

Defeating Trumpism With A People's Agenda



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11-27-2024 ~ We should raise walls of resistance as much as we can. More important, though, we should demand from the democratic forces to adopt a socio-economic agenda that puts people's needs above corporate interests.

A clear consensus has emerged that the economy was the key factor behind Trump's stunning victory. However, that may not be a very accurate description about what led a disaffected electorate wanting to see Trump back in the White House as the U.S. economy had been in a rather good shape from the second quarter of 2022 to the third quarter of 2024 and was in fact [outperforming](#) all other advanced economies by a wide margin. Indeed, surveys had consistently shown that the majority of voters had [negative views](#) on the economy at large, thus revealing a disconnect between economic numbers and public sentiment. Unemployment was the lowest it had been in decades, consumer spending was up, and inflation had cooled off. Yet voters still thought the economy was trash.

The U.S economic system does [stink](#), no matter what the numbers show, and the political system is totally dysfunctional, which explains why so many voters were not fazed by Democrats' core message that Trump posed a threat to democracy. They were probably wondering where democracy was to be found when economic elites run the show. Forty-five years of neoliberal economics have exacerbated capitalism's inherent tendencies toward economic inequality, created a permanent state of economic insecurity, and led to the rise of an [oligarchy](#).

The United States is the [most unequal society](#) in the developed world. The rich are growing richer with every passing year while the middle class shrinks, and

the poor are left to their own fate for survival. Massive social inequalities and economic disparities destroy trust and confidence in government and leave people thinking that the future is unavoidably grim. This is the primary reason for the rise of ethno-nationalism and authoritarian populism in the developed world, including of course Trumpism in the United States. It is the disastrous socio-economic and political consequences of neoliberalism that produce feelings of neglect, powerlessness and anger and lead voters in turn to cast their ballots for demagogues like Donald Trump who promise a return to a golden era.

The irony is that while Trump is an authoritarian bully who wishes to use the iron fist of the state to rollback immigration and crush social agendas and even those who oppose him, his economic views are overall staunchly pro-market and outrageously neoliberal. In that regard, there is nothing fascistic about Trump when it comes to the economy. Statism lies at the heart of fascist ideology. The state is the all-powerful entity for fascists. The question of state-controlled planning of the economy is of paramount importance to fascism. For fascists, the state should not control all the means of production, as is the case with traditional socialism, but should dominate them.

Trump's proposals for the economy are seen as a mixed bag. That's because while he has proclaimed himself a champion for deregulation, he is in favor of protectionist trade policies. But Trump's trade policy should not fool people that he is not a neoliberal. With protectionist trade policies, Trump, as with the way he runs his own business, only sees the short-term advantages in economic policy. Moreover, protectionist trade policy does not depart from neoliberalism. As has been acutely pointed out by British political economist [Tom Wraight](#), Trump simply uses "the coercive power of the state to force other nations to conform to market-based economic logic."

Trump has promised an anti-regulation blitz from Day One upon his return to the White House on virtually all aspects of the economy, including environmental and public health regulations. After spending months lying to voters about his knowledge of [Project 2025](#), Trump has picked scores of people who worked on this ultra-reactionary policy manifesto for top posts in his administration. The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 agenda for the economy, if fully implemented, would create a far more unequal and harsher society as it entails policies that will lead to massive cuts on all social programs, including Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program and food assistance, and calls for massive

disinvestment in public services and a host of new tax cuts for wealthy households and corporations.

Project 2025 is the ultra-right wing game plan for the full completion of the neoliberal economic vision and political nightmare that started nearly half a century ago. It will produce far greater social dislocation and greater economic anxiety than any other time since the onset of the neoliberal counterrevolution. Most of those who voted for Trump on the basis of their perceptions about the direction of the economy and their belief that [the country is on the wrong track](#) will be deeply disturbed by the new economic and social realities that will emerge in the United States during the second Trump reign and will hopefully rethink their support for Trumpism. The problem is that the Democratic Party is either incapable or unwilling to offer citizens a new vision for the United States, one that will end the rule of oligarchy, restore democracy, and put people and the planet above profit.

Here are some policies that should be included in a socio-economic agenda for the specific needs of the people in the twentieth-first century United States of America:

1. Implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC). That is, a publicly administered system that guarantees that all people have access to the full range of quality health services when and where they need them. Financing of UHC could come entirely from broad-based tax revenues. Coverage would be universal and automatic. Covered services would include inpatient, outpatient, dental, mental health, and long-term health, as well as prescription drugs. All three levels of the U.S. government (federal, state, and local) would be involved in the health care system.

2. Getting rid of all challenges and obstacles of union organizing, which include making illegal threats to close a plant if workers select a union to represent them and threatening workers with loss of jobs or benefits if they join a union. Current U.S. law makes it difficult for workers to join unions and even excludes certain categories of workers.

3. An industry-level approach to collective bargaining with active participation in social dialogue. An industry-level approach to collective bargaining will secure the best economic compensation possible for workers.

4. *Undertaking a large-scale federal program of social housing construction.* The United States faces a deep and persistent housing affordability crisis that demands active government intervention. It is beyond naïve belief to think that the market can fix the housing crisis. Repairing the house market with market-oriented solutions such as [liberalizing zoning rules](#) and other regulations have never worked. They do not lead to a major increase in housing supply or in more affordable housing. A strong housing safety net should also be introduced to address the problem of homelessness and ensure home security for the most vulnerable.

5. *Raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 or even \$20 per hour.* The current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour has been stagnant since 2009 and maintaining it is a scandal of grand proportions. No decent society, let alone the richest country in the world, should accept having such a thing as the “working poor.”

6. *Fighting poverty and inequality.* Poverty should not be defined one-dimensionally based on income alone. Poverty should be seen as access to a variety of resources, such as education, health, energy, jobs, rights and personal security. The task of eliminating poverty should include both short-term (cash handouts) and long-term approaches (delivering social services and addressing the structural causes of poverty with initiatives such as the guaranteed-jobs program).

7. *Implementing the [Green New Deal](#).* Greening the economy is a vital and urgent task to save humanity and the planet from the impacts of global warming but also provides a macro-economic approach to sustainable economic growth. It’s a win-win situation and only vested interests (fossil fuel industry, banks, oil-producing nations) and lack of political stand on the way to transitioning to a green economy.

8. *Cutting military spending.* The United States spent [\\$820 billion](#) on national defense during the fiscal year 2023. It spends nearly [8.4 times](#) as much on its military as Russia does and more than three times the amount of China. While the U.S. comprises just over 4 percent of the world’s population, it accounts for nearly [40 percent](#) of global military spending. Between 2001 and 2022, the U.S. spent [\\$8 trillion on war](#). The notion that such enormous defense spending is important for national security questions is utterly absurd. The U.S. homeland has

never been invaded and no nation threatens U.S. national security. The obscene amount of money that the U.S. spends on defense, which different methodologies estimated to be [above \\$1.5 trillion](#) for the fiscal year 2022, is for the building and maintenance of the U.S. empire. The U.S. has over 750 overseas military bases, which only provoke geopolitical tensions and harm the United States, as [David Vine](#) demonstrates in his book *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*. Money saved from cuts in the defense budget can go towards supporting social programs and/or for reducing the national debt. Arguing for reforms in Social Security and Medicare when the country spends so much money on the military is morally indefensible and will become politically unacceptable if people realize how wasteful and harmful military spending is.

At the heart of the neoliberal vision is a societal order based on the prioritization of corporate power and free markets and the abandonment of public services. The neoliberal claim is that economies would perform more effectively, producing greater wealth and economic prosperity for all, if markets were allowed to perform their functions without government intervention. This claim is predicated on the idea that free markets are inherently just and can create effective low-cost ways to produce consumer goods and services. It is all rubbish, of course; nothing but an ideological pretext to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Neoliberalism is indeed not simply an economic doctrine but also a socio-political ideology that places individual self-interest before the common good, displays indifference to social inequalities and economic disparities and subsequently justifies plutocracy.

Trump's approach to government and corporate interests, which he will undertake with an extra heavy authoritarian twist, will magnify all aspects of the neoliberal nightmare that has engulfed the United States under both Republican and Democratic administrations for the past several decades. Unfortunately, a majority of the U.S. electorate refused to see what Trump really stands for and was duped into believing that their great leader is the one to take on the detestable liberal/neoliberal establishment and create in turn a system that works for the average citizens, not just the rich.

The next four years promise to be one of severe cruelty for the most vulnerable people in the United States and a nightmare for the environment. We should raise walls of resistance as much as we can. More important, though, we should demand from the democratic forces to adopt a socio-economic agenda that puts

people's needs above corporate interests and consigns neoliberal capitalism to the dustbin of history.

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