



# US elections: Democrat President, Divided Congress

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International Fri, 06/11/2020 - 13:15

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International

Joe Biden looks certain to be the next President of the USA but, despite a record turnout of some 160 million voters, this was no "blue tidal wave". On the contrary, the Democratic party failed to win the Senate and even lost seats in the House of Representatives. Whatever the outcome of any of Trump's avalanche of appeals, that outcome is unlikely to change.

Nonetheless, to dismiss those appeals as simply "frivolous" or "vexatious" would be to miss their purpose. For months, Trump has been laying the foundations of a great myth, "the stolen election". In the short term, the legal challenges prolong the tension, encouraging his supporters, often armed, like those which besieged polling stations at Maricopa County, Arizona and in Detroit, to take to the streets.

Longer term, they can feed into a QAnon-style conspiracy theory that divides Trump supporters, including fascist groups such as the Proud Boys he has praised, from the "establishment" Republicans.

Thus far, the Trump backlash is not a mass phenomenon, but an uptick in racist killings in times of crisis is always a danger in the USA. Now is certainly a time to be prepared to defend against such violence as unleashed by angered Trump supporters.

The projected 66.8 percent voter turnout shows that Trump maintained and mobilised his predominantly white, lower middle class and male base. His mixture of racism, including his attacks on BLM protesters, his demagoguery against anti-covid measures and his populist fake rebelliousness fits the mood of his mad-as-hell base. Although he lost some of his white voters, probably to the right wing Democrats, his base sustained the losses and even grew. He also made some gains in all racial minority voting pools, despite his aggressive racial politics.

In contrast to Trump's campaign, Joe Biden didn't have to do much except wait and depend on all those who feared and hated Trump ? a still huge constituency. He could also depend on Bernie Sanders, AOC, and other ?socialists? elected on Democratic tickets. Leading figures in Jacobin and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) also fell into line, despite the DSA's 2019 convention decision not to campaign for any Democratic candidate except Sanders. As it turned out, the great majority of the DSA leadership pledged, ?to volunteer our time to phone-banking, text-banking, door knocking, and otherwise organizing to defeat Trump over the next four weeks?.

What can now be guaranteed is that Biden will proceed to let down his supporters by offering no great solutions to our biggest problems. Even if, by some miracle, he were to propose radical measures, the still-Republican Senate would block them. That is just the same situation as with Barack Obama ? a situation that led to the election of? Donald Trump.

In reality, of course, Biden does not stand for any radical measures, even before the final results had been announced he was already promising to make agreements "across the aisle", that is, with the Republicans in the House, and even suggested bringing Republicans into his administration. For all his playing on his working class family origins, his 30-years in Congress and the (shady) business deals of his family, though of course peanuts compared to Trump, show that he was a candidate of the establishment.

The fact that a majority of the educated business class prefers Biden confirms this. They see him as a safer pair of

hands for US capital's interests at home, via his influence over labor and many community leaders and, abroad, by restoring good relations with the US' NATO allies.

A Biden presidency, however, does present the Republicans with a dilemma. They can either collaborate with Biden to conservatize his already conservative inclinations for the sake of the US economy and to restore a basic stability to the country's politics, or they can act as permanent disrupters. If they choose the former course, this opens the possibility of Trump and his supporters forming an overtly racist populist, or even an outright fascist, party or movement.

Obviously, the pressure from the overwhelming majority of big capital will be for the former strategy; with millions of unemployed and coronavirus out of control, and the need to calm the global markets, they will not want to 'go to the streets' and risk a proto-civil war situation. However, there are undoubtedly a few billionaires within the hedge fund sectors of capital, the 'move fast and break things' brigade, who would fund a fascistic movement and the working class and oppressed will need to prepare for this.

At the opposite pole, the Democrats have done so badly that the space opens up for a Party like the Democratic Socialists of America to grow rapidly, providing they have the courage to put clear red water between themselves and Biden and his party.

Another major feature of the 2020 campaign, thanks to Trump's antics, is that large numbers of Americans and, indeed, citizens of foreign countries, have become aware of just how far short of a democracy (even the ideal of bourgeois democracy) the United States really is. On the front line, of course, there is the huge amount of voter disenfranchisement and vote suppression, hitting first at people of colour, but also striking poorer white workers. Then there are the obstacles placed to voting, especially in red states, like complicated registration procedures, invalidated registrations and uneven distribution of polling stations.

On top of that, are the intended structural failings in US democracy. There is the absolute scandal of the Electoral College that allows the majority of voters to get the president they did not vote for. Gerrymandering, a ubiquitous phenomenon indicating corruption, and the primary tool of vote suppression, are made possible only by this very system of red/blue precincts and states. The Senate, again with a grossly unequal distribution of seats, is able to delay, block and force major concessions on legislation passed by the more democratic House. Then there are the powers of the presidency, not least of which is the right to appoint judges for life to higher courts and the Supreme Court.

All of these features, highlighted by this election season, were explicitly designed by the founders of the US Constitution (as can be read in the Federalist Papers) to block and limit democracy. Ironically, even to make good the claims of the Declaration of Independence would require tearing up the roots of the American state. Clearly, such a democratic revolution could not be won within the framework of the present system, a fundamentally imbalanced one under any circumstance. The only force that could achieve this revolution is the working class - Black, white, Latino, Asian, sweeping aside the white supremacism that stems from slavery and the genocide of the American continent's indigenous peoples.

Building such a working class movement means fighting against mass unemployment, homelessness, the lack of a universal healthcare system to meet the pandemic, the pursuit by ICE of 'illegals' and other such issues that face workers, here and now. Certainly, the Democrats will not lead or support such political struggles.

What the situation needs, what the working class needs, is a party built in the thick of such struggles not, in the first place, by electoral campaigning. Such a party needs to take the lead in building fighting trade unions and community organisations. Such a party is a powerful tool to fight for the issues that affect the working class as well as a tool to strike at capitalism at an even higher level.

Biden's presidency should be the last period in which the powerful social forces of the working-class and the oppressed are given no option except a party of the US capitalists and imperialists, Democrat or Republican.

The DSA could play a decisive role in building such a party, but only if its members make up their mind at its next convention to dump the useless 'dirty break' strategy (in fact it is a no break strategy) and fight for a clean break with the Democrats. They need to develop, in open debate, a socialist programme, a revolutionary, not a reformist one, which today would simply reproduce the weakness and paralysis of the Democratic Party. This would be a major step towards developing our ability to resist economic oppression, political repression, and breaking the stranglehold on politics of the capitalist, two-party duopoly.

---

**Source URL:** <https://fifthinternational.org/content/us-elections-democrat-president-divided-congress>