

Two weeks until election day, Trump's coup plot is far advanced

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When Joe Biden took the oath of office on January 20, 2021, two weeks after the coup attempt of January 6, the new Democratic president triumphantly declared that “democracy has prevailed” and that Trump’s attempt to overturn the election “will never happen, not today, not tomorrow, not ever.”

Four years later, the coup plotting by Trump and the Republican Party is not only happening, the preparations are further advanced than in 2020-21. Trump and his forces have learned from the tactical failures of their first attempt. They have taken advantage of the Democrats’ policy of granting de facto amnesty to the January 6 plotters to plan the conspiracy that could play out in the coming weeks.

If he loses the election to Kamala Harris, Trump is preparing to declare victory on election night, accuse immigrants of massive voter fraud, disrupt the vote by the Electoral College and block the certification of the vote by Congress on January 6, 2025, through the combined efforts of Republicans inside the Capitol and fascist thugs outside. The outcome could well be the installation of a fascist president, rejected in three consecutive elections by the popular vote of the American people, as dictator.

Far from moderating his threats against democracy in the lead-up to the election, Trump has intensified them. In an interview before corporate CEOs in Chicago last week, Trump said the January 6 coup attempt was about “love and peace,” and that the election is “100 percent crooked.” In September, he said ballots were being lost in the mail, and the postal service was a “poorly run mess,” rehashing his 2020 lies. He has repeatedly accused “illegal” immigrants of voting, and, according to a Gallup poll, 74 percent of Republicans and 44 percent of independents are susceptible to his lies about voter fraud.

Having fertilized the soil with the Big Lie, Trump, his network of lawyers and his allies in Congress and state legislatures are preparing to delay and block the certification of votes at the local, state and federal levels. Marc Harris, a lawyer who investigated the January 6 coup attempt for the House of Representatives, said:

Those seeking to wreak havoc with respect to the 2024 election are way ahead of where they were in 2020 in terms of laying the groundwork for and widespread dissemination of the theories and talking points and lies they will use to challenge the results of the election.

In total, 180 lawsuits have been filed by Republicans alleging voter fraud, far more than before the 2020 election. The Republican

National Committee says it will deploy a “poll watcher army” on election day to make allegations of fraud and report them to Republican headquarters, and it is likely such groups will also be used to intimidate voters.

Donald Sherman, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, told *The Atlantic*:

What seems clear now is that there is a coordinated strategy to have more election deniers who are questioning the results of an election that hasn’t happened yet to serve as poll watchers and to make it easier for those kinds of conspiracy-theory-charged partisan poll watchers to create confusion and disruption in the process.

The plan is based on violence. At Trump’s behest, supporters have initiated a wave of threats against local election officials, with *Politico* reporting that

this year, law enforcement at all levels have described unprecedented levels of threats targeting every phase of the process. These days, the Justice Department routinely announces arrests of people sending vile messages to lawmakers, election officials and judges.

State legislatures are preparing once again to present alternate slates of electors in states that Harris wins, despite changes in federal law aimed at blocking such efforts. Republicans control both chambers of the state legislature in Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina and Wisconsin, critical swing states that combine for 53 electoral votes, more than the margin of victory in 2000, 2004, 2016 or 2020. Three of these four states have Democratic governors, as do Michigan and Pennsylvania. All these states could become “battlegrounds” in a literal as well as metaphorical sense.

The crisis atmosphere is intensified by the fact that control over each house of Congress is uncertain, and the new House of Representatives will be seated on January 3, just three days before the Electoral College certification process in a joint session of Congress. As the sitting US vice president, Harris herself will preside over the certification as Senate president. If she wins and if a new mob gathers at the Capitol on January 6, she will be a physically vulnerable target.

How exactly January 6, 2025 will play out is a question that no one

can predict, but it is a subject of serious debate within the state. Earlier this summer, a network of prominent former national security advisers, generals, congressmen, governors and senators met secretly to game out the events of that day in real time, using hypothetical prompts based on January 6, 2021.

They published their results in a documentary titled *War Game*, which focuses on the possibility of the military intervening in the crisis. In that scenario, the Democratic candidate wins the election narrowly but elements of the D.C. National Guard fraternize with fascist protesters and allow them into the Capitol to block the certification.

A small number of active-duty generals break ranks and support the coup attempt. Crowds gather at a handful of state capitols demanding that state legislatures vote to decertify pro-Democratic slates, with support from “constitutional sheriffs” and pro-fascist police departments. The administration fears invoking the Insurrection Act because it is unclear whether soldiers will follow orders, or whether the invocation will produce an uncontrollable social explosion.

In the event that neither candidate secures 270 electoral votes in Congress on January 6, the House of Representatives will determine the outcome of the election, with one vote per state delegation. Regardless of who wins control over the House, the Republicans will almost certainly retain their advantage in state delegations. Legal challenges from both camps will wind through the courts of appeals and end up in the Supreme Court, where a far-right majority will have the final say.

Trump and the Republicans’ fascistic conspiracies express the interests of ruthless sections of the financial oligarchy. When Trump refers to the “enemy within,” he means above all the working class and all opposition in the United States to the policies of the capitalist ruling elite.

The fact that, under these conditions, the contest between Harris and Trump is a dead heat is above all a devastating indictment of the Democratic Party and the Biden-Harris administration. Trump left office a beaten political figure, widely viewed as responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths from COVID-19 and a stolen election attempt that was popular only among his most fervent supporters.

He is, however, the beneficiary of enormous frustration. The Democrats have spent the past four years escalating war abroad, including the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, and the genocide in Gaza, which has lasted for more than a year and is now developing into a regional war throughout the Middle East.

The Democrats have nothing to propose to address the massive social crisis in the United States. An article in the *Financial Times* yesterday on the figures she would place in charge of economic policy noted that “the vice-president has distinguished her plans from those of president Biden, suggesting she would shift further to the centre and be more willing to hear ideas from—and listen to the concerns of—corporate America.”

Harris and surrogates are appealing to the Republican Party, including warmongers like Liz Cheney, and attempting to present Harris as the responsible steward of the crown jewels of American imperialism and the capitalist state.

Regardless of how the election and its aftermath play out, the crisis underlying the breakdown of bourgeois democratic forms of rule will only intensify. What remains of American “democracy” is collapsing under the pressure of immense social inequality, the loss of American imperialism’s position as world hegemon and global war.

In the period of its revolutionary rise, the bourgeoisie was capable of making a popular mass appeal in defense of equality and basic democratic rights. On February 11, 1861, the day he left Springfield, Illinois on his long journey to assume office in Washington, President-Elect Abraham Lincoln addressed a crowd that had gathered to greet him in Indianapolis, Indiana. To rapturous applause, he told them:

To the salvation of this Union there needs but one single thing—the hearts of a people like yours. When the people rise in masses in behalf of the union and the liberties of their country, truly may it be said, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”... It is your business to rise up and preserve the Union and liberty, for yourselves and not for me.

On January 6, 2021, by contrast, the Democratic Party was prepared to accept the opening of the gates of hell rather than risk the people “rising in masses.” On the campaign trail, Harris and the Democrats hardly mention that Trump is planning to steal the election for fear of triggering social protests. The Democrats’ sole concern today is guaranteeing an outcome that does not impact the war aims of American imperialism.

American democracy is at death’s door. The turn to fascism and dictatorship cannot be opposed within the existing political and economic system.

The Socialist Equality Party is fighting to establish the political independence of the working class, to break free from the Democrats and the Republicans. The fight against the growth of the extreme right is only possible to the extent that a program articulates the real interests of the working class, the vast majority of the population.

The fight for the social and democratic rights of the working class requires a frontal assault on the domination of the corporate and financial oligarchy, the expropriation of the wealth of the rich, and the establishment of democratic control over the “commanding heights” of the economy, the gigantic banks and corporations, in the US and internationally. That is, it requires a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system.



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