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L.S.
A Conspiracy of Dunces
April 15th, 2025

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flippant justification of human deprivation ought to mark them, not as ‘oligarchs’ or would-be kings, but as the monsters they are: enemies of humanity, and of our continued existence on this earth.

L. S.

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wrong to do so. Why would their rank and file need to form a revolutionary force if they're already in power?

And us? Political violence has re-emerged and indexed our powerlessness, though that need not remain the case. Current mass mobilizations, tailing the Democratic establishment for lack of any better option, have been split along class lines, by gender, and by the color line. The 'Hands Off' protests – including NATO in their list of untouchable liberal institutions – have been overwhelmingly white, drawing in more participants from the middle classes (professionals, public service workers, state employees, teachers, etc.) than from proletarianized white labor; where they have attracted attention and attendance from Black and Latino participants it has typically been from the managerial sector as well. This ought not suggest that the correct movement against the Trump administration would go *through* the current anti-Musk and anti-Trump protests, as if their political composition is an independent barrier to their true proletarian content – Noel Ignatiev said once that the class, when it acts as the class, is never wrong. If the lower and more numerous layers of the class are keeping us waiting, it's because they have not judged that the time is right to act. It simply bears noting that a revolutionary movement in the United States would not just be a mass movement, measured in however many hundreds of thousands of participants were drawn to well-advertised protests, but a movement on the level of the class – involving the otherwise-abstentionist multiracial proletariat which entered the scene during 2020's George Floyd Uprising, and whose self-activity set the priorities, strategic reflections, tactical sensibilities and internal limits of that moment.

Trump's businessmen and cabinet members have responded to fears of a recession by issuing ominous warnings of 'growing pains' and necessary tribulations. Our task, as aspiring revolutionists, is to direct their own class hatred back at them: every moment of senseless suffering and every

> [W]e have a conscious opponent, but one subject to a range of contradictions and resulting political limits—although not absolute ones.
>
> – Don Hamerquist, "Three Tendencies on Repression"

After decades of defeat, the revolutionary left's ability to provide prompt assessments of ruling-class composition and strategy has atrophied. The reader can be forgiven for being impressed that Fanon's colonized subject, for example, could keep pace with their far more eventful times: "They live in a doomsday atmosphere and nothing must elude them. This is why they fully understand Phouma and Phoumi, Lumumba and Tschombe, Ahidjo and Moumie, Kenyatta and those introduced from time to time to replace him." Our response to our own tin-pot dictator, by contrast, has been mostly outrage and uncertainty. A recent conclusion to the series of articles chronicling the movement against Cop City offers an impressive benchmark for analyses of ongoing struggles, but many of our descriptions of the ruling bloc still presume that it is a unified, wholly self-conscious force, whose true motives are unknown to us. As an attempt to think in the opposite direction, this essay inventories the Trump administration's coalition of bourgeois class forces, along with the competitive projects and motives that animate them.

POLITICS IN THE PROPHETIC TENSE

A recent article by Daniel Grave asks a crucial question which it then bars itself from answering: "recognizing that we are experiencing shock as a part of a wider strategy isn't really enough. We have to ask *what that strategy is*. What goals might this shock and confusion be trying to further?" Grave goes on to "present a theory that seems to click a lot of things into place." He calls it a "conspiracy theory," and that is exactly what it is: an attempt to "attribute a number of apparently disconnected events to the not-so-secret plans of a few powerful people." Because those people are in and adjacent to the federal government, the conspiracy takes on a national and even transnational character; a few characters are taken to serve as narrative leads as everything else falls into place around their open machinations. Such a conspiracy is *not* "normal fare in the real world." The powerful conspire, but under conditions which they do not choose; their plans often conflict with one another in aim and execution. The strategies of various members of the ruling bloc do not add up, without some degree of pruning and violence, to a single strategy.

But Grave presses on. The narrating voice of this conspiracy is Curtis Yarvin, a small-time internet blogger previously known by his username, Mencius Moldbug. Yarvin's writing took shape in a milieu graced by other internet personalities driven by their own manic ambitions; the coterie of 'neoreactionaries' from which he comes boasts names like Nick Land and congregated mostly on sites like Lesswrong, where a kind of circumscribed 'rationalism' took on the old mantle of the early-2000s new atheists. After a decade of cult stardom, more with liberal news outlets than with the tech-right that he was said to effectively command, he has switched from an old blog to a new Substack, where his articles balance free musings with prescriptive advice offered for a monthly fee. (Take one recent article: "after the paywall, I'll explain what to do about the Cathedral instead.")

If one were to believe Yarvin himself, or the various media reports of his influential reach, Mencius Moldbug was an ideological North Star for a steeled core of Trump-administration figures, most importantly Peter Thiel, who groomed JD Vance for his current position as Vice President. The connection between the two latter individuals is fairly clear; the portability of Yarvin's teachings to Thiel's own thinking, and from Thiel

tis Yarvin, far less coordinated than their enemies presume, and prone to overreach and missteps as a result.

They will be punished for their miscalculations far less than we will for whatever marginal successes we achieve. Ultimately, a mass movement will discover why Pete Hegseth's appointment as Secretary of Defense and the administration's purge of disloyal military leadership were so important: both were attempts to anticipate and undermine the last obstacle that Trump's first bumbling attempt at a seizure of power failed to anticipate – a disloyal Secretary of State who refused to deploy the National Guard on January 6^{th}. Unlike the first administration, the right-wing street movement and militias, once referenced as a bellwether of an increasingly-volatile American politics more and more comfortable with political violence, are quiet. The fantasy that right-wing militias would suddenly discipline themselves into organized 'cells' is mostly just that – fantasy. This is not because they are not already organized and federated; militia chapters are typically organized regionally, at the state level and locally. But their aims and self-styled political commitments are typically local, at the expense of national coordination or aspirations. They were underrepresented at January 6, and have most famously considered political violence at the state level – planning to hold government officials hostage in Michigan – only following months of FBI entrapment. The more active and explicitly fascistic street groups have alternated between deft manipulation of public, national discourse and humiliating defeats in street situations, while the active clubs have re-emerged to defend Tesla dealerships. These movements are responding to an objective shift in class forces and the role of the state. The Trump movement currently controls all three branches of the government and has disciplined the military to its own aims; a militia member who reads Pete Hegseth's "DEUS VULT" tattoo and breathes a sigh of relief is hardly his use of sex-selective IVF to produce genius heirs capable of saving Western civilization (a scheme so plainly neurotic it would make Freud blush); even his business ventures like SpaceX, motivated by his own desire to go to Mars which, at fifty-three, he knows will never take place – are all evidence of his perfect, hermetic integration into an irrational, murderous, vertiginous world in which the most powerful people alive are appendages of a suicidal, bulimic Moloch gorging itself to death for nothing. Adorno said that becoming human – a subject of capitalist society – required the accumulated violence of history and prehistory, millennia of terror and years of trauma sedimented to form the conscious ego. But how much damage is necessary to become whatever Elon Musk is?

WHERE IS IT GOING?

For his part, Curtis Yarvin has come out against the new administration in ways that make his characterization as the Trump movement's puppet-master fairly unwieldy. In an article called "Actually you shouldn't van people" he notes that "throwing random grad students who signed pro-Hamas op-eds into unmarked vans with black sacks on their heads is unlikely to be an effective strategic policy." This is not a sudden change of heart regarding the liberation of humanity ("All the institutional structures that maintain this fetish need to be broken into dust. All the human beings in these systems need a new job, a new hobby, or even a new fetish—like writing love letters to serial killers.") but it neatly clarifies the distinction between Yarvin, a self-styled Machiavellian, and a Trump administration whose terrorism czar is a Hungarian pioneer of various War-on-Terror misdeeds and whose picks to manage the border are out-and-out Nazis. They are stupider than Cur-

to Vance, is more tenuous, bound up in gossip more than action. Before Yarvin was attributed responsibility for the rise of the Silicon Valley secessionist movement or an empowered Trumpian right, he was counseling "the steel rule of passivism": an "absolute renunciation of official power" intended to "vaccinate" the neoreactionary project against capture by political elites. If his assessment of the value of political participation wavered with attention from the Silicon Valley elite or the emergence of the Trump movement, it is hardly because he is the secret mastermind of either – he is a 'gray mirror' in which any willing patrons in the ruling bloc can recognize themselves, whatever their aspirations. Unfortunately for Yarvin, he gets little in return: whatever the year, none of the forms of government one might find espoused on his blogs – 'neocameralism,' 'patchwork' localism, the total dissolution of the federal government, etc. – are reflected, as yet, in Trump administration policy.

At any rate: liberal outlets were quick to pick up a 2022 essay that Yarvin wrote outlining his ideal iteration of a right-wing seizure of power. As Grave notes, it's full of winks and nods, but this shouldn't paper over their function, which is to absolve Yarvin of having to commit to his own outline. His profile of Trump in the essay need not be discarded too quickly, because the fact that Trump isn't "selling his hotels" – that he's not "all in", as Yarvin puts it – is just as important as any political daisy-chain we could construct.

Many identified the content of Yarvin's essay with the Department of Government Efficiency, initially overseen by both Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, now chaired only by the former. Like many other supposed identities between Yarvinite plans and federal follow-through, though, it's more a semantic similarity than a technical one. Trump is not ready to, nor has he begun to, "take 100%" of state power. DOGE has not fired every federal employee, it has applied the principles of big business, as practiced by Musk, to the federal government, catastrophic miscalculations and all. Yarvin says: "Once duly elected, in office [the administration] will not just caper in front of the cameras (in fact, it will not talk at all to the legacy press) – it will spread its wings, and become a beautiful governing butterfly." Readers can judge whether the new administration has spent more time 'governing' than 'capering in front of the cameras.'

What else did Yarvin demand? A restructuring of the executive branch to put a "CEO" in charge. Like they were reading from an ancient scroll, liberals were quick to point to Elon Musk as proof that the prophecy was being fulfilled. But in "The Butterfly Revolution", the "CEO" plays a very specific role, which is formally similar to the chief executive of a business, not defined by the title of the person who runs it: he "will run the executive branch without any interference from the Congress or courts, probably also taking over state and local governments." Trump would be an ideological and not operational leader. Again, this has not taken place. Grave's article, though, uses Yarvin's essay to predict that the Trump administration is planning to install a constitutional monarchy in the United States, with the "con artist" and "moral monster" in the Presidency as its king.

Admittedly, a great deal that Yarvin wants, the Trump administration has provided. Elon Musk and Peter Thiel are the practical incarnations of the ideological morass out of which Yarvin writes, and DOGE cuts to staff, federal oversight, and nonprofit and humanities funding has, along with the administration's assault on unproductive sectors of higher education and high-profile social movements around the country, advanced his project more than it has stymied it. But the specific character of the Trump administration cannot be found in the machinations of shadowy figures at the margins of its scene. Instead, it's worth examining the fragile political alliances that happen to prevail at the moment, which add up to a rough image of the administration's class character.

put-together right-wing operatives of the new administration have attempted to straightforwardly ignore court orders to cease activity until its constitutionality had been established or disproven – but Trump has broken ranks with this plan, contradicting Vance's early attempt to ignore a circuit judge during the first wave of funding freezes. As Palantir CEO Alex Karp recently told CNN:

> We love disruption, and whatever's good for America will be good for Americans and very good for Palantir. Disruption, at the end of the day, exposes things that aren't working. There will be ups and downs. There's a revolution. Some people are going to get their heads cut off. We're expecting to see really unexpected things and to win.

This is the throughline that has characterized previous compositions and decompositions of the Trump movement's ruling bloc – during Trump's first term, it appeared almost entirely unplanned, with Trump often hiring and firing staff based on personal loyalty and malleability. His second administration has introduced a new body, DOGE, which is intended to streamline the destructive measures necessary to bring the executive branch under his control, and to ensure compliance across other institutions in Washington. And as a result, through sheer force of complementary business interests, the ruling clique has held together for months. Disintegrating impulses have often been as personal as they have been impersonal and objective: if the ruling ideas of our society are those of our ruling class, the dreams and delusions of its current, manic vanguard are no exception. Musk's anxious bombast and over-eager fealty to the Trump movement are not a sign of personal disintegration or an imbalanced life. His pathetic, awkward character; his petulant outbursts and lies;

tained reflection on the left-liberal media ecosystem's total separation from anything other than a vanishing layer of professionals, students, and other members of the mediating middle classes: we talk a lot, for example, about the 'white working class,' but sustained investigations of rural political economy are slim. The truth is that there are whole separate worlds nestled throughout America, partitioned along racial and class lines. Our failure to breach between these spheres reflects a combination of subjective failures and an objective hardening of the complex that we've previously termed the color line, but if we intend to make the most of crises to come, we have to start by refusing to compose ourselves along the lines handed down by the ruling bloc.

The good news is that, while we don't have readymade class self-consciousness, neither do our enemies. Cracks are forming in the DOGE clique, and between certain members of that clique and the President's cabinet. Miller and Homan's border policies caused brief friction with the tech bourgeoisie, expressed in an argument within the right wing over H1-B visas. On this point the demand of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs for cheap, skilled labor power contradicts the Miller-Homan fantasy of a sealed border and a self-sufficient white nation – but the coalition held when Musk backed down and admitted that the program was "broken and needed major reform" to "mak[e] it materially more expensive to hire from overseas than domestically." Musk himself may be in line for a demotion after a failed ploy at voter manipulation during a Wisconsin state Supreme Court election, and faces mounting pressure to retire from shareholders. Sam Altman, OpenAI's self-styled guru, has been absent from the scene since Chinese AI venture Deepseek matched the performance of his ChatGPT at a fraction of the computing and monetary cost of the latter; his departure was accompanied by a bitter suit against Musk, alleging unfair competitive practices. These divisions extend inward, to Trump's cabinet: on several occasions, the most

WHAT IS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION?

Donald Trump is the schizophrenic mouthpiece for a contradictory coalition of capitalist interests. Its members include Silicon Valley elites, recently enriched by new volatile and speculative markets and kept afloat by government subsidy; capitalist representatives of a defense industry which increasingly overlaps with the Silicon Valley bourgeoisie; landlords from national firms like Blackstone; and representatives of the FIRE sector. Individual capitalists often straddle lines between categories – the Silicon Valley nouveau-riche, who will be the focus of this essay, typically have one foot in tech and defense, the other in finance. The old agrarian populists, who were prominent during Trump's first campaign season but quickly shelved once he entered office, are sideline detractors from the Trump movement, though they often give themselves a similar amount of credit to Yarvin when describing the trajectory of the past decade. Steve Bannon, for example, identifies the Trump administration's resident billionaires with an "oligarchy" and "technofeudalism" at odds with his own populist nationalism: "In technofeudalism, you're just a digital serf. Your value as a human being, as someone built and made in the image and likeness of God and endowed with the life spirit of the Holy Spirit — they don't consider that. Everything is digital to them." "They don't believe in this country. They believe in this country right now because it protects them and provides some benefits to them."

On the outer layer of this convoluted process sits Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, staffed solely by X, Tesla and SpaceX veterans, Thiel- and Vance-adjacent characters, Stephen Miller's wife and a handful of college-age interns. Clustered around Musk's DOGE are billionaires from his early days as a Silicon Valley aspirant: Peter Thiel, Marc

Andreesen, Balaji Srinivasan and a handful of others, distributed between tech and telecommunications, finance, and the defense industry. The menagerie of Heritage Foundation drafters and billionaire backers that has trailed in their wake dovetails with, and does not simply orchestrate, the new administration's political goals. This is a complex machine without a clearly-demarcated driver's seat, and taken honestly, the maneuverings of its participants look more like matter filling a void than they do a conscious plot by the nation's elites. Several plans are at work – often more than one per 'camp' – and many are simply incompatible.

Mar-a-Lago Accord? – One scheme aligns the Vice President with a portion of the DOGE billionaires: what the Silicon Valley nouveau-riche have taken to calling the "Mar-a-Lago Accord." Vance is the mouthpiece for this project, which intends to weaken the US dollar, enabling debt repayments by other countries to delay a global default, and possibly permitting an end to the US dollar's status as foreign reserve currency. This plan has important allies in the White House, including Council of Economic Advisors Chairman Steve Miran, who coined its name in a 2024 essay, and who recently outlined its rationale in a speech at the Hudson Institute:

> [O]ur financial dominance comes at a cost. While it is true that demand for dollars has kept our borrowing rates low, it has also kept currency markets distorted. This process has placed undue burdens on our firms and workers, making their products and labor uncompetitive on the global stage, and forcing a decline of our manufacturing workforce by over a third since its peak and a reduction in our share of world manufacturing production of 40%.

This implies a necessary challenge to the US dollar's reserve currency status, which Miran claims has "caused persistent

the old guard, who represented a Dixiecrat conservatism at home in the American South and in the rural regions of the Midwest, Elon and the rest of the Silicon Valley bourgeoisie fulfill a role demanded by what DuBois called the "American assumption": "that wealth is mainly the result of its owner's effort and that any average worker can by thrift become a capitalist." The nouveau-riche Silicon Valley billionaires, like Trump during his own first term, occupy a contradictory position in the discourse and self-understanding of the Trump voter: they simultaneously hang, suspended in mid-air, at the most distant station from their supporters, termed geniuses and supra-generational talents; but in the background, no matter how ridiculous it might appear to us, evinced at every rally where they appear and every public event which opens up for questions and answers, they are simultaneously one of the people: proof, in the last instance, of an essential identity between the supporter and their bourgeois representative.

But the American assumption emerged "contemporary with the Cotton Kingdom, which was its most sinister contradiction." The complex interaction of these axes – bourgeois and proletarian, white worker and nonwhite worker, and, increasingly, citizen and noncitizen, patriot and dually-loyal traitor, concrete laborer and out-of-touch activist – is what currently seems to 'polarize' American civil society. It is what makes arriving at summary judgments of Trump's electorate so difficult – not only is this new wave of right-wing retributive violence outpacing and outmoding our old concepts and schemas, it is taking shape in an effectively self-contained information ecosystem; we only regularly encounter it downstream of algorithmic sorting on social media platforms, or simply don't unless we poke around on other forums. Who uses Truth Social, much less Lesswrong or SomethingAwful? Does Silicon Valley's tech-entrepreneur culture seem contiguous with our urban, liberal sensibilities? The new Trump administration should force a serious, susinto the big bourgeoisie by preferential treatment by the administration. On the one hand, this is still a competitive market in the Trump administration, hence Sam Altman's marginal role in recent months and OpenAI's faltering performance since the Deepseek fiasco; on the other hand, this competitive quality of federal-private partnerships through DOGE-adjacency and backchanneling seems to be the point of the new arrangement: to force Trump's bourgeois allies to vie for his favor, giving him an artificially-maintained upper hand and allowing him to perform, in effect, the role of any capitalist state: both encouraging conflict between individual capitalists and maintaining the relative integrity of the market in general. (This role does not extend to his foreign relations or fiscal policy – but the capitalists who will profit most from recent chaos are the DOGE clique, artificially privileged over the other transnational capitals with interests and headquarters housed in the United States. The notion of an "American firm" might have been in decline for the two decades prior to Trump's inauguration, but DOGE, as a coordinating body and a formalization of Trump's prior back-channel relations with Silicon Valley billionaires, has given it new meaning.)

Loose Ends – A few important corners of the administration are missing from this list. The landlords are spread out between Blackrock and other asset managers on one hand and big agricultural firms on the other. The latter have their own internal conflicts with other, less-capitalized farms, all of whom have to fight on the top end over continued subsidies and on the bottom end against their workforce, especially in the Southwest, where farm labor is far more Latino and organized than elsewhere. The farmer subsidies, and the image of the self-made small proprietor, were the backbone of the old Trump campaign's image, but as his early attempt to freeze agricultural subsidies showed, they no longer play the same role in the movement's messaging or self-understanding. Instead of Bannon, Tom Cotton and

currency distortions and contributed… to unsustainable trade deficits." Those trade deficits look like economic restructuring which displaced fixed capital to markets with lower-priced commodity labor power, beginning in the seventies, but which have also propped up a new monetary order, or, as Miran puts it, have "facilitate[d] non-Americans trading with each other." A shift in the opposite direction would happen even as Chinese fixed capital struggles to reterritorialize to Africa, and 'premature deindustrialization' creates simultaneous surplus populations and ballooning service sectors in countries targeted by late-breaking foreign investment.

As Miran's conclusions imply, potentially-disastrous outcomes abound, especially because the last five decades of the world economic order have depended on a strong dollar to offset declining profitability with monetarily-cheapened wages abroad. If this faction successfully erodes US dollar hegemony, and especially if the world shifts away from the US dollar as global reserve currency, it's unclear what would replace it. (The Chinese Yuan does not float on the foreign currency exchange and Chinese monetary policy depends on its being periodically devalued, as is occurring at present, despite a weakening dollar.)

Is this project the secret motive of the entire Trump administration? Recent internal controversy over the first battery of tariffs – borne out in Miran's own speech – suggests not.

Insider Trading – Steve Miran tells listeners that "[t]he best outcome is one in which America continues to create global peace and prosperity and remain the reserve provider, and other countries not only participate in reaping the benefits, but they also participate in bearing the costs." At present, a shift away from the dollar as reserve currency is not backed by the chief of the CEA, but certain ameliorative efforts are. (Interestingly, Miran, the author of the definitive essay on the 'Mar-a-Lago accord,' is not empowered to pursue it openly at the moment.) What does “burden sharing” look like to the White House?

One option would be to take the tariffs without retaliating, averting trade wars and further global economic disorder. With the tariffs’ reduction, outside of the Chinese case, to ten percent, this seems to be the aggregate consensus, though that could shift. Miran’s next three options involve foreign investment in American reshoring and specific industries: “they can stop unfair and harmful trading practices by opening their markets and buying more from America”, “they can boost defense spending and procurement from the US, buying more US-made goods, and taking strain off our servicemembers and creating jobs here” or “they can invest in and install factories in America” to avoid tariffs in general. The final option is the most simple: pay up. “They could simply write checks to the Treasury that help us finance global public goods.”

It is unclear what the initial rationale for the massive first battery of tariffs was, but by the time that Trump reduced all but China’s to 10%, the scheme had turned into blatant market manipulation. Trump announced a sweeping set of tariffs on April 2 at 3:00 PM, CST:

> My fellow Americans, this is Liberation Day. We’ve been waiting for a long time. April second, 2025 will forever be remembered as the day American industry was reborn, the day America’s destiny was reclaimed, and the day that we began to make America wealthy again… For decades our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike. American steelworkers, autoworkers, farmers and skilled craftsmen – we have a lot of them here with us today – they really suffered gravely, they watched in anguish as foreign leaders have stolen our jobs, foreign cheaters have

involved with federal projects clustered around the defense industry. As a result, their data centers are marketed for their current use with AI models, but ‘hyperscaling’ need not be restricted in use to commercial computing.

Popular reporting about these telecommunications companies emphasizes the utopian, technocratic visions of their founders and Silicon Valley backers. But as before, the mirage of some AI-driven, corporate-run utopia is far less important than the real prospects of the firms’ concrete investments in facilities, processing power and communications infrastructure. A recent DARPA project on Chicago’s South Side flags a more likely future: Palo Alto startup PsiQuantum’s computing campus, advertised to computer science students, liberal investors and local property-owners as a new beachhead in technological progress. The gigantic computing center will employ few, help fewer, raise local property values and expel renters, pollute the economically-abandoned neighborhood, and its computing power will be put to political and military purposes. The privately-operated data centers are a similar ‘dual use’ technology: Biden’s first push for further AI and data center development passed the task off on the Department of Energy and Department of Defense; as the project has continued over the past few months, the Trump administration has solicited investment from Altman’s OpenAI, along with its competitors in SoftBank and Oracle, and has directly funded a five hundred billion dollar ‘Stargate’ project with OpenAI, SoftBank, NVIDIA, Microsoft and others.

Cutting through the cruft and speculation: the billionaires who manage these companies rely on massive federal subsidy, which has purchased their compliance – sometimes freely given – with broader federally-guided defense industry projects. This is one point where the varied projects of the technology and telecommunications giants come together: more federal subsidy and more fixed capital with variable, adaptable uses, secured by Silicon Valley’s new entrants

Hopefully not. Should there be elections in three and a half years, onlooking capitalists can reasonably presume that whatever tariffs are put in place under the current administration would not outlive it. Fixed capital investments are financed, like any other venture by a firm, by referring to the investment's projected revenue, and American labor is simply far more expensive than labor anywhere else. If Trump's shadow cabinet wants to bring back American manufacture, they will have to find ways to rig or suspend future elections, and to do so in ways legible to would-be investors. Democratic processualism has, so far, chilled references to a third Trump campaign from all but the Bannonite fringe. It is far more likely that this is, instead of some nefarious scheme to seize power, simply a means to justify the preferential treatment of Trump's bourgeois supporters, helping the new entrants in the defense industry pick up the pieces of a cracked-up American economy, rather than a real attempt to resurrect the white working class via a repetition of the postwar boom. (All efforts to the latter effect will produce unpredictable, chaotic situations which may ultimately be beneficial to aspiring revolutionaries, but which will also, at present, skew in Pete Hegseth's direction.)

Data Barons – What about the rest of the Silicon Valley bourgeoisie? Many of these telecommunications holding companies and firms are grouped under the "Magnificent 7" stocks: Apple, Microsoft, NVIDIA, Alphabet (the parent company of Google), Amazon, Meta (which owns Facebook and Instagram), and Musk's Tesla – largely survivors of the dot-com bubble. Aside from the consumer products and digital storefronts for which they're better known, these conglomerates and firms supply other rentier services (Amazon's web services division) and fixed capital in data centers used to run large language models ('AI'), maintain and sort databases, facilitate cloud computing, and shore up Silicon Valley's vanity projects. The Mag 7 companies are just as important funding sources for the Silicon Valley nouveau riche as federal subsidy, and they are all

> ransacked our factories, and foreign scavengers have torn apart our once-beautiful American dream.

Turmoil followed, and recession indicators piled up, concluding with a frenetic bond market as countries moved to sell off US reserve assets. Trump then took to Truth Social at 9:30 on April 9th, advising that "NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO BUY!!" Three hours later, just past noon CST, he posted to Truth Social announcing the non-China tariffs were reduced, the market opened back up, and it rallied – how briefly has yet to be seen. In a subsequent Oval Office meeting, he went around a circle of billionaires and tallied their profits from buying at the trough of the initial dip: "This is Charles Schwab. It's not just a company, it's actually an individual. He made two and a half billion today, and he made nine hundred million." The crowd present in the Oval Office laughed.

Beyond standard-fare corruption there is not pre-existing unity among the various members of the Trump administration on any of these questions. On April 8, Peter Navarro laid out a plan for the reshoring of American production: "there's gonna be plenty of jobs for robots, plenty of jobs for humans" at the domestic Apple factories. Four days later, Trump cut tariffs to phones. The acting body has no idea what its head is thinking.

Defense Industry – Another faction of the administration includes Silicon Valley's defense industry startup Palantir. Miran's speech effectively attempted to force other countries to buy American defense industry contracts, which would take pressure *not* off of "our servicemembers" but instead off of the capitalists whose firms stand to benefit from a preferential market (and, it stands to reason, a volatile international order further polarized around a US-China trade war).

But the motives of these actors, even at Palantir, are internally incongruous. The aspirations of Shyam Sankar, CTO of Palantir and vocal supporter of the DOGE shadow-cabinet, are outlined in an article from October of 2024, called "The Defense Reformation." In a meandering series of theses, Sankar outlines an in-house mythology wherein the great leaders of American industry are artificially hemmed in by federal oversight and "legacy" firms are kept lazy by subsidy; he calls for the privatization of the defense industry and an end to the disbursements that have kept its leading firms artificially profitable despite routine failures and constantly-missed deadlines:

> Cost-reimbursed independent research and development (IRAD) is an indulgence. It isn't real R&D. Cost-type contracting enables contractors to play with house money (reimbursed by taxpayers). Private R&D in the commercial world far outstrips government R&D. The 1960s are gone. Companies must invest their own capital — their asses must be in the hot seat if we want innovation. Apple didn't charge you for their failed self-driving car in your last iPhone purchase. Contractors shouldn't be able to charge you when their lab experiments run amok, either.

On a number of points, Sankar's essay agrees with the rest of the Silicon Valley ideologists: "We seem to generally appreciate that Usain Bolt is more than a generational talent… [b]ut this is also true for Tom Mueller, Elon Musk, Palmer Luckey, Brian Schimpf, Ryan Tseng, and the Founders at the First Breakfast." It aims to break with "the communist conformity that's slowing us down" by liberating the 'leaders' of various Silicon Valley firms from specious oversight and cost-plus subsidies… including, of course, Sankar himself. This is of a piece with Yarvin's reference to a CEO figure capable of conducting the affairs of the nation, but beneath this surface ideological agreement lie intractable tactical divergences with other blocs of Sankar's class, most importantly regarding federal awards and subsidy.

Shyam Sankar's vision of the privatization of the defense industry demands the introduction of real competitive pressures to its market. But Elon Musk's business model, Marc Andreesen's, and even in certain ventures Thiel's are wholly incompatible with this demand. Even restricting its application to defense, Musk's famously disaster-prone and otherwise-unprofitable SpaceX is increasingly integrated with the defense industry; Palantir has depended on multiple billions in federal awards over its two decades of existence, and every notable AI venture has partnered with agencies at the Pentagon in recent months. Federal disbursements have provided the space and forgiveness necessary to launch many of the firms whose representatives now cluster around the President. This is why Sankar's vision hasn't been carried out in full – not because of insufficient sway in a mahogany boardroom, but because of the bottom lines which determine the decisions made in those boardrooms. Its selective integration into US monetary policy, with Miran demanding other countries buy American defense industry contracts, only underscores its congruence with a foundational myth of the Trump administration: the reshoring of American industrial production, in particular its "Defense Industrial Base."

As accords with their industry and class interests, the defense industry entrants at Palantir promise to "resurrect the American Industrial Base" by breaking the monopolies of the five major defense firms: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, RTX, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics. This matches a broader promise by the Trump administration to reshore American production, one that's persisted since Trump's first inauguration, when he promised public works and defense manufacture would return to rural America – to popular acclaim among his crowd. But beyond what these businessmen say – do they mean any of it? Does Navarro, or Miran, or Trump?