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USA presidential elections

US Presidential Elections: Requiem for a threatened coup d'état

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Vote-counting in the US presidential elections is not yet over although Biden seems to be close to victory. [1] A view from the US. [IVP]

Legal challenges notwithstanding, Joe Biden's apparent victory in both the popular and electoral college vote brings to a close a sordid US presidential election. Voters were offered the choice between Trump, a reactionary, racist, sexist, climate change denying loud and would-be dictator, and ex-vice president and longtime senator Joe Biden, the moderate Democrat offered to the electorate after the Democratic party leadership managed to torpedo the candidacy of Bernie Sanders and his popular calls for universal health coverage through Medicare and the forgiveness of college loan debt.

Trump's Three-Prong Strategy

Trump's campaign strategy was not based on a program to address the twin crisis of the pandemic and unemployment, and certainly not as a climate change "denier" to confront issues such as the nearly uncontrollable widespread fires that have killed dozens on the US west coast, most certainly exacerbated by global warming. Rather, Trump who trailed Biden steadily between 5-11 percent in most polls for months pursued a three prong approach: The first was to denigrate Biden as senile, beholden to his party's supposed left wing, and through the business dealings of his son Hunter, corrupt. He called Biden's running mate Senator Kamala Harris, a former California attorney general a socialist and lobbed racist and sexist taunts against her. None of this gained traction, even with the reactionary and overtly pro-Trump cable news channel Fox. His accusations against supposed "crimes" by Biden and Obama were so outrageous that even his lapdog attorney general William Barr refused to take them seriously.

The second line of attack was to threaten the use of violence and voter intimidation by encouraging far right gun-toting militia men. His call during the first presidential debate for one such group, the "Proud Boys" to "stand back and stand by" was widely seen as encouraging violence to limit potential Democratic voter turnout.

The third line of attack was to delegitimize the elections itself, claiming that the Democrats were planning on stealing the election through massive mail-in and absentee voting. The claims of voter fraud were refuted by election scholars and experts and never really taken up by the right-wing media or any but the most far right fringe members of the Republican party. This line of attack was designed to prepare a legal challenge to any outcome that involved Trump losing. In the closing weeks and days of the campaign he insisted, contrary to all technological, legal, and administrative precedent that the winner must be declared on election night even though the vote counting methods used by scores of states have long resulted in results being reported in the hours or days after the polls closed. The pandemic also resulted in huge numbers of absentee and mail-in votes also slowing vote counting as voters sought to avoid the dangers of in-person voting.

Trump was always alone in his most extreme declarations and dark threats. Neither Fox news nor Republican senate majority leader Mitch McConnell accompanied him down this path. The military already made it clear that it would not be intervening in the elections. There was very little reported election site violence on election day although angry pro-Trump mobs gathered outside of an Arizona office where votes were being counted.

The Democrats also showed that they were not above using legal maneuvers to undermine democracy for their own

partisan advantage. In Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Arizona they succeeded in excluding the Green party ticket of Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker.

In the run up to the election the US left debated possible scenarios of an attempted Trump "coup." Several union locals passed resolutions in favor of a strike in the event of an attempt to overturn a Biden victory. Although as of the night of Wednesday, November 4 several key states had yet to finish counting and reporting their votes it is becoming more and more clear that Biden will win the necessary 270 electoral votes and that Trump's lawsuits will face an uphill fight to overturn the results. Without the vocal support of his party, Fox news and other reactionary news outlets, it appears that this was the coup d'état that didn't happen. The Republicans on the other hand, look poised to hold onto the Senate which will continue to pose obstacles to a second round of stimulus payments to unemployed workers, employers, and state governments and stymie Biden's pursuit of the limited measures he would pursue to confront the current crises.

There could still be need for street mobilizations in the unlikely case that Trump got the Supreme court or state courts to overturn the election results. There still could be violence by right wing militias especially if Trump continues to tell them the election was stolen, but this too seems unlikely.

The struggle continues

When the election is settled struggles will arise for effective measures against the rapidly spreading pandemic, mass unemployment, threats of eviction, the rapidly growing environmental disasters, and the fight against racist police violence. Assuming he will be the next US president Biden's support for fracking, opposition to Medicare for all, and flat refusal to consider defunding police departments should help rekindle the energy displayed during the many weeks of mass antiracist protest.

Milwaukee

November 4, 2020

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[1] *The Guardian*, 5 November 2020 "[Biden says he's on course to win US election as Trump threatens to fight outcome](#)".