

Trump's conviction in New York and the 2024 crisis election

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The conviction of Donald Trump on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in his trial in New York is a significant event in an election year dominated by an unprecedented and intensifying political crisis and factional warfare within the ruling class.

On Friday, President Joe Biden spoke from the White House on the case. The conviction, Biden declared, reaffirmed “the American principle that no one is above the law” and upheld our “justice system,” which has “endured for nearly 250 years” as “the cornerstone of America.”

The *New York Times* wrote in an editorial that “the greatest good to come out of this sordid case is the proof that the rule of law binds everyone, even former presidents.”

What a fraud! Trump has not been convicted for his serious, fundamental crimes against the American people—above all, his attempt to overthrow the Constitution and the results of the 2020 election in a fascistic coup. The conviction, rather, relates to the falsification of business records to cover up a tawdry sex scandal in the run-up to the 2016 election.

As for Biden's attempt to posture as a defender of “the rule of law,” the present occupant of the White House has repudiated international legal conventions on human rights and denounced tribunals such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in order to defend Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Among sections of the population there may be hope that Trump's conviction will bring some measure of accountability for the crimes of the fascist former president. But there are no simple solutions to the deep-rooted and terminal crisis of American democracy.

It is not clear what impact the conviction will have on Trump's personal fate, though the former president

responded by going on the offensive. In a fascistic rant Friday, Trump denounced the trial as “rigged” and called the judge overseeing the case the “devil.”

Virtually the entire Republican Party leadership rallied to Trump's support and denounced the verdict as a “weaponization” of the legal system. From so-called moderates such as Senators Mitch McConnell and Susan Collins to fascists like Christian nationalist House Speaker Mike Johnson and QAnon supporter Marjorie Taylor Greene, Republicans lined up to condemn the trial.

There are already indications that Republicans will take retaliatory actions against the Democrats, including attempting to keep Biden off of the ballot in states they control.

The election is unfolding under conditions of a staggering global and domestic crisis, overseen by two rival factions of a corporate and financial oligarchy that is careening toward world war and dictatorship.

The Democrats have sought to sideline Trump not because of his crimes against democracy, but because significant sections of the ruling class do not consider him to be a reliable steward of US imperialist foreign policy.

The next five months before November will unfold under conditions of an escalating war in Ukraine against Russia, bringing the world closer than ever to a nuclear holocaust. This has been the central priority of the Biden administration, which has worked to forge an alliance with the same Republican Party leaders now lining up behind Trump.

The very day of the Trump verdict, the White House announced it was ending its ban on Kiev's use of US weapons to attack Russian territory, a massive escalation that will lead to all-out war.

The escalation of global war requires ever more

violent attacks on democratic rights at home. Biden is spearheading a nationwide police rampage against peaceful campus protests opposing his support for the Israeli genocide.

On the morning of the Trump verdict, police tore down a protest encampment at Wayne State University in Detroit and arrested 12 students. On Friday morning, police attacked an encampment at the University of California Santa Cruz, arresting 80.

The present political situation in the United States is the culmination of a protracted crisis of democratic forms of government in the United States.

It is almost exactly 50 years since the resignation of Richard Nixon as a result of the crisis triggered by his reelection campaign's break-in at the Watergate Hotel headquarters of the Democratic National Committee. Then, naked criminality in the White House prompted Congress to prepare Nixon's impeachment to force his removal from office. The Supreme Court backed its efforts by ordering Nixon to release recordings of his discussions with his co-conspirators.

Far from resolving the problem, Nixon's resignation set the stage for a series of political crises—from the impeachment of Bill Clinton over a consensual sexual relationship, to the theft of the 2000 election by means of a right-wing bloc on the Supreme Court, to the attempted coup of January 6.

The fundamental cause is the growth of international and national contradictions of American capitalism that have no progressive solution within the existing economic, social and political framework—in particular, the turn by US imperialism to war as a means of offsetting the global decline in its economic position, which has led to 30 years of uninterrupted wars of aggression and conquest, culminating today in the initial stages of a new world war.

This has been accompanied by a colossal growth of social inequality, an unprecedented concentration of wealth at the very top, and de facto rule by a corporate-financial oligarchy. In its New Year statement, the US Socialist Equality Party documented levels of social inequality that are incompatible with democratic forms of rule. We wrote:

The United States is home to the highest concentration of billionaires in the world, whose

collective wealth, according to Americans for Tax Fairness, rose to \$5.2 trillion in November 2023, the highest amount ever recorded. As of the third quarter of 2023, the top 10 percent of the US population owned two-thirds of total wealth, while the bottom half owned only 2.6 percent.

This oligarchy exercises effective dictatorial rule. In a country of 333 million people, the entire political system is dominated by two reactionary parties—one increasingly fascistic, the other focused on one question above all, the escalation of war.

Much will transpire over the five months remaining until the November election. It is possible that neither Trump nor Biden will end up as the candidates of the two corporate-controlled parties. But one thing is certain: the entire political establishment will continue its lurch to the right.

For the working class, the central issue is to intervene into this crisis with its own program and policies. Not a single problem confronting workers can be resolved without a frontal assault on the wealth and privileges of the capitalist oligarchy. A crisis such as that engulfing the United States and the entire world cannot be resolved by tinkering around the edges. What is required is a complete reorganization of social, economic and political life.

This requires a program against war and oligarchy, and for equality, peace and genuine democracy—that is, a socialist program for the overthrow of capitalism, the root cause of the crisis.



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