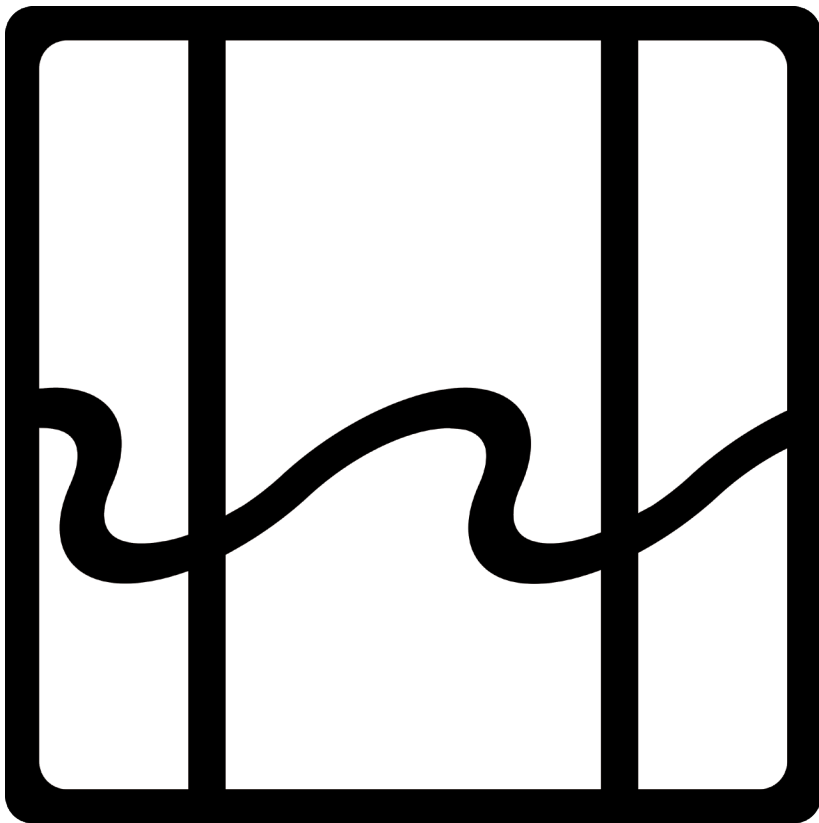


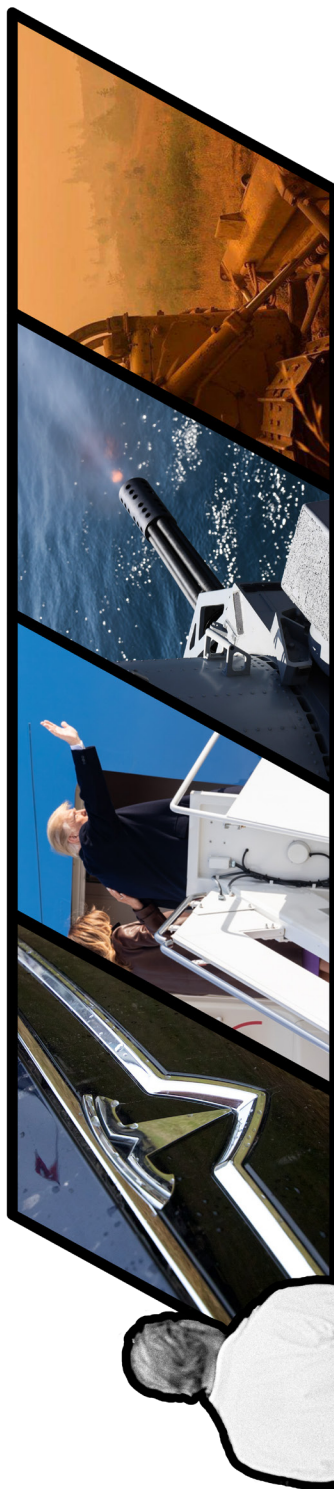
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**ON THE TRUMP
BLITZKRIEG**

and folded them into his project. Musk constantly vents sheer idiocy, yet he's the wealthiest person alive and controls one of the few social media platforms with mass reach. The MAGA movement has a cadre of professional operatives, some of whom are young and energized while others are savvy and experienced.

Some of us were surprised that such an ambitious and profoundly unpopular project could ascend to such heights of power. They were not surprised; they were prepared. Describing the Department of State in the Project 2025 *Mandate for Leadership*, Kiron K. Skinner frames the incoming Trump administration as a minoritarian faction within the broader U.S. State bureaucracy. He anticipated stark resistance to a "conservative" agenda because "large swaths of the State Department's workforce are left-wing."¹¹ (Though, of course, "left" means something entirely different to us, the point here is that they are internal enemies.) Nevertheless, they built a strong-enough coalition that they are now dictating the policies of American government. They are playing by Carl Schmitt's rules: as the sovereign, Trump gets to define the exceptions. They planned to have Trump sign these 70-some executive orders immediately upon taking office. Will they be deemed legal? Does it matter? There's no legal barrier to a *fait accompli*. They don't need to win all hearts and minds. In a hegemonic struggle, the powers that be are not trying to get you to agree that they're right; they're trying to convince you that they're the only way out of a crisis. The point of Trump's blitzkrieg is to make us ask "Why even bother?"

Here's why we bother: the question of political limits is a question of social force. We still can build our social force. As Stuart Hall said, "no victories are permanent or final."¹² The point now is to resist the idea that we've lost the battle before it's even begun. Now is the time to bother our enemies.

11 Paul Dans and Steven Groves (eds.), *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise 2025* (The Heritage Foundation, 2023).

12 Stuart Hall, *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*, ed. Sally Davison, et al. (Duke University Press, 2017).

Musk does the Nazi salute and helms the absurd DOGE. MAGA shithheads celebrate chauvinistic nationalism and white supremacy. The right is ascendant and it feels like we are surrounded.

Trump's blitzkrieg forces us to become reactive, impairing our inquiry. How does labor organize without an NLRB?⁸ Where is it safe for pregnant, queer, and/or trans people? What can we do for our friends and family who are losing their jobs? Where are the ICE raids and deportations happening this week? These are all pertinent questions, of course; we need to answer them. But it's also worth pausing to reflect. As always, we must analyze the conjuncture while we strategize and respond creatively.

So, here's a deeper reason why the metaphor "blitzkrieg" is apt for us to describe the Trump strategy: shock and awe can make it hard to assess the material realities. For us, a substantial part of our problem is confusion about how to grapple with a political spectacle that obscures the concrete work Trump and his world have done. As historians now recognize, the German army never articulated a military doctrine of blitzkrieg.⁹ Hitler is reported to have derided the term, calling it "completely idiotic."¹⁰ To the Germans at the start of World War II, the invasions were simply about applying available technology and capacity to the battlefield. Military units were carefully positioned and forces energized, then unleashed. The opposing armies, though numerically superior in some cases, were simply outmaneuvered. Reeling from defeat, the word "blitzkrieg" was invented by non-Germans to describe the attacks.

Like Germany's neighbors, we're also victims of the psychological dimension of blitzkrieg. Although we knew *something* was coming, we're still struggling to think clearly and recognize that these attacks didn't come out of nowhere. The right's strategy is the logical application of its power. And, frankly, the architects of this moment had drafted a plan well in advance. Trump, while puerile and lacking a consistent ideology, is a skilled political organizer. He held dozens of large rallies in 2024, raised over a billion dollars, defeated challengers

8 Hypothetically, the end of the NLRB could actually provide an opportunity for a revival of something like the early 1930s labor illegalism that the institution was designed to contain. See "[No NLRB? No Problem!](#)" *Industrial Worker*, February 7, 2025.

9 Azar Gat, *War and Strategy in the Modern World: From Blitzkrieg to Unconventional Terrorism* (Routledge, 2020).

10 David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (Simon & Schuster, 2014).

On the Trump Blitzkrieg

by S. Darby

In the first five weeks of Trump's second term, *The New York Times* ran six separate opinion pieces describing the experience as a "blitzkrieg."¹ One reader wrote to express how, "we've witnessed a rapid onslaught... of executive orders, proclamations and mandates, including the firing of at least a dozen inspectors general."² On February 22, the Editorial Board wrote that "Mr. Trump has waged a concerted and well-choreographed assault on the institutions of American government and the longstanding principles of its foreign policy..."³ David Wallace-Wells framed it as:

[A] blitzkrieg against core functions of the state, operating largely outside the boundaries set by history, precedent, and constitutional law, and designed to reduce the shape and purpose of government power to the whims, and spite, of a single man. Or perhaps two men.⁴

That newspaper was hardly the only mainstream outlet relying on the moment's most salient military metaphor. Would we echo this blitzkrieg discourse to describe the whirlwind of executive actions, the storm within the administrative agencies, and the spectacular bluster coming from the U.S. federal government? I think we should.

But first, let's distinguish our position from that of the liberals. Lately, the typical use of the term "blitzkrieg" reflects, in large part, the shock of loss that Democrats are experiencing. Steve Bannon gleefully explained this as an intended effect of the MAGA strategy:

When you're winning, it's like blitzkrieg... They're surrendering

1 Carolyn Faggioni, et al., "[Assessing Trump's 'Wrecking Ball' First Week](#)," January 28, 2025; David Wallace-Wells, "[This Isn't Reform. It's Sabotage](#)," February 5, 2025; Charlie Savage, "[Trump Brazenly Defies Laws in Escalating Executive Power Grab](#)," February 5, 2025; Noah Millman, "[Welcome to America's Fourth Great Constitutional Rupture](#)," February 10, 2025; Zeynep Tufekci, "[The Pharmaceutical Industry Heads Into Musk's Wood Chipper](#)," February 11, 2025; and The Editorial Board, "[Who Will Stand Up to Trump on Ukraine?](#)," February 22, 2025.

2 Faggioni, "Assessing Trump's 'Wrecking Ball' First Week."

3 The Editorial Board, "Who Will Stand Up to Trump on Ukraine?"

4 Wallace-Wells, "This Isn't Reform. It's Sabotage."

*without a fight. This is extraordinary, and that's their urgency: You got to keep pounding. Don't let them up. Don't let them have a breath. Don't let them regroup. Don't let them organize.*⁵

Truly, in the face of the blitzkrieg, the liberals can't stop Trump now. It's just like Denmark's historic inability to stop the Nazis. The Democratic Party is in crisis. But we don't own their electoral loss, and we can't do anything about their powerlessness.

A major reason liberals are bound to keep losing is that they're myopically focused on the blitzkrieg's illegality. Laurence Tribe described Trump as "the most lawless and scofflaw president we have ever seen."⁶ For Noah Millman in the *New York Times*, "[t]he question is whether [the Trump blitzkrieg] will transform our constitutional order fruitfully yet again or accelerate a final degeneration into Caesarism." For us, on the other hand, we wouldn't defend the neoliberal *status quo ante*—except maybe insofar as it provided easier terrain for us to navigate. Trump's lack of respect for the Constitution isn't his greatest crime. Rather, we're responding to his amplified repression and how he's consolidated power around a certain pole of economic nationalism.⁷

We also recognize that the mainstream media trades in hyperbole, outrage, and moralism. David Wallace-Wells admits in his February 5 piece that, "[a]t the moment, it is hard to see it but hysterically." For us, the media's clichés are generally distractions when what we need is analysis.

And yet, we have a few reasons to embrace the term blitzkrieg. First, we register the actions of Trump, Musk, and this new authoritarian rightwing movement in January through March as if they were also attacks... *on us actual "leftists," as well as on ordinary proletarians in general.* They don't know us very well and their rhetoric shows they certainly don't understand us, but it seems clear that we are the real enemies they militate against. The disappearances and attempted deportations of Mahmoud Khalil and other participants in the Gaza

solidarity movement are the evidence of this. The more idealistic among the Trumpists (Thiel, Yarvin, Bannon) seek to forge an autocratic state that ruthlessly polices and exploits its proletarians. The more pragmatic ones see opportunities for power and personal profit. They haven't won our consent. So, to everyone in that coalition, we are an obstacle to those ambitions, a problem to be solved.

Second, though a cliché, "blitzkrieg" nicely captures the shock of these attacks. The word evokes the terror of being overwhelmed by an unanticipated oppositional force, the chaos in our camp. We imagine the noise of tanks, artillery, and aircraft. The blitzkrieg renders our resistance fragmented and uncoordinated. Material defeat is coupled with psychological pain, disorientation, the loss of control and hope. It interrupts the rhythms of daily life, breaks time—moments and days advance suddenly, without affording any period of reflection. That's what it feels like lately. Laurence Tribe is overwhelmed by the task of addressing all of the administration's illegal acts ("The very fact that the illegal actions have come out with the speed of a rapidly firing Gatling gun makes it very hard for people to focus on any one of them. That's obviously part of the strategy," he writes). For us, there is a rapid upending of our lives, projects, and strategic interventions. We marvel at the fast pace of change, and only too late do we recognize our unpreparedness. We are not ready to answer the burning questions of the moment.

When Trump was reelected, political analysts predicted economic disaster and corollary civil unrest. At the time, we knew it would be naive to assume that everything Trump threatened would actually happen. We also knew it was equally foolish to ignore the potential and actual threats presented by his victory. We saw *something* coming, but didn't know what it would be. It was spectacle, no less so for our recognition of this fact.

Once in office, the administration didn't delay in implementing its plans. Trump signed an executive order that denies the constitutional right to citizenship for anyone born in the U.S. The Senate is now pushing forward a budget that funds mass deportations and a border wall. Trump's allies propose camps. They want to deputize 10,000 private citizens, empowering them to round up their neighbors. Trump removed a member of the NLRB, denying it quorum, emboldening Amazon to refuse to recognize unions. The EEOC will sue to stop what it calls "discrimination" against Christians and white people.

5 Isaac Arnsdorf and Natalie Allison, "[In Trump's Whirlwind First Two Months, Speed and Aggression Are the Point](#)," *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2025.

6 Steven Greenhouse, "[Trump's Disregard for US Constitution 'a Blitzkrieg on the Law', Legal Experts Say](#)," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2025.

7 As Jamie Merchant explores in *Endgame: Economic Nationalism and Global Decline* (Reaktion, 2024), economic nationalism has increasingly become an ideology shared, in a variety of forms, by not only the Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S., but also by many "socialists" here and abroad from Bernie Sanders to Xi Jinping. See review in this issue of *Heatwave*.