and NCAE. These unions are increasingly embracing frameworks like social justice unionism and bargaining for the common good, which connect workplace demands to broader fights around care, education, housing, and public infrastructure. However, internal contradictions within labor remain: many unions still do not fully recognize gender struggle as central to their mission, and racism, misogyny, and transphobia continue to surface in many sectors of the labor movement within both leadership and rank-and-file culture.

The diversity of the oppressed gender movements renders it difficult to generalize across sectors. Still, surveying this heterogeneous terrain, a number of common trends begin to appear.

Many sectors of the gender liberation movements have developed increasingly sharp theoretical frameworks that understand race, class, gender, and sexuality not as identity claims, but as interlocking systems of power. At its best, this intersectionality is not just theoretical but practical, with many groups collaborating both within their own movement and across sectors. The intersection of gender with many other fronts of struggle—labor, housing, racial justice, education—creates organic opportunities for gender justice groups to build unity with other groups both strategically and practically. And as the New Confederacy ramps up its attacks on gender and sexuality, gender justice groups have an opportunity to assume a greater leadership role in the broader anti-fascist resistance. Amid a general societal decline of grassroots member-driven organizations, some of the most developed grassroots organizing is happening within oppressed gender movements—whether we think of networked abortion funds, trans and queer mutual aid networks, or militant nurses' and teachers' union locals.

At the same time, the oppressed gender movements face major challenges. Many of these sectors—especially trans, abortion access, and RJ organizations—are among the most targeted by the far right, facing doxxing, criminalization, divestment, and demoralization. Notably, there is a sharp disconnect between small, underfunded grassroots groups with deep ties to impacted communities and large, well-resourced nonprofits that often lack accountability to a mass base, yet set the narrative and policy agenda. The larger groups frequently make pragmatist errors and often focus on legislative, lobbying, and advocacy efforts incapable of meeting this political moment. Many of the smaller groups have a more radical power analysis, but are often ambivalent about power-building: divided on the need for long-term base-building that can contest for governing power, and prone to left sectarianism. Decades after Jo Freeman wrote her critique of the "tyranny of structurelessness," many oppressed gender groups also remain ambivalent about structure itself, at times impeding their ability to scale effectively. An exception to this is some of the more militant unions with a majority oppressed-gender membership; at their best, these groups combine a structural power analysis with clear structure-based organizing models to build power and lead the resistance.

6.5 Climate and Ecological Justice: Strategic Gains, Strategic Uncertainty

After nearly three decades of growing mass movements for climate and ecological justice (CJ/EJ), which succeeded in establishing carbon emissions reduction as a central global policy goal and won major environmental justice reforms in the US, the CJ/EJ movement today faces serious challenges. These challenges not only limit the possibility of further ecological progress, but also threaten to unravel years of hard-won gains.

Beginning in the mid-2010s, the CJ/EJ movement in the US experienced a major surge in activity. The resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock catalyzed national attention, while groups like Sunrise Movement and Climate Justice Alliance were able to mobilize many thousands to demand sweeping reforms to climate and energy policy. Movement forces shifted from leading local resistance efforts to converging around a shared vision of structural transformation. Their demands ranged from land reform and protections for disenfranchised farmers to electrification, renewable energy deployment, and public control of energy infrastructure. This vision coalesced into what became known as the Green New Deal (GND). While CJ/EJ groups articulated different variations of the program, the vast majority aligned with the GND framework. Though it originated in the US, the GND gained international resonance, influencing environmental platforms among center-left parties and movements in Europe and South America.

In the US, the GND gained enough traction to become a leading political and policy framework within the Pro-Democracy United Front. It offered a more ambitious and justice-centered alternative to the "Environmental, Social, and Governance" (ESG) framework promoted by centrist forces—who acknowledged the climate crisis but remained committed to market-centered approaches. Following the 2020 election, the Biden-Harris administration attempted to integrate elements of both programs into its legislative agenda. The result was the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), passed in 2022. The IRA included major climate and energy provisions: tax credits for green industries, subsidies for renewable energy and electric vehicles, and the creation of a “green bank” to support decarbonization. Additionally, in an earnest attempt to meet CJ/EJ demands and consolidate movement support for the Biden-Harris administration, the IRA embraced the Justice40 initiatives put forward by movement forces to address energy burdens and environmental injustices faced by oppressed nationality peoples within the US.

Overall, the IRA was seen as a major victory for and as the culmination of decades of campaigning by the CJ/EJ movement alongside other green forces, despite its limitations. It represented the largest climate investment in US history and reflected years of sustained organizing. By the end of the Biden-Harris administration, the IRA program was still being rolled out and there were many factors delaying the investments provisioned in the bill. Kamala Harris embraced the IRA as a central part of her 2024 campaign platform.

Since Trump has been reelected, all the IRA and Justice40 initiatives are being targeted for destruction, in line with the program of “Project 2025” embraced by the New Confederacy. The undoing of "Bidenomics" and climate policy reflects a sharp rightward turn in federal governance and a crisis for CJ/EJ strategy. The vision of the GND (and even ESG) was focused on addressing climate change at a global scale through decarbonization of the largest carbon-emitting economies. But explosive geopolitical conflicts over the past few years have thrown the international liberal world order—the framework on which mutual decarbonization via the Paris Accords stands—into crisis, putting efforts towards decarbonization at major risk. With Trump back in power, it is unlikely that CJ/EJ movements will bear much influence over federal policy in the US.

Climate and ecological justice movements now find themselves in a difficult conjuncture. So, these movements are forced to rethink their strategy in conjunction with those forces rising to the defense of anti-racist democracy against growing authoritarianism. Changing from momentum to intense friction at whiplash pace has put CJ/EJ movements on their back foot, figuring out where to regroup and how to move forward.

Amid this uncertainty, some patterns are emerging. Disruptive actions targeting fossil fuel companies and polluters are likely to continue. Pipeline resistance, anti-deforestation campaigns, and struggles over local environmental regulation will remain flashpoints—especially as MAGA forces move to eliminate oversight and governance. Many CJ/EJ groups may shift toward more localized fights, given the inaccessibility of national or international levers in the short term. These local struggles could become training grounds for developing advanced forces, surfacing contradictions within the MAGA bloc, and anchoring new coalitional possibilities for the Third Reconstruction.

In Memphis, for example, Black-led environmental justice groups are resisting a newly opened data center tied to Elon Musk’s xAI project. The facility relies on methane-spewing natural gas generators and subsidized power from the Tennessee Valley Authority, polluting a majority-Black community. In more favorable terrains, like New York, reform remains possible: the 2023 Build Public Renewables Act committed all state-owned buildings to run on renewables by 2030, guaranteed union jobs, and offered retraining for displaced fossil fuel workers. Such examples offer a glimpse of what’s still possible at the state and local levels.

Looking ahead, the CJ/EJ movements may play a critical role in reorienting the democratic front. If they can regroup and align with other sectors—particularly organized labor, oppressed nationality movements and oppressed gender organizations—climate and environmental justice movements could play a major role in cohering a progressive bloc capable of challenging MAGA and shaping a post-neoliberal political agenda rooted in a Third Reconstruction. The next phase of climate justice organizing will depend on whether these movements can weather the current storm—and rise to meet the next one.

6.6 The Inside/Outside Trend and the Development of Independent Political Infrastructure

Over the past decade, many of the most grounded and strategic sectors of the US left have come to embrace an inside/outside orientation rooted in independent political organizations (IPOs): primarily local and state-level vehicles that combine base-building and issue organizing with a coherent electoral strategy. These formations are not simply campaign engines—they aim to serve as strategic vehicles for the political aspirations of the oppressed nationalities, oppressed-gender people and the multiracial/multinational working class. Early innovators of this strategy like New Virginia Majority, Florida New Majority and the Ohio Organizing Collaborative have helped inspire the formation of many state-wide IPOs, especially since 2016, including the Carolina Federation, Down Home NC, Tennessee For All,, Florida Rising, and many more. At a local level, there has likewise been a proliferation of experiments with IPO formations such as the Knoxville City Council Movement, New Haven Rising, New Lynn Coalition, Reclaim Philadelphia, and the Richmond Progressive Alliance, to name only a very few. In some areas—most notably, New York—DSA has functioned like an IPO; however, this has been highly uneven within DSA nationally due to internal organizational contradictions discussed below. There has also been a critical thickening of the infrastructure within the Third Reconstruction wing of the pro-democratic front, through the growth of organizations not themselves IPOs but which support IPOs and the broader movement, such as Movement Voter Project, We Make The Future, Local Progress, and others.

At the local level, IPO projects have taken a number of different forms: from formal (often 501c4) organizations to informal collectives, to chartered chapters of larger state or national groups. At the state level, IPO-type projects have typically gravitated towards one of two poles (with a range of intermediary approaches). In some cases, IPOs have formed as new stand-alone organizations that seek to directly integrate base-building, issue organizing, and electoral work. In other cases, IPO-type projects have emerged as an umbrella for a coalition of labor and social movement organizations that seek to work together on a joint electoral strategy and policy program. In Minnesota, for example, exciting IPO work has been led by a coalition of community organizations, workers' centers, labor unions, and faith-based groups.

Each of these models has strengths and weaknesses. The coalitional approach has the advantage of breadth and buy-in, uniting multiple organized constituencies. But because a coalitional political vehicle is one step removed from direct base-building, there is a risk that it becomes disconnected from and unaccountable to a mass membership—particularly when participating coalition partners often struggle themselves to do effective base-building. The "stand-alone" IPO model bypasses this challenge by directly building and engaging a base, but sometimes at the cost of perceived insularity or friction with other longstanding organized forces. These variations reflect a key strategic tension: we need IPOs that have a broad and diverse enough social base to contend for political power, but that are disciplined and structured enough to move strategically and maintain accountability to an organized membership.

Both models have had challenges getting to scale. If existing organizations do not yet have a base that is broad and deep enough to lead a majority of popular forces in the state, then even the strongest coalition will be insufficient. At the same time, no "stand-alone" IPO has yet

succeeded at building a base of the breadth and depth necessary to lead a new political majority at the state level.

Parallel to this state-based work, the Working Families Party (WFP) has expanded to new states and played an increasingly prominent national role, especially in battleground electoral efforts. WFP's dual character—as both an electoral vehicle and a broader front of progressive forces—has made it a contested but strategically important space. For significant sections of the inside/outside trend, WFP has functioned as both a nucleus and an umbrella for the nascent Third Reconstruction "party" we need to build. Its ability to win primaries, hold electeds accountable, and project a popular alternative to neoliberalism has outpaced most other attempts at national electoral alignment.

But these advances are not without contradictions. While WFP has offered important resources—especially in electoral infrastructure and expertise—the relationship between WFP and place-based IPO, labor, and social movement organizations remains underdeveloped. Proposals to use WFP as the electoral arm of social movements have sparked serious debate. Many see the idea as promising, but under-specified and overly focused on national branding rather than grounded organizing. Others worry that aligning too closely with an organization seen as embedded within the Democratic Party will compromise their politics and vision. To some extent, this reflects strategic confusion about the nature of the Democratic "party," which is less a coherent entity than a dynamic terrain of struggle (as discussed in Section 5). But it also reflects the reality that WFP and many of our state-based IPO projects, while scaling up their electoral organizing, have not kept pace with deep base-building, leadership development, and building out of co-governance structures.

When Liberation Road adopted independent political organization as a core component of our strategy in 2016, we pointed to the example of the "Jackson Plan" spearheaded by the Malcolm X. Grassroot Movement (MXGM) in Jackson, Mississippi. As we wrote then, "the Jackson Plan articulates a clear, left view of the question of political power and the state: it is necessary to contest within the existing state through issue/policy fights and the capture of government offices and at the same time to be building institutions of participatory (what Harnecker would call protagonist) democracy." However, the connection of struggles "inside" the state and "outside" in civil society has proven fraught for most groups that have sought to emulate the Jackson model. While a variety of grassroots groups continue to experiment with people's assemblies and solidarity economies, few have managed to connect these efforts to a sophisticated electoral strategy. Meanwhile, many of the IPO projects with which our members have been involved have made great strides around electoral strategy—and some have won important policy fights at the level of local and state government—but the parallel process of building organs of direct democracy has generally remained underdeveloped.

As a result, our most sophisticated electoral work has outpaced the development of organization and democratization at the level of civil society. In cases where IPOs have managed to elect left candidates, this has often produced contradictions, as these elected officials became accountable to a mass base much broader than even our most successful base-building

organizations, but with much more underdeveloped, confused, and contradictory politics. At times this has resulted in left-progressive electeds taking bolder stances than their electorate was ready to support, contributing to losing subsequent elections; at other times, to these electeds adopting more moderate stances than IPOs wished to advance, contributing to disillusionment among our base. There have been increasing efforts towards co-governance at a local level as well as in some states, like Minnesota. In New York, DSA's "Socialists in Office" program provides support to elected socialists, and WFP often supports endorsed electeds with regular meetings, contributing to the gradual emergence of something like a progressive caucus structure at the state level. Overall, however, our IPOs have struggled to develop the collective capacity and strategic competencies to consistently support elected allies in navigating the complexities of office, contributing to the isolation of movement candidates once elected.

Meanwhile, as the establishment wing of our united front has lost coherence and legitimacy, our IPOs have found themselves playing an increasing role in waging general election struggles—but without control of the "commanding heights" where strategic decisions are made. The 2024 election made this contradiction more visible. In key swing states like North Carolina and Pennsylvania, IPOs and aligned grassroots organizations anchored the ground game—often more effectively than the Democratic Party itself. With support from national efforts like Seed the Vote, movement-led place-based efforts increased coordination, scaled infrastructure, and helped hold the line in terms of turnout. In contrast to the sharp Democratic drop-offs in other parts of the country, these states saw either stable or increased turnout. Yet the contradiction was stark: while progressive IPOs led the voter engagement strategy on the ground, they had little influence over the public narrative, media ecosystem, or campaign messaging—what some described as "owning the doors, but not the air."

Across all these fronts, the IPO front remains among the most promising, if underdeveloped, experiments of this period. Yet IPOs still suffer from a lack of shared infrastructure, national narrative coordination, and consistent investment. IPOs have shown they can recruit and train candidates, mobilize tens of thousands of voters, and coordinate with labor and movement allies. But too often, these projects operate in isolation—without the connective tissue needed to scale into something greater.

If we are serious about building a Third Reconstruction, we must treat the electoral front not as an accessory, but as a core site of struggle—where we contest for ideas, for legitimacy, and for material control. The road to power will not run through the Democratic Party as it currently exists—but it will run through the terrain the party occupies. The Democratic Party is not a coherent political organization, but rather a coalition of forces—some progressive, some regressive, some simply opportunistic. To navigate that terrain effectively, we will need independent political formations that function like a party for our side: organizations that are rooted in deep base-building, capable of long-term strategy, and clear about their role in contesting both within and beyond electoral politics. Simultaneously, we need to engage in a parallel process of democratization at the level of civil society: building people's assemblies, workplace democracy, and other mechanisms of direct democratic decision-making. IPOs, at their best, are the embryos of such formations—vehicles capable of organizing our forces

across terrains, shaping popular consciousness and public policy, and building the power of the oppressed nationality and oppressed gender movements and the multiracial/multinational working class.

6.7 The Socialist Left and the Need for a Socialist Core

Surveying the developments outlined above, three key challenges for our movements emerge. Across our movements:

1. There are too few organized mass membership organizations working at the size and scale we need.
2. There is too little coordination, collaboration and connective tissue.
3. There is too little strategic consolidation, with many “left errors” (sectarianism, ultra-left politics) and “right errors” (tailism, pragmatism).

To address these challenges, Liberation Road has argued that we need a stronger, more coherent socialist “core.” By that we do not mean anyone who self-identifies as “socialist.” Unfortunately, many sectors of the US socialist left are only weakly connected to effective mass base-building, organizationally insular, and strategically prone to ultra-leftism. Instead, the core we need to build must be rooted within and helping to lead effective mass movement organizations, working across movement sectors to increase alignment, and strategically clear.

Throughout this period, one of the central strategic tasks taken up by Liberation Road has been to help cohere such a socialist core. The need for this has only grown clearer in recent years, as authoritarian threats have escalated and the limitations of fragmented and siloed left formations have become more visible. Our 2022 Strategic Orientation named the consolidation of this socialist core—strategically, programmatically, and organizationally—as our central responsibility for the period.

Efforts to cohere this trend have made some significant advances, even if they have not yet yielded a shared organizational form. Across a number of formations—Liberation Road, North Star Socialist Organization (NSSO), DSA’s Socialist Majority Caucus and Groundwork, the Communist Party USA, Convergence, and sections of the Rising Majority coalition and State Power Caucus—there is growing strategic convergence around key elements: the centrality of racial capitalism and white supremacy as structural targets, the need for a broad united front to block authoritarianism, and the strategic necessity of contesting for governing power. That convergence was visible in the widespread adoption of the “Block and Build” framework for the 2024 elections, adopted by many of the formations named above as well as by larger mass organizations like the Working Families Party and the Black Lives Matter PAC. This reflects a broader reality: while no single formation has succeeded in consolidating the Left programmatically or organizationally, many of us are now operating with shared strategic assumptions and in overlapping movement projects.

Other developments point to a trend in motion, even if not yet coherent. The 2024 Rising Majority Congress marked an important moment of attempted alignment for social movements. While the gathering did not resolve major questions of organizational unity or shared program, it nonetheless reflected a deeper political coherence than any comparable space in recent years. In a different lane, Grassroots Power Project (GPP) has functioned as the closest thing our "trend" has to a think tank—supporting ideological alignment at the national level, and playing a key behind-the-scenes role in organizational alignment efforts in states like Florida, Colorado, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The labor left project has the potential to play a similar role within the labor movement—developing a left "pole" within key unions and experimenting with coordination around Mayday and other moments—although its lack of clear leadership structure has meant the space has often been shaped by what some have called a "tyranny of structurelessness." Meanwhile Convergence has become an important outlet to reflect on and connect these diverse terrains of struggle.

Liberation Road has played an active and consistent role in this process. Our Left Relations team has led bilateral work with most of these key organizations and helped initiate moments of collective strategic intervention. One example came during the 2024 Socialism Conference, where we co-led a session with SMC and North Star on the urgent need to block MAGA and defeat Trump. That session helped push clarity around the stakes of the election at a time when parts of the left were still unsure and vacillating. We followed that by hosting a national online version of the event with Convergence, and then joined Convergence in organizing a post-election call for socialist, labor, and movement leaders across the trend. We are now helping organize follow-up calls to build that into a regular space for coordination.

At a local, state, and sectoral level, many of Liberation Road's cadre members have worked to help cohere aligned leadership both with the self-identified socialist left and, especially, within and across IPOs, unions, and social movement organizations. We have seen some success in organized labor—an area where our cadre are heavily concentrated—and in the US South—a strategic priority for our organization. We have been excited to continue deepening relationships with aligned caucuses and forces within DSA, at both a national and local level. We also explored organizational unification with North Star Socialist Organization, a new cadre formation which emerged out of the Socialist Organization and Strategy (SOS) process, which we had helped to facilitate. While we were disappointed that NSSO opted not to pursue organizational unity at this time, we were excited to collaborate with many of their new members around 2024 electoral deployments, and have continued to coordinate with their leadership, with whom we share deep strategic alignment.

But none of this has yet added up to the kind of durable, mass-based, strategically aligned movement infrastructure required to wield greater influence within our broad front. At best, we have increased coordination within movement "galaxies"—but those galaxies remain largely isolated from each other. Many of these spaces of coordination also remain far too distant from on-the-ground base-building. At the same time, our forces leading the most grounded and effective base-building are often so focused on maintaining their own operations that they struggle to step into broader alignment work and political leadership roles.

Across multiple fronts, we remain caught between the scale of the authoritarian threat and the insufficiency of our current infrastructure. Left and progressive forces continue to respond to crises with new tables and coalitions—Fightback, Frontline, Time to Act—but despite good intentions these often duplicate existing efforts without consolidating or cohering them. Meanwhile, the far right is consolidating. The New Confederacy is running a coherent play. They are building a political vehicle to govern. We are still trying to figure out who we are and how we relate to one another.

The socialist left, in particular, faces a stark choice. We can either remain a collection of loosely affiliated networks and tendencies, each doing important but partial work. Or we can take seriously the need to cohere—not in name alone, but through shared structure, practice, and accountability. The “Block and Build” framework developed in 2024 was an important step, as were other developments outlined above. But those foundations are not yet stable. And they will not become so through summits or slogans alone. They will become stable only through ongoing shared work, strategic coordination, and ultimately, organizational unification.

This is not a time to retreat or hunker down. Nor is it a time for either self-congratulation or despair. It is a time for honest assessment, strategic courage, and disciplined collective work. The raw materials for a major political realignment are here. The question is whether we can forge them into something that doesn’t just resist, but builds the power to lead a process of structural transformation, both inside the terrain of the state and across civil society. The Third Reconstruction will not build itself. But it can be built—if we do the work to build it.

GLOSSARY

Cisheteropatriarchy - Our society's systemic hierarchy of gender and sexuality with white, cisgender, heterosexual men at the top. It is white supremacist and capitalist in nature, which is why many use the phrase white supremacist capitalist cisheteropatriarchy. The term denotes the intersection of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity and emphasizes the connections between the oppression of all oppressed gender people.

Fascism - fascism is a radical movement for the elimination of capitalist democracy. Its mass component is based largely on the middle strata (sometimes referred to as the petty bourgeoisie in revolt), and in the US the white middle strata in particular. Such movements emerge during periods of political, economic, and ideological crisis, though not all such periods necessarily result in the emergence of fascism. Fascism is militaristic, racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic. It promotes a radical vision based on myths about the past and the path forward for the "chosen" or the "pure," a vision which in the US is rooted in white supremacy, xenophobia, and patriarchy. In power, fascism suppresses all dissent and sees itself as above the rule of law. A reorganization of the hegemonic capitalist bloc may be facilitated through fascism when some capitalist class fractions feel blocked by the state bureaucracy and by other competing segments of capital.

Hegemony - A concept first developed by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to describe the ways in which a dominant social group maintains its control over society, not only through overt force or coercion, but through the subtle imposition of its values, norms, and beliefs as the cultural "common sense." In this process, the ruling class's worldview becomes so pervasive and normalized that it is accepted by the majority of people, including those who are disadvantaged by it, as the natural or inevitable way things are. This creates a situation where the power structures and inequalities in society are maintained without widespread resistance, as they are often perceived as just and legitimate. Hegemony is not static; it requires continuous reinforcement and adaptation to address emerging challenges or contradictions. It is also contested by subordinate groups, who may develop "counter-hegemonic" ideas and movements aimed at exposing and resisting the dominance of the ruling class's ideology. This makes hegemony a dynamic and contested process, reflecting the struggles for power and influence in society.

Interregnum - The term comes from a Latin phrase meaning between regimes or "reigns," and originally referred to the gap between the death of one monarch and the coronation of the next—an ambiguous period during which it was not clear where power and authority resided. Under capitalism, Gramsci repurposed the term to refer to a period when the existing hegemonic structures had failed, but it was not yet clear what new ones could take their place. Interregnums often give rise to sharp social contradictions, competing visions of the future, and heightened potential for both progressive and reactionary forces to shape what comes next.

Keynesianism - An economic theory and policy approach developed by British economist John Maynard Keynes during the 1930s, which argues that active government intervention (through public spending, taxation, and monetary policy) is necessary to manage economic cycles, reduce unemployment, and stimulate demand during downturns. Keynesianism opposes the idea that free markets alone can ensure full employment or economic stability, emphasizing instead the role of the state in sustaining economic growth and social welfare. After the interregnum of the 1930s (a period marked by economic depression and world war) Keynesianism became the hegemonic paradigm in the capitalist world system from 1945 until the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement in 1971.

Left sectarianism - refers to a tendency within leftist movements to prioritize ideological purity, narrow organizational interests, or rigid theoretical frameworks over political impact, broad social struggle and mass line. Sectarian forces often isolate themselves from potential allies by dismissing or denouncing other groups on the left as insufficiently radical, reformist, or compromised. In practice, left sectarianism can manifest as:

- Refusal to participate in united front efforts with broader social forces;
- Overemphasis on internal ideological disputes at the expense of confronting the primary political enemy;
- Elevation of a single organization's goals or priorities as the sole legitimate path forward;
- Undervaluing or ignoring the actual consciousness, lived experiences, and self-activity of working-class or oppressed communities.

Natalism - Refers to a policy paradigm that uses the powers of the state to enforce or incentivize child-bearing and parenthood. Fueled by fears of demographic and cultural change, right-wing forces use natalism to promote so-called “traditional” (heterosexual, patriarchal) families and to punish those who deviate from these norms.

Nativism - In a narrow sense, refers to preferential policies for native-born citizens over and against immigrants. In an expanded sense, nativism promotes the interests of the nation’s “own people” against those depicted as “outside” the nation, group, or tribe—a division which can be constructed on racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or other grounds.

Neo-fascism - Neo-fascism refers to post-World War II movements and ideologies that revive key elements of historical fascism—such as ultranationalism, scapegoating of marginalized groups, anti-democratic impulses, and the glorification of violence—but often without adopting overtly fascist symbols or rhetoric. Neo-fascist movements frequently operate within formal democratic systems while seeking to hollow them out from within, using law-and-order appeals, conspiracist narratives, and strongman politics to consolidate power.

Neoliberalism: Neoliberalism emerged in the late 20th century as a reaction against the postwar welfare state and Keynesian economic models. It involves a deep ideological focus on individualism, individual liberty and competition; an economic focus on deregulated markets, privatization of the public sphere, and financialization; and a political focus on using the powers

of the state—whether democratic or authoritarian—in full service of the market, privatization, and international capital penetration. In ideology and policy, neoliberalism gained strength in response to the global economic and political crises of the 1970s, as the 40-year Keynesian consensus ran aground amid stagnation and worldwide national liberation struggles. While often associated with figures like Reagan and Thatcher, neoliberalism has been advanced across political parties and remains a still-powerful force in global capitalism, even as its legitimacy has been challenged amid deepening crises.

New Confederacy: The white united front which has grown over more than forty years into a powerful alliance of the most reactionary factions of capital, ardent white supremacists, nativists, right-wing populists, and neo-fascists, with a mass base in white middle strata, white rural sectors, and some white sections of the multiracial/multi-national working class. Its main aim is the preservation of the white republic, the Republican Party is its political instrument, and the foundation of its power lies in control of state governments—particularly, though not exclusively, in the South.

Oppressed Genders - Refers to people whose labor, bodies, sexualities, and gender expression are systematically devalued, exploited, and controlled on the basis of the gendered and sexual hierarchies of cisheteropatriarchal racial capitalism. This includes cis women, trans and nonbinary people, two-spirit people, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and others whose gender or sexuality places them outside the dominant norms of cisheteropatriarchy. In our analysis, gender is not simply a personal identity but a social relationship shaped by power, labor, and ideology. Gender oppression is material—it is about how labor is organized, how care work is exploited, and how state violence enforces conformity. But it is also ideological, reinforced through culture, religion, and law to naturalize hierarchies and justify domination. For more analysis, see our organizational "Points of Unity on Gender Liberation"

Oppressed Nationalities - A term that refers to populations that have been *racialized*—that is, subjected to systemic forms of racist and/or national oppression rooted in the historical development of US capitalism, settler colonialism, and imperialism. These groups experience structural oppression as distinct peoples or communities with shared histories of exploitation, dispossession, and resistance. There are two broad categories of oppressed nationalities:

1. **Historically constituted, multiclass national groups**, which can be considered oppressed *nations* within the territory claimed by the US. These include peoples forcibly incorporated into the US, including Indigenous peoples of the US mainland, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Hawaiians, and Indigenous peoples from other US-occupied territories like Guam. We also consider African-Americans a "nation," that is, a people distinct from all others, bonded together in the Black Belt South over the course of centuries of constant, brutal, systematic oppression and resistance.

2. **Racialized immigrant communities**, including those who have migrated voluntarily or under conditions shaped by US imperialism and global inequality. These include many Latine communities from outside US territories and various Asian and Pacific Islander

> populations. Though their experiences differ from those of colonized or enslaved peoples, they are still subjected to racialized labor exploitation, criminalization, and political exclusion.

In addition, the framework of oppressed nationalities includes populations who may not fit neatly into traditional definitions of race or nationality but are nonetheless racialized and targeted—such as Arab and Muslim communities, who face Islamophobia and racialized surveillance. This term is used in our political analysis to highlight the centrality of oppressed nationality struggles in the broader fight against the New Confederacy. For more context, see our organizational "Unity Statement on Racism, National Oppression, Self-Determination, and Strategy for US Socialism."

Populism - A form of politics that juxtaposes "the people" against "the elite" and sides with the former. Because there are multiple ways of defining both "the people" and "the elite," the content of this politics depends on how this distinction is defined. Forms of left-wing populism provide progressive definitions of "the people" that include the multiracial working class, oppressed nationalities, immigrants, religious and other minorities, and other oppressed groups. Forms of right-wing populism define "the people" in ways that exclude oppressed groups.

Pragmatism: In politics, community organizing and labor organizing, pragmatism refers to practices that prioritize the short-term, immediate factors of a given circumstance over broader ideological, political or ethical considerations. In the context of community organizing, the term is associated with the Alinskyite organizing model, with its focus on "winnable demands" and relatively apolitical single-issue campaigns rather than larger systemic problems or structural transformation. In labor, the term refers to apolitical models of union organizing that eschew social justice unionism in favor of pragmatic accommodation with management, employers and capital.

Revanchism - From the French word *revanche*, meaning "revenge," revanchism refers to a political tendency driven by the desire to reclaim perceived losses—of territory, power, status, or cultural dominance. In the context of US politics, revanchism often takes the form of reactionary efforts to "take back" the country from those imagined to have usurped it—women, people of color, immigrants, queer and trans people, or the Left. It is closely linked to ethno-nationalism, patriarchy, and nostalgia for a past order, whether real or mythologized. The term helps capture how authoritarian forces frame their politics not just as defense of tradition, but as righteous retaliation. In this sense, revanchism is both ideological and emotional: it fuels grievance-based politics that seek to reimpose domination by reversing the gains of liberation struggles.

Strategic Alliance - A purposeful, long-term political relationship between distinct social forces—such as classes, nationalities, organizations, or movements—formed to advance shared objectives against a common enemy or to shift the balance of power in society. In the framework of Liberation Road's united front strategy, we often use the term *strategic alliance* to refer specifically to the long-term project of uniting the organized movements of the multiracial/multinational working class and the oppressed nationalities in the US. This alliance is

considered the fundamental axis for defeating the forces of the New Confederacy, dismantling racial capitalism, and building a just, democratic, and socialist society. This alliance is “strategic” because it brings together, based on the historically-constituted form of capitalist rule in this country, the two most potentially revolutionary social forces needed to overthrow the specific US version of racial capitalism: the multiracia/multinational working class and the oppressed nationalities. The unity of these forces is essential to any transformative project capable of overcoming both capitalist exploitation and national oppression.

Trifecta: A state government trifecta describes single party government where one political party holds the governorship, a majority in the state senate, and a majority in the state house.

Triplex: A state government triplex exists when one political party holds the following three positions in a state's government: governor, attorney general, and secretary of state.

United Front: The term “united front” is used in different ways by different traditions within the socialist left. In our tradition, the united front does not refer to a conscious coalition of working-class socialist organizations, as the term is used by many Trotskyists. Instead, we use the term to refer to the objective unity of the broadest possible array of social forces united by their opposition to a common enemy. As such, united fronts include forces with differing ideologies, constituencies, and political priorities—what unites them is not total agreement, but a shared *direction of travel* toward a common immediate objective. In our current time, place, and conditions, our united front includes all those strongly or weakly opposed to the political project of the MAGA New Confederacy. Leftists have a dual responsibility within this united front: to strengthen the broad front itself, and to build the independent power of its left pole, rooted in the organized movements of the working class and oppressed nationalities and genders. Engaging in a united front does *not* mean collapsing into liberal politics or erasing principled disagreement. On the contrary, our role includes contesting for leadership, deepening mass understanding, and putting forward a strategic and emancipatory vision that liberal and centrist forces cannot offer. For more information see our United Front Policy.