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Mass voter opposition leaves rulers of the world's largest economy in a struggle for stability

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Donald Trump was the biggest loser in the November election.

In a record turnout of the voting-eligible population, 51.4% of the vote went to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Donald Trump and Mike Pence got 46.9% of the vote. It was the biggest voter turnout percentage-wise since 1908, with more than 66% of those eligible voting.

Trump had made racism the core of his campaign, and the vote was mostly seen as a rejection of Trump and racism.

The U.S. consistently has nearly the lowest voter turnout of all the industrialized

countries in the world. This is due, in part, to the extensive voter suppression in the U.S. — including poll taxes, registration fees and “literacy tests” — and the many undemocratic measures that prevent participation in the elections, such as holding voting only on work days.

There are also millions who are blocked from voting because they are immigrants or were formerly incarcerated. Also, the unofficial — but strictly enforced — rule that only a Democrat or Republican can be president discourages a great many voters.

This election year had unusual complications because of COVID-19, which made voting at traditional polling stations dangerous. As a result, many voted by mail. Voting by mail is not only safe, it is democratic, removing some of the restrictions that prevent people from voting. Trump, therefore, has made a special issue of opposing voting by mail.

Donald Trump encouraged his supporters to vote in person, while the anti-Trump voters generally voted by mail. Since in-person votes were usually counted first, Trump racked up huge initial leads in most of the swing states as returns were reported on the evening of Nov. 3. At that point, Trump declared victory.

However, by the following day, as the mail-in votes were counted, Trump’s large leads in those states disappeared. By Friday, Nov. 6, it was clear that Biden had won the Electoral College as well as the popular vote.

However, the Associated Press, which unofficially declares the president-elect, held out for another day. On Nov. 7, AP finally declared Joe Biden the president-elect of the United States.

This unusual delay gave Trump and the Republicans a considerable head start in their campaign to steal the 2020 election. The archaic U.S. Constitution, written in 1787 — modeled on the slave-holding Roman Republic’s government, with its senate

and single consul (president) with supreme command of the army and the civil administration which was chosen by something like the Electoral College — provides many ways to disregard the majority vote against Trump.

First, Trump demanded recounts and looked for evidence of voter fraud. By voter fraud, Trump does not mean the suppression of the Black, Brown and Indigenous vote. Trump says there was ballot-box stuffing, with Democratic voters sending mail-in ballots and then voting in person, noncitizen immigrants voting, ballots sent in the name of dead people, and computerized voting machines programmed to flip a certain percentage of Trump votes to Biden.

If Trump could block the votes in a few key cities — Detroit, Philadelphia and Atlanta were particularly targeted — he could shift the Electoral College vote enough to claim victory, even though he still would have lost the popular vote badly. The trick was to shift just 4 states so that Trump would have 269 electoral votes, causing an Electoral College tie that Congress likely would have decided in his favor.

According to the Constitution, if no candidate gets a majority in the Electoral College, then Congress decides, using a unique formula for its decision. Each state's delegation gets one vote, so that a state with a majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives will be expected to vote for the Democratic candidate, and likewise for majority Republican states.

On that basis of one state, one vote in the current Congress, which has been heavily gerrymandered, the Republican candidate would win.

So challenging the vote in just four states had the possibility of gaining an Electoral College victory or pushing it into a selection by Congress.

A Trump coup?

Almost 90% of the Republicans in Congress have refused to acknowledge the winner of the popular vote. Top officials in 18 states and more than half of House Republicans supported a lawsuit trying to reverse the result through the Supreme Court and the Electoral College. The court turned down the challenge on Dec. 11.

Getting an Electoral College victory was one of Trump's strategies from the beginning of his campaign. He never tried to win the popular vote. The Electoral College is designed to block democracy and provides many avenues for special interests to manipulate the outcome.

The Constitution allows states to select their electors any way they want. They are not required to choose the winner of the state's vote.

A state could decide to select its electors based on what they declare would best serve the national interest. Or a state legislature could step in after an election and select the electors, claiming that the will of the voters was unclear. (For more on the anti-democratic Electoral College, see Jesse Wegman's book, "Let The People Pick the President: The Case for Abolishing the Electoral College.")

Trump might be counting on creating constitutional and legal chaos, including large-scale violence by Trump supporters in the streets, as a basis for declaring martial law. During his first "debate" with Biden, Trump had told the fascist Proud Boys to "stand down and stand by."

[On Dec. 12](#), two days before the Electoral College vote, fascist Proud Boys wearing "MAGA" hats were recorded on video burning a Black Lives Matter banner at the Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., an action widely characterized as "reminiscent of cross burnings." A similar attack took place at the nearby Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In Olympia, Wash., at a pro-Trump rally at the state Capitol, a counterprotester was

shot; police reportedly removed a bomb found at the site that, had it detonated, “could have caused significant injury.”

Trump’s shakeup of the Pentagon leadership has certainly [fueled speculation](#), and his attempt to remove civil service protection from most federal employees, making them political appointees to be hired or removed at the will of the president, makes little sense for a president that will be leaving office in less than two months.

But if the U.S. capitalist ruling class, including the military brass, allows a Trump coup that way, they will lose the crucial legitimacy that 231 years of uninterrupted constitutional rule has given them. Would they do that just to keep out Joe Biden?

While a declaration of martial law is unlikely to get support, it shouldn’t be completely discounted.

Many capitalists prefer Trump

As is always the case in U.S. presidential contests, the big capitalists differ among themselves as to which Democrat or Republican candidate should be president. While many capitalists preferred Trump, others backed Biden.

The argument for Trump is that as a big capitalist and landowner, he is one of their own and understands their interests. Over the last four years, Trump has run the most “pro-business” U.S. administration in history. He won over to his side many originally skeptical capitalists.

Trump first sabotaged the Affordable Care Act, trying to drive tens of millions of people off health insurance and reducing coverage for those who have it. Trump moved to dismantle public education with devastating funding cuts to the Department of Education, starving public schools and pushing privatization schemes.

Trump gutted regulations designed to protect workers and the environment. Along with the congressional Republicans, Trump pushed through a massive tax cut for the rich in 2017. He has consistently opposed any policy to combat climate change and took the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Then during the COVID-19 pandemic, he pulled the U.S. out of the World Health Organization. Trump has also filled the federal judiciary from the Supreme Court down and the National Labor Relations Board with pro-business and anti-labor judges.

But even those capitalists who hoped for “four more years” of this may not now support the attempts of Trump to go beyond the law and tradition in order to cling to office. That could do far more damage to their class interests than will any slight moderation of Trump’s “pro-business” policies by Biden.

The Nov. 23 New York Times reported, “Concerned that President Trump’s refusal to accept the election results is hurting the country, more than 160 top American executives asked the administration on Monday to immediately acknowledge Joseph R. Biden Jr. as the president-elect and begin the transition to a new administration.”

Signers of this letter “included the chief executives of Mastercard, Visa, MetLife, Accenture, the Carlyle Group, Condé Nast, McGraw-Hill, WeWork and American International Group, among others. They included some of the most important players in the financial industry: David M. Solomon, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs; Laurence D. Fink, chief executive of the asset management giant BlackRock; Jon Gray, Blackstone’s president; and Henry R. Kravis, a prominent Republican donor who is the co-chief executive of KKR, a private equity firm.” In other words, a representative group of the ruling capitalist class.

The ruling class

Since Trump's 2016 presidential victory, the ruling capitalist class has been strongly divided on Donald Trump. Who are the people that collectively make up the U.S. ruling class?

The capitalist class is not just [647 billionaires](#). Though that is how it is sometimes seen, that's not how Karl Marx defined it in his writings. The 1% percent or even 0.001% doesn't really define it.

The ruling capitalist class, as Karl Marx defined it, consists of those people who live off profit — banking interest, stock market dividends, business profits and landlord rent. The working class lives off the wages of labor. There is also an intermediate class — the middle class — between the capitalist class and the working class. In the Communist Manifesto, written by Marx and Frederick Engels, they use the traditional French name for the middle class — the petty bourgeoisie.

As Marx elaborated, if you can live off property income — profits, interest and rent — at a level exceeding that of a skilled worker without having to hold a job, you are a member of the capitalist ruling class.

In the U.S., there are some 20.2 million millionaires, according to the Credit Suisse “Global Wealth Report 2020.”

Only part of the capitalist class are actually business people, what Marx called “active capitalists.” These include heads of banks and other financial corporations as well as the CEOs of industrial and commercial enterprises. The active capitalists are those people who manage large and medium-sized businesses.

Small business people generally have net assets of less than \$10 million, even if they hire and exploit wage workers. Having \$10 million or more in assets should be sufficient to have an upscale living standard without engaging in wage labor.

Without at least \$10 million in assets, small business people can't retire from the active management of their business and hire professional managers to run it. They must at the very least perform the labor of supervising and managing and are therefore not full members of the capitalist class, even if they exploit hired labor.

At the bottom are the smallest business people, who cannot even hire workers and must depend on their own labor and the labor of their family members. This category of business owners — which includes small family farmers — can swing between the working class, hiring themselves out part time to avoid extreme poverty, to “successfully” moving into the capitalist ruling class.

In large corporations, the CEOs don't usually own anything close to a controlling interest in the corporation. But if they have net assets exceeding \$10 million, they can live quite well even if they lose their corporate positions. They are therefore both active capitalists who represent the owners of the corporation as well as being money capitalists in their own right through their ownership of capital.

The closest allies to the capitalist class are the near-capitalists: the upper middle class. These are the people who have accumulated an amount of capital enabling them to almost but not quite quit working altogether and live off profits, interest, or rents.

To maintain their upper-middle-class lifestyle, these people still have to work either in high-salaried jobs or as managers in their own businesses where they are not quite rich enough to hire professional managers and still retain their upper-middle-class lifestyle. These candidate members of the capitalist class identify with the class they hope to join as full members.

Some people unrealistically expect to become capitalists in the future and thus identify with the interests of the class they will never in fact join. These range from

people doing tech startups to small business people who lack enough capital to hire professional managers and therefore must work hard in their businesses to enjoy a “decent” middle-class lifestyle.

Another group identifying their interests with the interests of the capitalist class are the local, state and federal police and prison guards — the chief instruments of state power to ensure capitalist class rule. These are the men and some women who do the dirty work of the capitalist class. Virtually all the police “unions” in the U.S. endorsed Donald Trump.

Still another group in the middle area that identifies their interests with the interests of the capitalist class are the managers and supervisors. In “Capital,” Marx described how the division of labor requires a complex managerial hierarchy: “An industrial army of workers under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and NCOs (foremen, overseers), who command during the labor process in the name of capital.” They are salaried, with higher incomes. Almost all are white men, as is the capitalist ruling class as a whole. People of color and oppressed genders are a fraction. Racism and sexism are part of the root ideology of the capitalist class.

The working class, those who live off the wages of labor, makes up the vast majority in this country, but not 99%. Based on Marx’s definitions of the capitalist class, the middle class and the working class, the working class in the U.S. makes up 67% of the population, [according to one estimate](#).

If there were real democracy in the U.S., the rich would have been voted out of power years ago. But that’ll only come with socialism.

