Peter Gelderloos
Long Term Resistance
Fighting Trump and Liberal Co-option
2017

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communal ways. This will help us survive in struggle, support intergenerational communities of resistance, develop a greater theoretical maturity… and to paraphrase a Mapuche comrade, we can't sabotage the State's infrastructures if we depend on them.

These constructive projects will be harder for capitalism to recuperate (think alternative businesses, co-ops, organic farms) if they are inextricably tied to a practice of criticism and attack against power on the deepest levels, blockading airports, opening borders, supporting prisoners, going on strike, sabotaging new technologies, fighting racists (those with hoods and those with badges), stopping pipelines, and delegitimizing authority in our daily lives.

Such a combination constitutes a sincere response to the dangers we face, during and after a Trump presidency, and it also gives us the chance to create our own long-term solutions, rather than being extras in someone else's play.

surprise that charismatic, hope-exploiting left-wing victories are usually followed by swings to the Right.

A critique of the Left is so important, when the obvious threat is the extreme Right, because the Left is now taking to the streets, and the powerful institutions we already mentioned—the Democratic Party, the mass media, Silicon Valley—will be doing everything they can to instrumentalize and manipulate the movement we are taking part in.

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The media want to make sure no one challenges their monopoly on the production of facts and the management of debates. The Democrats want to make sure we don't use this movement to spread practices of self-organization and autonomy, nor reveal their complicity with oppression when the elections come round. Silicon Valley wants to make sure we focus on the immigrants who are useful to the economy—and therefore continue to view them as resources rather than people—and that we don't spread critiques about how the technologies they are developing harm us and may well provide the framework for the totalitarianism of the future. And none of them want us to challenge the State, capitalism, and white supremacy at a fundamental level.

At every step of the way, we need to be thinking how to disappoint them.

In a nutshell, the combination of the self-organization of daily life with an uncompromising attack on power is the hardest to repress or recuperate. Rather than simply talking about what's wrong with the current system or making broad suggestions for a better world, we need to put anarchy into practice by liberating our vital needs from the market and fulfilling them in

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that were more anarchistic and critical of democracy, the chief difference was that Occupy was prefigurative rather than passive. They didn't demand change, they put it in practice. But when the centralized assemblies inevitably failed, a consequence of the ideological fallacy of believing there exists a difference between representative democracy and true or direct democracy, all that remains is a rejection of establishment politics and an inarticulate demand for renovation.

The leftist (as opposed to anarchist or indigenous) portion of the anti-globalization movement made a similar error. Rather than spreading deep critiques of capitalism and the State, everyone from progressives to Negrists to anti-imperialists focused their attacks on neoliberalism. This was a way for unrepentant Marxists to avoid coming to terms with historical errors, for NGOs to make fundraising appeals without sounding like Marxists, and for elitists from the Global South to play the role of victim, casting capitalism as a purely US or European phenomenon. A chief part of this narrative was how neoliberalism violated the sovereignty of poor countries through unfair trade deals. This rhetoric is now coming back to bite the Left in the ass, with the election of a new crop of world leaders who are pro-capitalist but not neoliberal. In a greater irony, the protectionist discourse of the Left actually becomes more effective when paired with the xenophobic discourse of the Right. In the media, "anti-globalization" now means Alt-Right. So many years of mobilizations, Social Forums, and making puppets, down the drain.

Last but not least, the Left paves the way for right-wing victories by systematically making promises it has no ability to keep. When SYRIZA, in Greece, becomes the administrator of the harshest austerity measures in Europe, or when Obama presides over the greatest mass deportations in US history, the suppression of the revolts against police shootings, and an increase in the wealth gap between blacks and whites, it is no

tion metrics, and so on, society will learn to accept the figure of the neutral, perfected, trustworthy technocrat.

The figure of the dictator has been delegitimized, in part thanks to our struggles. A side effect is that we have trained ourselves to be ever on the defense against dictators, at a historical moment when such a tool is becoming obsolete. In our struggles we have communicated a rejection of politicians, and popular skepticism has gone up. Ironically, someone who wasn't previously a politician won the elections. We also have the power to delegitimize the figure of the technocrat, the State itself, and the technology that makes it possible. But only if we recognize the threat, communicate it far and wide, and put our bodies on the line fighting against it. Seeking lowest-common-denominator alliances and only criticizing the aspects of capitalism and the State that are easiest to hate is the path of least resistance, but in a revolutionary struggle, taking the easy way out means digging your own grave.

When Democracy is the Problem

Already, Trump is causing Obama to go down in popular memory as a far-left progressive and not a centrist who deported millions and killed hundreds of thousands in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and elsewhere. Sure, Trump is worse than Obama in a lot of ways, but the whole point is that we should never have to make a choice between different flavors of murder and oppression. Fighting against Trump is a cynical waste of time if it helps us forget that Trump is just the visible face of a murderous system. And within this system, Right and Left work together more than anyone wants to admit.

The Tea Party and the Occupy Movement, in making claims to a true, regenerated democracy, were at times saying the same thing. Leaving aside the versions (like Occupy Oakland)

So far, the only thing that has mitigated the horrifying opening salvos of Trump's presidency—of course the first president to follow through on his campaign promises had to be this one—has been the widespread popular resistance against his deportation orders, Muslim bans, pipeline projects, and misinformation campaigns. Resistance in and of itself is a beautiful thing because it shows that people are still alive, they still consider themselves a part of their environment; on the other hand, resistance is by no means a synonym for change. The State has long known how to manage resistance, and how to factor it in as one more cost of its policies. For that reason, rather than being self-congratulatory when we resist, we should encourage one another to understand just what it is we are fighting back against, what it would take to defeat it, and how our actions measure up to the requirements of the situation.

What Is Trump?

Donald Trump is the privileged son of a wealthy family, a mediocre real estate magnate, an effective brander, a successful television personality, a serial sexual assaulter, an unapologetic racist, and an egomaniac. The difference between him and most other world leaders, past and present, is the specific sector his personal wealth derives from, his stint as a TV personality, and the openness with which he expresses his opinions. Benjamin Netanyahu, for example, who has long been viewed as a legitimate leader, is every bit as racist and reactionary. If Trump were just a man, he would be the type of person you would try at all costs to avoid. The reason we can't avoid him, the reason he has become a problem for the entire world, and not just a disgrace for his family and neighbors, is that he sits at the helm of a complex set of powerful institutions. What we need to understand, then, is the relationship between Trump and these institutions.

Warning Bells

The fact that a Trump presidency feels so dangerous, not just personally but for all society, should cause some warning bells to go off. Assuming my readers are not wealthy white businessmen, we are all at risk under a Trump presidency. The risks vary, and some people risk much more, but prison sentences, deportations, hate crimes, sexual assault, queer bashings, police shootings, pollution, climate change, and political repression are a threat for all but the most privileged. However, those threats have been there for a long time. Under past presidencies, we had to deal with a prison sentence, the deportation of a loved one, a police beating, cancer, as a strictly personal problem, getting some support from our social circles if we were lucky, while the TV continued to project images of a happy, equitable society.

Now, the media are Trump's most prominent critics. Why? Because for the first time in ages, the elite are seriously divided on important questions of policy. Trump is not an anti-establishment figure. Rather, the establishment no longer entertains a fundamental consensus, as they did in the days of Bretton Woods, the North Atlantic Treaty, and the Federal Reserve Act. The erosion of consensus is also visible in other once stable Western democracies, signaling a possible change of era, and at the least a serious crisis in how capitalism functions.

The fact that all the important newspapers and all the major television stations except for Fox are fully or partially critical of Trump tells us that many capitalists not only dislike him, they feel threatened by him. Yet the way the media function has undergone a remarkable change. For the first time in memory, the US media are playing the role of fact-checkers. Just 15 years ago when President G.W. Bush was preparing the invasion of Iraq, the New York Times and all the major television networks freely broadcast Pentagon propaganda even though all the basic allegations justifying the war were easily debunked.

progress and popular resistance, entire populations do actually become inoculated against certain strategies of state power. Individual institutions tend to hammer down resistance, but systems, as they evolve, seek out the path of least resistance, and their movements are guided by the mentalities of all their members. The figure of the dictator has a bad rep. Though we have not succeeded in revolution, we have at least succeeded in rescuing common sense from the authoritarian ideologies of the past millennia; a vast majority of people are once again distrustful of anyone with a great deal of power. Any system that chooses a political strategy of dictatorship will face a legitimacy crisis from day one.

Though the ideological hardcore of the Alt Right is neoreactionary, which is to say they support a dictator, I think the evolutionary usefulness of a populist strongman like Trump is in shaking up a decaying system and forcing experts to articulate the crisis of democracy. He himself is not a model for the way forward. The model will be technocratic states like China that are weathering the economic crisis better than the US, and proving to be politically more stable. The big question, then, is whether a crisis of social control will also become a factor: will popular uprisings threaten power? In that case, which method is more effective at controlling them – authoritarian liquidation or democratic recuperation? If the latter, one-state China will fail as a potential model, and the West will have the opportunity to draw on its own technocratic traditions. Imagine a multi-party democracy in which politicians recommend policy guidelines based on electoral mandate, but it is the technocrats in Central Banks and related institutions (governing everything from environmental protection to gender relations to the borders) that draft and implement the actual policies. As Artificial Intelligence comes to play an increasing role, first in stock exchanges and currency markets, later in public health, environmental protection, traffic and transportation, immigra-

as ideologically erroneous. That would only hasten the emergence of its ugliest aspects, those that thrive in sectarianism and that accuse any critics of being secretly in league with the fascists, as the Stalinists did to the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and as the identity politicians of the Left learned how to do, in modern form, in the toxic environment of college campus activism. Because we hate white supremacists and homophobes, and recognize the danger they represent, we will not stop fighting them. But we can use a more conscientious language, and a deeper, more historical analysis in the course of that fight. We can share other methods and other critiques of power with those who for the moment entertain a gut identification with anti-fascism.

The need to surpass the limitations of anti-fascism may well be one of the defining features of this historical moment. If we oppose Trump as a potential fascist, at best we will pressure him to stay within the bounds of democratic government, but these are more than sufficient for him to carry out his program. What's more, we will miss the opportunity to expose the continuity with which governments oppress people, and we will play into the hands of the Democrats, making it easier for them to continue this madness in more intelligent ways after the next elections.

Obviously, none of us know the future, and nothing appears on earth that does not eventually disappear. Democracy will not last forever. So let's entertain for a moment the scenario that it will come to an end in the next decade. A crisis of social control could certainly spell the end of democracy. While its specific strategies change over time, the State persists, and its fundamental logic is that of social control. Whither will it go?

I find it hard to believe that the model for institutional evolution will be the fascist dictatorships of the 20th century for two reasons: one technological and the other systemic. In the age of nanotechnology and the internet of things, dictatorship is not political, it is material. What's more, in the pendulum of

The role of media has been to establish parameters, deciding which candidates were fringe and which candidates were serious contenders, and then to evaluate how well the serious candidates sold their ideas, rather than evaluating the ideas themselves. This is because none of the ideas under debate threatened them; they all fell within the parameters of elite consensus.

The role of media in previous elections has been to establish parameters, deciding which candidates were fringe and which candidates were serious contenders, and then to evaluate how well the serious candidates sold their ideas, rather than evaluating the ideas themselves. This is because none of the ideas under debate threatened them; they all fell within the parameters of elite consensus. In terms of public policy, the media role has been to summarize the proposals of all politicians and institutions they deem to be legitimate, casting all the options as equally valid, and differences as mere questions of opinion. Deftly creating a war of positions and appearances, they are able to encourage debate without encouraging critical analysis or intellectual independence. There is not one official view, as in a classical dictatorship, but there is an official range of views. By creating a visible debate within invisible margins, the media cover up the proposals for society of any non-state actors. Under their watch, social movements with incisive critiques and bold ideas are cast as mute indicators of discontent seeking only to pressure the official policymakers. In blatant disregard of reality, journalists follow a playbook in which eloquent and intelligent social movements must be forcibly recast as confused, angry, or simply dissident masses who oppose existing policy without ever embodying another way of doing things.

"What do they want?" the journalist asks, shaking his head moralistically as the camera shows a broad shot of a protesting mass. The audience, watching a play in which the dissidents have no speaking parts, can only conclude that they do not know. The journalist has not explicitly put this idea in the au-

dience members' heads, but by effectively directing their gaze and preventing horizontal communication, he has left them with no other possible conclusions.

The Obsolescence of the Mass Media

Media methods range from subtle democratic misdirection to the sort of extreme manipulation we associate with a Stalinist regime, but fact-checking has never been a part of their toolbox. Trump is no more a liar and manipulator than Bush was (does anyone remember "fuzzy math"?), and in comparison with Obama he is simply more clumsy and categorical. If the media are showing him to be dishonest, it is not only because many capitalists disagree with him, but because the press as an institution is under threat. I am unaware of any other time in modern history when a politician won a major election despite strongly unfavorable coverage in an overwhelming majority of newspapers and TV networks. This is a watershed event. Facebook and Twitter are now more powerful than CNN and the New York Times. This shift is part of the broader phenomenon of the decentralization of capitalist production. Opinion production is also being decentralized, and there is no going back. From the days of consensual facts and one central arena for all important social debates, we are entering into a world of pluralism, in which any identity is legitimate, and any demographic deserves its own consumer niches and news sites, even LGBT folks, even anarchists, even neo-fascists (sorry, "alternative" right-wingers). These different niches never have to enter into debate, the alternative facts that support their views never have to be questioned. The only relevant concerns are how many advertising dollars they can generate, and how many votes they can muster. This is one of the death knells of mass society.

of progress, of technology, rooted into the fabric of society so deeply that we can make all the free choices we want and we'll still never break free.

Another potential problem with the antifa model is that it puts a disproportionate focus on combating certain kinds of street thugs, certain kinds of intellectuals, and certain kinds of politicians, without any communal, liberating practices or proposals for society. Not only does this lead to an incomplete understanding of power, as mentioned, it also inexorably leads to a thug mentality. Fighting racists and homophobes is psychologically emancipating, it makes us healthier and wiser as human beings, and it also responds to our collective needs of self-defense and survival. But if it is our number one priority and even a source of our identity, we will eventually become, at least a little bit, like that which we are fighting. Certainly not with every anti-fascist, but undoubtedly in every major anti-fascist scene, a part of those involved become just another gang, frequently reproducing macho, sexist, and homophobic behaviors (because the fascists are the real problem, and every other struggle is secondary), and more than a few times they have attacked other people in struggle (feminists or anarchists), often for the most trifling of motives. This often gets left out of the romantic histories of anti-fascism, but it is a very real dynamic.

Ultimately, anti-fascism can serve as an adrenaline fix, similar to the harm reduction campaigns that many activists have dedicated themselves to in the past decades. In both cases, the need is indisputable and the intentions are impeccable, but in time, a practice arises that is toxic in its self-righteousness and blind in the way it refuses to address root causes.

If we are fighting for freedom, we don't need to identify specifically as anti-fascists. Anyone who opposes white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and the State, will fight against fascism, because it champions all of these forms of oppression. Without a doubt, though, anti-fascism is the big new trend. We certainly won't change that by denouncing it

Fascist jurisprudence—and to a large extent its social organization—works on the principle of a state of exception. In fact, this was one of the main contributions that fascism made to the post-war democracies, alongside rocket scientists and security apparatuses in Italy and Greece. Democracy took the state of exception, not as a general legal principle but as an exceptional one, and worked it into its anti-terrorism policies as a way to control subversives, first in Germany and Spain, later in the US.

Exceptionalism under democracy proves to work both ways. Whatever threatens it is perceived to be a danger of unique proportions, both in the eyes of rulers and subjects. Even people who are supposedly critical of democracy see fascism as something infinitely worse, momentarily forgetting that fascism is currently a tool of democracy and even in its heyday, from 1922-1945, fascism was a tool of the same class of people who elsewhere were using democracy to pursue their interests. By portraying fascism as exceptional, the defenders of democracy can obscure the root of the problem.

Many anti-fascists unwittingly reproduce the same dynamic. The default mood of anti-fascism is always urgency. And while it's important to never fall into the complacency and appeasement that defined 1930s Europe—challenging fascists' "free speech" is a great example of learning from the past—wild exaggerations don't help us. For the past ten years, I have seen anti-fascists totally convinced that Russia, then Greece, then Spain were on the verge of fascist dictatorships, and in the process of scrambling to meet the threat, they have forgotten about many other vital forms of organizing and struggle. And now, some people in the US are seriously predicting that Trump is preparing a coup. Not only have they proven to totally misunderstand how power functions, they have helped those in power cover up the fact that the dictatorship is already here. It is not a political dictatorship, because it does not need to be. It is the dictatorship of Capital,

the climate in which we are fighting against the government, and the spectacle through which our movements will be broadcast back to us, is a reactionary one infused by liberal values and appeals to protect the old way of life.

The mass media might perish, or they might adapt by using their superior resources to centralize nodes of opinion production within the new, individualized, de-massified networks. All Twitter accounts are created equal, but they quickly conform to the drastic influence-inequality that marks the social media landscape. The relative decentralization of capitalism is in precise terms a move towards polycentralization with more effective exploitation of and integration into specific terrains. It is not a move towards any true anti-hierarchical horizontalism.

Either way, the media as they currently exist are threatened, and the greater part of their rejection of Trump reflects institutional self-interest rather than the self-interests of the capitalists who own the media. (As we shall see, capitalists are divided regarding Trump, but there is no clear majority against him.) Given that the media are leaving happy times behind and entering into uncertain waters, they are reflexively championing the traditional values associated with the old system: democracy, equality, and diplomacy.

In other words, the climate in which we are fighting against the government, and the spectacle through which our movements will be broadcast back to us, is a reactionary one infused by liberal values and appeals to protect the old way of life. We'll get back to this observation in the next section.

Trump and the Capitalists

At the risk of oversimplifying, every government administration can be said to represent capitalist interests. Within this framework, the subsequent questions concern what those interests are, whether capitalists are unified, divergent, or an-

tagonistic in their interests, and which set of interests will be defended by the government. What is left out by the abovementioned framework is the fact the state interest of social control is prior to and supersedes capitalist interests, and that the State systematically redefines what capitalism is capable of.

A prominent characteristic of the world today, which Trump by no means created, is that the neoliberal consensus has ended and capitalist interests are divergent. Meanwhile, the political strategies that seek to protect these interests have become antagonistic well beyond the constant inter-capitalist competition by which different actors seek to win a bigger piece of the pie. Now, fundamental questions about how the pie is to be baked and served are in dispute.

Given the lack of unity among capitalists, it is no surprise that Trump enjoys mixed support from the owning class. Some have recently suggested that Trump's presidency represents "a victory for those sectors of capital worst at valorising themselves." Not surprisingly, articles expressing such a view are short on examples, because the argument is overly simplistic, as all positions tend to be that present politics as the mere manifestation of the needs of Capital. To be precise, Trump has significant support from the manufacturing, defense, energy, real estate, and finance sectors, some of which are facing a valorization crisis, others of which are not. These are companies with a relatively stable place in the economy, led by extremely wealthy people who trust that the deregulation Trump champions will make their lives easier and their fortunes greater. Their position as cornerstones of the leading world economy, which they have held for decades, makes them feel immune to the rising insecurity. The global scale of their customer base and operations will help them weather any trade wars that Trump provokes. And many of them don't have to be terribly worried about tariffs and immigration bans because the aforementioned decentralization of capitalist production means they have been starting to relocate manufacturing

ues to be the case on a smaller scale today. In Germany, antifascism is the dominant logic of the entire "radical Left." There, it is a key element in preserving German exceptionalism (a trait that the Right and Left in Germany share), reproducing a political tradition based primarily on shame, celebrating various state models—from the USSR to Israel—and protecting the State from fundamental critiques.

Everywhere I have seen anarchists become convinced of the urgency of the fascist threat and join anti-fascist formations, they cease to make specifically anarchist criticisms of fascism (that it is ultimately a tool of the same elite that profits under democracy, and a more obvious manifestation of the same white supremacy that infuses all of society), in order to join in a chorus of leftist, progressive discourses that demonize fascists as a unique evil and implicitly or explicitly celebrate the values of democracy.

Why radicals in the US would import a decontextualized political model from Europe, even with the same aesthetic and the German moniker "antifa", eludes me. Tactical imports like the Black Bloc have certainly worked in the past, but at least anarchists understood the purpose of the Black Bloc, and it quickly proved to be adaptable to the US context. What about antifascism as an import? It seems a strange fit. We already had an adapted version of this model, in the form of ARA, Anti-Racist Action. But sure, one sounds a lot tougher fighting fascists than fighting mere racists, so at the first opportunity to claim that our enemies are indeed full-blown fascists, it seems inevitable that at least in certain circles, ARA would give way to AFA.

It is admittedly strange to be critiquing the urgency that has gripped US society. Finally, people are actually feeling something, and what's more, they're taking to the streets to stop the government in what so recently was a society defined by apathy and atomization. However, anti-fascism operates on urgency in a special way that we should at least be aware of.

Front, proposed by Stalin and applied with disastrous results everywhere from Germany to Spain. In the early '30s, the Communist Party had been secretly working hand in hand with the Nazis to destroy the social democrats until the Nazis, to the Commies' surprise, gained power. Reversing gears, they drafted the Popular Front strategy to unify the entire Left, under their leadership, to confront the fascist threat, which they now realized had become a geopolitical danger to the Soviet Union. The actual effect was more to control socialists, anarchists, and dissident communists than to beat the fascists. In the Spanish Civil War, it was the Popular Front that killed the revolution, long before Franco swept into Catalonia and Aragon. Stalin was happy with the results: by prolonging the conflict, he eventually secured a non-aggression pact with Hitler, and in the meantime he had liquidated the anarchists and Trotskyists.

The Democratic Party, preparing for a rebound, will treat the movement as a springboard and an electoral base. Left-wing NGOs, awash with new funding, will flood the movement with money, further co-opting its agenda.

This is not ancient history, but a model that persists today. Europe's remaining Stalinists can be found in anti-fascist formations. Anti-fascists even risked their lives in a conflict between two reactionary states, traveling to eastern Ukraine to take part in what they imagined was a struggle against fascism, duped by the fact that the Russian government, as a point of patriotic mythology, considers itself to be anti-fascist.

Anti-fascism is specifically an interclass alliance (unifying workers with the bourgeoisie) designed to protect democratic governance. When anarchists and other anti-capitalists take part in anti-fascist formations, they systematically tone down their deep criticisms of capitalism and government to focus their critiques against the aberrations that are unique to fascists. This was the case when the CNT took part in the Popular Front government during the Spanish Civil War, and it contin-

closer to their consumers. Even before the elections, some of these companies were expanding their production within the US, cutting their labor costs below even the sweatshop level by roboticizing entire factories. Since Trump has been loudly blaming immigrants and taking the focus off new technologies, they know they will get a free pass from popular anger over the new forms of exploitation they are using.

To be clear, though these capitalists support Trump, they did not engineer the Trump victory. They simply knew that they could thrive regardless of whether Trump or Clinton won. The Trump administration is trying to protect capitalist interests, but it did not arise to meet capitalist needs. On the contrary, it arose by taking advantage of a specific political crisis and by appealing to the most decadent of the self-interests within the US capitalist class. In other words, it is more an actor than a product.

This becomes clear when we examine the relationship between the Trump administration and the capitalist sector that opposes him most fiercely: the tech sector, the vanguard of the new economy (leaving aside the retail sector, in which he has provoked a deal of insecurity over the possibility of price hikes caused by punitive tariffs). It is no mistake that of all the Silicon Valley leaders, the only one who supports Trump is the CEO of the most pedestrian, the least innovative of all the internet age powerhouses: Peter Thiel of PayPal. The corporate architects of the new economy, like Google, Apple, and Facebook, may be the only hope for capitalism to survive the ecological and financial crises it has created. Economic growth based on fossil fuels and manufacture, followed by financial bubbles, has had a three hundred year run and it might be meeting its geological limits. Of all the capitalists, only those of the IT sector are ideating game-changing transformations to this dynamic, and developing the technologies to make them feasible, from ethereal production to AI to extraterrestrial exploitation.

On the other hand, AI and robotics threaten the social contract by undermining the historic point of unity between the capitalist logic of accumulation and the statist logic of social control: control people and profit off of them by putting them to work. Any solution to that crisis would require bold interventions by the State approaching some kind of utopian yet corporate socialism (a prediction that was already made in 2009, that socialism would not result from the development of productive capacities, as Marx foretold, but rather repressive capacities, once the State had the techniques to surveille and control those who were no longer kept in line by the threat of hunger).

A corporate socialism could include universal wages, the colonization of outer space, and the expansion of the service economy beyond anything previously imagined. To save capitalism and to avert the disasters of its own making, the Silicon Valley vanguard doesn't only need the president's ear, they need all the resources, the regulatory assistance, and the planning capacities that the State has at its disposal. And right at this juncture, the new president rebuffs the IT powerhouses and begins imposing policies that directly harm them, supported by the pillars of the traditional economy who continue doing business like it's the 20th century. This only goes to show that power is as blind as those who wield it.

In my mind, the key points of this overview are that Trump is neglecting the interests of what is strategically—but not financially—the most important capitalist sector, but he is vigorously defending the interests of all the capitalist sectors that were important back in the '70s and '80s when he was forming his worldview and his business practices. Given that the former and latter sectors currently have divergent but not antagonistic interests, Trump's effectiveness and his ability to win reelection depend on whether he reshapes his agenda to cater to both sets of interests. This could mean limiting xenophobia to poor immigrants and exempting international

tics (and in fact, Newspeak is originally a feature of Stalinism). There is nothing specifically fascist about this list.

I would offer the following definition from an earlier article published by CrimethInc:

Fascism is not just any extreme right-wing position. It is a complex phenomenon that mobilizes a popular movement under the hierarchical direction of a political party and cultivates parallel loyalty structures in the police and military, to conquer power either through democratic or military means; subsequently abolishes electoral procedures to guarantee a single party continuity; creates a new social contract with the domestic working class, on the one hand ushering in a higher standard of living than what could be achieved under liberal capitalism and on the other hand protecting the capitalists with a new social peace; and eliminates the internal enemies whom it had blamed for the destabilization of the prior regime.

We could also add a tendency to go to war to conquer a larger colonial base with which to pay back the massive investment that finances the new social contract.

Since their defeat in WWII, fascists have had a limited though dangerous role as street thugs. They help weaken social movements and terrorize marginalized populations, but they have not had a real chance of gaining institutional power. The few times that they have gotten too strong and entertained institutional ambitions, their governments have knocked them down and put them back in their places, polishing their democratic credentials in the process.

And what, specifically, is anti-fascism? At the risk of seeming pedantic, I think it is necessary to review the history and trace some patterns that continue to this day. Of course, there have been different strains of anti-fascism. The struggle in Italy in the '20s, or in different working class neighborhoods in the UK and Germany in the '80s, produced many valuable experiences that we should celebrate and pass on. But the most historically prominent model of anti-fascism is the Popular

Wherever there is a single neo-nazi or border vigilante unafraid to take action, marginal people in the streets are at risk, but the way power functions in the US, major, global-level transformations would have to take place before fascism were conceivable here as a system of government.

Because the US is a settler state, white supremacy has played its paramilitary function in a diffuse, rather than a centralized way, marking a key, fundamental difference with the fascist model. The citizen, in the US model, is called on to act as a vigilante, taking the initiative to clear the forests, drain the swamps, tame the frontier, protect the border, and keep the slaves under eternal vigilance. They are not a stormtrooper awaiting orders. The citizen is an inclusive, albeit elitist, figure. He does not have to show purity going back three generations, but rather a zealous loyalty to the cultural values of his civilization. Therefore, he has a colonizing, civilizing mission to bring others into the fold. Democracy, which has always been a militaristic slave system effective at managing commercial empires, is the ideal form of government for the settler iteration of white supremacy.

The culture of this model is charitable: it offers itself as a gift, a form of progress, to the rest of the world. Hitler, for example, would never have spoken of the "white man's burden," that discourse that united the more subtle, progressive white supremacists of the UK and US. A central element of the model is cultural continuity, the pretension of being an ancient and wise culture stretching all the way back to Ancient Greece. Once again, stable democratic government that avoids any overt coups is the most suited to satisfying the model.

Those who call Trump fascist fail to define what is fascist about him. A standard example comes from Natasha Lennard's piece in The Nation, in which she points to "features like selective populism, nationalism, racism, traditionalism, the deployment of Newspeak and disregard for reasoned debate". All of these are features shared by every single form of far-right poli-

IT recruits (which relies on the liberal, "color-blind" recipe for racism), encouraging green capitalism alongside the carbon economy (requiring a more ambiguous form of climate denial), subsidizing autonomous (robotic) manufacturing within the US, and aggressively promoting space exploration and government support for the social deployment of technological innovations that are not currently on his radar. Silicon Valley, for their part, will have to use traditional lobbying and also to instrumentalize social movements in order to force Trump to transform his agenda in the aforementioned ways.

The other thing Trump will need to do to retain support is to achieve results from his risky strategy of bilateral trade negotiations. While Trump is departing sharply from the neoliberal dream of the world as one large free trade area, he is by no means against free trade. To understand that, we need to acknowledge that free trade is no more free than the free market. It is simply a euphemism for a highly regulated arrangement designed to increase trade volume. This can be achieved through the multilateral agreements like NAFTA and TTIP and the global institutions like the WTO that were hallmarks of neoliberal politics, or it can achieved through the bilateral trade agreements that Trump is promoting. In theory, the former require that everyone follow the same set of rules (though the European Union, for example, assigned very specific economic roles to different member states, allowing core members to protect industries that peripheral members were forced to desubsidize). This means that the rules will reflect the interests of the multinational corporations that operate throughout the entirety of the economic area. In the past, those interests were synonymous with the interests of the US and its NATO allies, since all the multinationals of note were North American or Western European. But over time, the benefits began to generalize to the capitalists of all countries.

A second tipping point away from neoliberalism is political in nature. Neoliberalism was doomed by the institutional

primacy of state power over financial power. A globalized economy needs a global state to regulate it, but power-holders are still firmly national. Their worldviews and interests are developed at the national level, and nearly all their institutional handles pertain to nation-states. In a shortsighted maneuver to maintain their own chauvinistic supremacy, US conservatives gutted the UN—the potential world government—and therefore sabotaged the very world order they put in motion after WWII.

While all other politicians were inclined to adhere to a neoliberal strategy that immensely benefited the US but allowed US supremacy to slowly slip away, Trump is making a gamble. The US is no longer the number one global producer, but it is still the largest consumer, meaning it has a unique bargaining position: every country wants access to the US market. If Trump can encourage "free trade" that privileges US interests, he can maintain the US position as global economic leader and maybe even recover the number one manufacturing spot (not by saving factory jobs, of course, but by subsidizing an expansion of robotic labor). If his multiple high-stakes games of chicken fail, he will cause the US economy to tank, hasten the imminent emergence of China as global economic leader, and lose reelection.

Trump and Government

Trump's relationship with the democratic traditions of the US government is rocky, to say the least, but allegations that his administration is fascist or even that it is preparing a coup can prevent us from perceiving the precise relationship between Trump and the existing institutions. Without a doubt, he has frequently breached democratic etiquette and his heavy-handed, largely novice administration has made more than a few embarrassing fumbles while implementing policy.

immigrant mother whom the media turn into temporary celebrities, provided they say the things the media want people to hear.

Protesting Trump will be the new normal, and we will have many more opportunities to take to the streets and block the machinations of power, but for every new ally or comrade, there will a whole array of non-profit financing, media spokespeople, government-friendly demands, reformist narratives, and peace police to redirect our struggles towards the rejuvenation of state power.

What is Anti-fascism?

In my mind, anti-fascists—or anarchists operating within an anti-fascist framework—are accomplishing a number of vital things in the fight against Trump. They took him seriously from the beginning, showing the relationship between hate speech and an increase in racist, Islamophobic, and homophobic attacks; they are convincing people of the legitimacy of self-defense against fascists; they are criticizing the way the principle of free speech is used to protect fascist organizing; and they are shutting down neo-fascist and other white supremacist events.

The extreme Right is dangerous. It is a threat to the lives and well-being of immigrants, queer and trans people, people of color, non-Christians, Native peoples, and those who struggle for freedom; therefore, we need to make sure that it does not grow. All of us are affected, either directly, or because loved ones or those we are in solidarity with are targeted.

However, not everything on the extreme Right is neo-fascist, and every threat requires the most adequate response. To speak bluntly, fascism at the State level has never been a real threat in the United States, with the partial exception of the 1933-34 business plot, a half-baked plan by a small yet important group of industrialists that never made it past the conceptual stages.

tutions respond, resulting in a strengthening of democracy, a triumph of supposedly good government, which will be possible only if some in his own party turn against him; or a gradual erosion of democratic norms, which would weaken government in the short-term but would open the door to the transformation or replacement of democratic structures in the mid-term. Neither of these outcomes bode well for anarchists or anyone else struggling for freedom, requiring our conscious and intentional intervention.

Which Way, the Resistance?

Key elements of the conflict between the Trump administration and the existing power structures mold the terrain in which resistance takes place. Critical, existentially threatened mass media means that anti-government resistance in the Trump era will be more visible, but also that the media will be more embedded, constantly modulating movement discourses. They will infuse the movement with conservative values, in this case, a defense of democracy and democratic institutions against the upstart politician. The spectacular heroes of the movement will be independent judges, charismatic Democrats, and the occasional black pastor or immigrant mother whom the media turn into temporary celebrities, provided they say the things the media want people to hear. The Democratic Party, preparing for a rebound, will treat the movement as a springboard and an electoral base. Left-wing NGOs, awash with new funding, will flood the movement with money, further co-opting its agenda. And the titans of the tech economy, along with the platforms they control (Google, Facebook, Twitter…), will give an aesthetically hip, mainstream legitimacy to the values that uphold their interests.

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But such friction is hardly representative of a major structural shift. On the other hand, disrespecting democratic conventions can undermine the cultural expectations that constitute one important layer of defense against authoritarian coups or fascist movements. However, neither Trump's authoritarian character nor even his intentions (or those of his chief adviser, Steve Bannon) are sufficient to drag an entire country into fascism. For a government to change its fundamental structures, a whole host of structural and societal elements need to be in place. As it turns out, none of those elements are currently present. There is no right-wing social movement able to force a crisis of democracy. No significant political party and no significant percentage of US capitalists are advocating for an end to democracy. In the US and in Europe, there is less cooperation and dialogue between political parties, but ruling parties are still able to keep government functioning even when they lack a majority (and in parliamentary democracies with no tenable majority and a partially dysfunctional government, like Spain, neo-fascist or other anti-democratic parties have zero presence). And the executive branch is not amassing the power necessary to override the other branches. Trump might insult independent judges, but when they foil him, his response is to write new executive orders that pass legal muster rather than trying to suspend the judiciary.

Trump has created a rather unprecedented conflict with the intelligence agencies, leading to a partial breakdown in communication. However, they are duking it out with the staunchly democratic weapons of appointments, resignations, and snarky comments to the press. And besides, a bad relationship with the intelligence agencies is hardly the hallmark of a fascist dictator.

Trump's approach to government respects a fundamentally democratic process, but uses aggressive measures to try to sway it, which is something all past Republican administrations have done since Nixon. In his case, he is empowering

the most right-wing elements already in government by normalizing previously unacceptable behaviors, while bullying any government functionaries who do not enthusiastically support his agenda.

To start with, he has the fanatical aid of the police. His sloppily authored Muslim Ban—ambiguous, overreaching, ill-prepared—would have been meekly and hesitantly enforced were it not for the eager and active compliance of the border police, many of whom refused to relax their guard and release their airport prisoners even after the first judicial stays were announced. More recently, state and local police have been burning the midnight oil to carry out massive deportation raids, now that they can be deputized by ICE again. It doesn't take a perceptive wit to see how happy they are to be given openly racist, xenophobic crusades. Every cop is both a bureaucrat and a vigilante. Their true character shines through when we see which tasks they carry out with bored apathy and which tasks they fulfill with sadistic perfectionism.

The police are a constant in democratic society. It's the same mercenary class, whether the government is left-wing or right-wing. The opportunistic business elite, the fickle politicians, the fancy thinkers, they can be forgiven for trying out progressive strategies or conservative strategies for social control, but they all need the same racist, sadistic, patriotic, inhuman police manning the wall, protecting the balance of power and keeping the dispossessed under the boot heel of authoritarianism.

Though the police came running to him, Trump had almost as easy a time with the Republicans. While they were campaigning for reelection, the establishment Republicans criticized him for his open racism, sexism, and insults to the military and CIA. Now that he is in office, Republicans have closed ranks behind him, giving him an uninterrupted series of Congressional victories and showing that white supremacy and rape culture were already inside the government long before Trump, they just used a more polite vocabulary.

On the other hand, Trump has changed his position on nearly every issue where he lacked party support. His deviance on NATO and Taiwan are fading down the memory hole, forgotten amidst fresher controversies. And he is also working with congressional Republicans to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. He is showing he knows how to play politics, and the role he is creating for himself at the head of the party, though he oscillates between self-important ass and effective negotiator, bears little in common with the totalitarian figure of a Führer.

The Democrats, for their part, are pulling together as an opposition party. Since the Republicans have an absolute majority, their only hope is to play the role of the defenders of democracy, capitalize on protest movements like Obama did in 2008, and attempt to make gains in the House and Senate in 2018.

Significantly, the Democrats will have to beat Trump in the streets and in social media before they can beat him in elections. They need social movements to shame and demobilize his base, to stain his charisma, and to mobilize an anti-Trump demographic that does not make radical critiques of the system. For the next two to four years, the Democrats will not be able to block him with institutional measures unless he commits more security-related blunders like the one that divided his own administration, angered fellow Republicans, and brought down former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. In less than one month as president, Trump has done things far worse, from the standpoint of a government ethicist, than the dirty dealings that forced Richard Nixon out of office. His impunity shows that new standards are in place. Ethics are now measured with exclusively partisan yardsticks, another result of the polycentralization of mass society.

In conclusion, even at his most conflictual, Trump is establishing a firmly democratic relationship with government. Nonetheless, he is flaunting a great deal of democratic etiquette, which will have one of two results: either the insti-