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Trump Out Now



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I am an author, political commentator, teacher, and historian who prefers in “normal times” to spend most of my time researching, writing, and teaching. This summer and fall, however, I’ve been out protesting with [Refuse Fascism](#) raising the demand “Trump-Pence Out Now” – out immediately.

That’s because these are not “normal” times. The deadly coronavirus that has been spread by the pandemo-fascist Trump administration has already killed 220,000-plus Americans and will likely 200,000 to 300,000 more by Inauguration Day (January 20th) next year. The United States is in the middle of a related and attempted rolling coup being carried out by a White House that knows it cannot win a second term in conventional fashion. With a long list of enemies and groups on its hit list, the Trump administration seeks unchallenged dominance

but lacks enough voter support to prevail without subverting what's left of democracy in the elections system. It is therefore undertaking a multi-level assault on the American electoral process.

The cable news talking heads keep scratching their heads on how Trump is talking only to his base and not trying to broaden his voter support beyond his 43-45%. They might want to reflect that Trump and the GOP's main plan this summer and fall has been to cripple and steal the election, not to win it in a "normal"/conventional fashion.

This attack is what ought to be expected from a regime whose relentless pathological criminality (see point # 2, below) has defied our capacity for belief and processing malevolent evil. "The enormity and variety of Mr. Trump's misdeeds," The New York Times' Editorial Board observed two Sundays ago, "can feel overwhelming. Repetition has dulled the sense of outrage, and the accumulation of new outrages leaves little time to dwell on the particulars." ("A Man Unworthy of His Office," New York Times, October 17, 2020, Sunday Review, p.2).

Why have there not been millions in the streets engaged in non-violent protest every day this fall to demand the immediate removal of a vicious regime that has violated numerous civilizational and democratic norms and is doing its best to sabotage an election?

We are up against seven narratives that stand in the way of the mass action required. In what follows I briefly counter each of these anti-mobilizing story lines.

+1. *"There's an election coming up, so chill."* Yes, we know about the election. The polling data looks promising for Joe Biden (like it did for Hillary Clinton this time in 2016). Most of the electorate rejects this evil president. But voting to remove Trump, while necessary, is insufficient. The incumbent president, vice-president, and attorney general have made it clear that they intend to use both constitutional and extra-constitutional means to cripple and steal the contest. The methods include racist and partisan voter suppression in key battleground states, replete with the sending of armed "poll-watchers" into minority precincts; attacking the legitimacy of the mail-in ballots that are required by the very pandemic that Trump has multiplied across the nation; deploying an army of right-wing lawyers to contest the Electoral College slates in states that go for Biden; jamming through a far-right Supreme Court nominee (Amy Coney-Barrett) who can be expected to join 4 or 5 other Republican-appointed judges to in signing off on the at once constitutional and extra-constitutional theft of the contest; preparing violent mobs to suppress anti-coup protests; preparing to declare martial law and putting in the streets paramilitary forces (from the Department of Homeland Security, especially ICE and Border Patrol) accountable only to Trump. As *Salon's* Chauncy de Vega [recently observed](#):

"Donald Trump continues to make it clear that he does not intend to leave office peacefully if he is defeated... Trump considers any election in which he is not the 'winner' to be null and void. Trump's appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the United States Supreme Court is an

obvious *quid pro quo* to secure his ‘reelection’ if his attorneys and other agents can sufficiently sabotage the vote on Election Day and beyond....During his debate with Biden, Trump...commanded white supremacist paramilitaries to be prepared to attack his and their ‘enemies’ if he loses on Election Day or is otherwise removed from office...Trump also wants Joe Biden and other leading Democrats imprisoned and perhaps even executed because he deems them to be guilty of ‘treason’ and a ‘coup’ attempt against him. Trump and his Attorney General William Barr have also threatened to use the United States military against the American people if they dare to protest the outcome of the 2020 Election if Trump somehow finds some extra-legal (if not outright illegal) way to stay in office.”

Meanwhile, the openly anti-democratic Electoral College continues to overrepresent the nation’s most white, rural, reactionary, and “red” (Republican) regions in ways that work to Trump’s advantage. Captive to an archaic 18th Century national charter drafted and passed by and for slaveowners, merchant capitalists, and publicists for whom democracy was the ultimate nightmare, we still don’t elect American presidents by a national popular tally based on the elementary democratic principle of one person, one vote.

Even in the unlikely event that Trump is defeated by popular and Electoral College margins so large that he can’t semi-credibly contest the outcome, the wannabe fascistic dictator will remain in position to do unthinkable damage for eleven more weeks. The world can’t wait until January 20th, 2021 for the defenestration of this lethal lunatic, who has called for the imprisonment of his political opponents, including Joe Biden. Trump recently led his frothing Michigan backers in hate rally chants of “Lock Her Up” directed at a state governor who some of his armed neofascist backers were plotting to kidnap and murder. Trump has recently called the nation’s leading infectious disease health expert a “disaster,” and described people who advocate public protections against COVID-19 as “idiots.”

The death toll of the pandemic that Trump has fanned and continues to lie about (“it’s going away”) may well reach half a million (nearing America’s body count during World War II) by next February. This regime must go now.

+2. *“A sitting American president wouldn’t actually steal an election. That’s just too much. That wouldn’t happen here.”* Really? This is a neofascistic lawless “law and order” presidency that respects few if any constitutional and social conventions. From sadistic child separations and concentration camps at the border to the deployment of paramilitaries to sweep up civil rights protesters designated as “terrorists,” the encouragement of violence on the part of neofascist militias (the Proud Boys and the like), setting new Orwellian falsehood records, and the fanning of a deadly pandemic whose lethality Trump clearly understood from the beginning even as he publicly downplayed it, and so much more, the Trump regime has demonstrated a malignant and pathological willingness to subvert longstanding rules of civilized and democratic conduct. This is a man who praises neo-Nazis, calls “Black Lives Matter” a hate slogan, applauds the paramilitary street execution of an antifascist activist

(Michael Reinhoehl), and defends a teen fascist (Kyle Rittenhouse) for murdering two civil rights marchers in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The orange-brushed wannabe fascist strongman has now used one of his patented super-spreader hate-rallies to lead chants calling for the “locking up” of Michigan’s governor – this in the wake of the arrest of “Michigan Militia” members who were inspired by a Trump Tweet to plot that governor’s assassination. Trump’s recurrent paranoid-style rants about the supposed menace posed to the nation by “the radical Left,” replete with bizarre claims that Joe Biden is a “trojan horse for socialism” and that Kamala Harris is a “communist” (actual Leftists laugh darkly at these preposterous “charges”) are clear fascist-style plays meant to suspend what’s left of democracy and impose ruthless “law and order” from the top down.

Along the way, the tangerine-tinted tyrant has used his own infection by the coronavirus as an opportunity to downplay the pandemic while assaulting the nation’s top infectious disease expert (Dr. Anthony Fauci) and touting a hack radiologist (Dr. Scott Atlas) who advocates ruinous “herd immunity” as the top disease authority. The hack’s strategy could kill as many 3 million Americans. The preening Antichrist Trump’s devil-dances on the stages of his super-spready hate rallies to demonstrate his supposed “youthful” and Darwinian vitality while proclaiming that his virus “affects virtually nobody.” COVID-45’s proclamation is a sadistic insult hurled at those who loved and miss people among the 220,000-plus felled by the Trump Virus

Donald “There Won’t Be a Transfer of Power” Trump is not hiding his campaign to extinguish what’s left of electoral democracy. His claim that the only way he can lose is “if the election is rigged” is a *not-so-veiled call for civil war and martial law if the tally appears to be going against him. He openly declares that he may not honor the outcome.* This would be a good time to remember the Russian dissident [Masha Gessen’s first rule](#) on dealing with authoritarian heads of state:

“Believe the autocrat. He means what he says. Whenever you find yourself thinking, or hear others claiming, that he is exaggerating, that is our innate tendency to reach for a rationalization. This will happen often: humans seem to have evolved to practice denial when confronted publicly with the unacceptable. Back in the 1930s, *The New York Times* assured its readers that Hitler’s anti-Semitism was all posture.”

The notion that Trump wouldn’t try to pilfer an election takes naivete and childish enablement of abuse to new levels. The real question about Trump is not what would he do to stay in power but rather *what wouldn’t he do?*

Sadly, this naivete is fed daily by a corporate cable news media whose talking heads continue even now to *act like there’s something surprising about Trump’s latest barbarian transgressions.*

+3. “*The people, the Democrats, and the government will rise up to remove Trump if and when he tries to steal the election.*” That’s good to know, if true, but there’s not much “if”

about it and it may be too late to stop the crime if we wait until after Election Day. As the distinguished historian Timothy Snyder recently told Chauncy de Vega, “*we are in a slow-motion Reichstag Fire right now.*” The attempted coup is already underway and Trump has considerable institutional and extra-legal power to carry it out, including white-nationalist (Republifascist) partisan control of state legislatures in key battleground states, the allegiance of many white state, county, and local police and National Guardsmen, the loyalty of untold thousands of armed far-right extremists (including many military and ex-military cadre and commonly coordinating with police), and a Supreme Court about to become super-majority right-wing thanks to the imminent approval of the “Christian” Republifascist Coney-Barrett by the Republifascist -controlled U.S. Senate. It is important to organize on a mass scale now, not just after the formal election day. The sooner we organize and demonstrate in large numbers to counter the *rolling coup*, the better.

The Democrats’ track record on resisting stolen elections in this century is not good. They laid down in face of the right-wing assault on the decisive Florida ballot count in 2000-2001 and did nothing to challenge the theft of the 2004 election. Consistent with late Princeton political scientist Sheldon Wolin’s description of them as “the Inauthentic Opposition,” the dismal, dollar-drenched Democrats have been actively aiding and abetting Trump’s presidency from the dreary Hillary Clinton campaign through the prolonged RussiaGate drama. The Russia-Trump-Mueller drama deflected national attention away from Trump’s worst crimes while congressional Democrats continued to grant giant military budgets and surveillance powers and (this year) corrupt corporate bailout funds to a president they all-too-accurately described as insane and dangerous. The Democrats are the party of Hollow Resistance.

Hopes for the U.S. military command acting to remove Trump and smash his violent forces if he defies the election seem far-fetched. It could happen if Trump refuses to honor a Supreme Court ruling against his likely challenge to the election, one is free to imagine, but relying on the imperial Pentagon to save “democracy,” or what little is left of it, by removing its commander-in-chief feels to me like desperate barking up a very wrong tree.

+4. “*Trump is a symptom of an authoritarian, corporate-dominated, and bipartisan system that went off the rails of democracy long ago.*” [That is 100% correct\[1\]](#). But Trump and Trumpism are malignant fascistic tumors that must be cut out for a gravely sick patient, American democracy, to be re-born. One does not endorse cancer or the conditions that give rise to it by removing a deadly tumor that threatens to kill the patient in short order. And a mass movement to remove the Trump-Pence-Barr regime could become a great popular precedent for a deeper and broader movement to transform America in politically and socially democratic ways.

+5. “*We’ll face violent repression if we protest the attempted coup.*” Perhaps, but we will face even more repression in a second (and third?) white-nationalist Trump term.

+6. *“I am too focused on my specific cause to get focused on the distant matter of who is sitting in the White House.”* Your cause matters a great deal but, yes, comrade, you are indeed overly focused on your specific cause. In a second Trump term, something certain to be much worse than the first one, Black lives won’t matter, LatinX and immigrant lives won’t matter, women’s lives won’t matter, gay and transgendered lives won’t matter, livable ecology won’t matter, public health won’t matter, consumer rights won’t matter, civil and human rights won’t matter, health insurance be shredded, won’t matter, workers and economic justice won’t matter, and – this is the threat most specific to Trump – efforts to fight to make all these just and beautiful causes will face unprecedented repression.

+7. *“I can’t be bothered with all this; I need to stay focused on my private affairs.”* We all certainly must watch out for ourselves and our loved ones, yes, but the political system that results from widespread citizen demobilization, privatism, and atomization ends up negatively impacting supposedly private and family experience. Look at how Trump’s fanning of the pandemic has invaded our daily lives. Wait until he and his neoliberal fascist allies go full bore after Social Security and tears up health insurance protections for Americans with pre-existing conditions. Politics has a way of coming back and haunting us when we don’t join with our fellow citizens to make a better world

Millions of Americans may have to get in the streets and stay there to compel the nation’s power elite to force Trump out. Then we will struggle to compel post-Trump Washington to address the misery, sickness, oppression, poverty, meaninglessness, and absurdity faced by hundreds of millions of Americans with real solutions. Since both of the dominant political parties are owned by concentrated wealth and power structures who have are inherently opposed to such solutions, that struggle must carry us into a confrontation with the whole damn interrelated evils of class rule, racial oppression, patriarchy, police-statism, empire, and ecocide – the unelected and intertwined dictatorships that gave rise to the Trump regime and its inauthentic opposition among other atrocities. The sooner we start mobilizing in a serious way against the “slow motion Reichstag Fire” currently underway, the stronger our movement will be. November could be too late. The attempted coup. A real popular resistance needs to be underway too. The establishment centrists in charge of the Democratic Party do not have anything remotely close to what it takes to undertake such a resistance. They can be counted on to behave in accord with their core institutional mission: keeping the citizenry passive, crippling popular resistance, wrecking bottom-up class struggle, and taking the risk out of democracy.

Endnote

1. I think in retrospect Trump may be seen as like a rock that takes out half your teeth in a mouth that was already so rotted, with gums so diseased and teeth so wobbly that you could hardly chew food even before the stone hit; like a roof so weakened by water leakage and termites that a big snowfall collapsed it all of a sudden in November. I always thought that

the opposition between (a) Sheldon Wolin's "inverted totalitarianism" ("corporate-managed 'democracy'") and (b) more aggressive hate-rallying and gun-toting Amerikaner white nationalism/neofascism was something of a potentially false dichotomy. Wolin's soft authoritarianism softens people up for the harder authoritarianism of real and wannabe fascist strongmen.

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Paul Street's new book is [The Passive Resistance: Obama, Trump, and Politics of Appeasement](#).

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