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Political and Geostrategic **OBSERVATORY** of the United States

KEEPING THE COALITION TOGETHER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Lincoln Mitchell, based in New York City and San Francisco, is a political analyst and a writer who teaches at Columbia University. He has contributed to CNN, Opinion, NBC News, the San Francisco Examiner, and other outlets. Lincoln has authored nine books covering topics from democratic development to urban politics to baseball.

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Midterm elections can have a unifying effect on a political party. In 2026, there were a number of high-profile primaries for the House were Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) or DSA adjacent insurgents sought to unseat long time Members of Congress in New York, Colorado and elsewhere. Some succeeded and some did not. There were also some extremely competitive Democratic primaries that were divisive and negative, perhaps none more so than the Michigan Senate primary. The nastiness, although largely one-sided, in that primary was overshadowed by the general election in which Republican candidate Mike Rogers ran against eventual winner Abdul El-Sayed on a platform of bigotry and hatred, but the primary was no picnic either.

Despite all that, by September most Democrats found ourselves hoping candidates about whom we did not know all that much would win. It didn't matter to most of us if a candidate in another state was a smidge too pro-Israel, not as committed to Medicare for all, a tad too woke, more enthralled than necessary with socialist ideas or unwilling to push the billionaires enough. If they were Democrats, we were rooting for them and, in many cases, donating to them as well. That approach is essential not just for winning elections but for holding together an anti-fascist coalition, like the one that emerged in the late summer and autumn of 2026.

Holding that unity together in this new environment will be difficult. We are already seeing cracks in the unity in the leadership races in the House and the Senate. Hakeem Jeffries seems to have solidified his position as the next Speaker of the House, but Chuck Schumer is not guaranteed to be the Senate Majority Leader. In many ways, this lack of unity is good. The Democratic Party, while less ideologically all-encompassing than at most times in its history still has clear center-left and further-left factions that have meaningful and important policy differences. There is nothing wrong with that, and there is nothing wrong with the two sides doing what they can as they pursue their policy goals. However, when it tips into taking their collective eye off the ball of defeating fascism, it becomes a problem.

This potential for division will increase as the Democratic presidential primary accelerates. It is now probably easier to name the prominent Democrats who are not seeking their party's presidential nominee in 2028 than all those who are but suffice it to say that it will be an extremely crowded field. Competitive Democratic primaries are good for the party and frequently produce stronger more prepared nominees. However, balancing that with the need to hold an anti-fascist coalition together will not be easy.

For much of the last two years I have avoided conversations about who might be the Democratic nominee in 2028. I viewed that question as not important and somewhat peripheral to the task of fighting fascism. It is no longer possible to avoid that conversation. It

will be part of the political air we will breathe from now until some time in late spring of 2028. While it clearly matters whether Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez , Rahm Emanuel or somebody between those two poles of the Democratic presidential field is nominated, it is more important that the process of answering that question does not tear the party apart.

Ironically, by most historical measures, the Democratic Party is more unified ideologically than at any time in its history. The difference between Chuck Schumer and Chris Van Hollen, who is challenging him for leadership of the Democratic majority in the senate or even between Emanuel and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, is much less than that between the two extremes of the party in 2000, 1980, 1960 or in the pre-World War II era. However, during this campaign season both sides elevated these fights to an unnecessarily unhelpful degree.

The huge Democratic victory in the midterms was not a triumph for the centrist or DSA wings of the party. Rather, it was a victory for the notion that the party must be broad enough to elect Abdul El-Sayed and Roy Cooper to the Senate and Claire Valdez and Zach Dembo to the House. Keeping that in mind will be important over the next two years. The battle between Schumer and Van Hollen may seem very important now because of its proximity, but in the broader swath of American politics and the fight against fascism, it is peripheral.

Calls for unity are pollyannish and unhelpful. That is not what I am trying to do. Rather, I want Democrats in congress and Democratic voters to recognize that what happened a few weeks ago is a big blow to the MAGA fascist movement, but it is not the final one. If you believed fascism was a threat a month ago, you should still believe that now-recognize that the fight against fascism has taken a step forward, but also that the threat remains. That is the ball on which we must keep our eyes. Part of that means holding whoever leads the party in the Senate and whoever is the nominee in 2029 accountable, but it also means recognizing that fighting over the details of bills that will be vetoed anyway may not be the best use of our time and energies.

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