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Preliminary observations on the US presidential elections

As of early Wednesday morning, the US presidential election remains undecided. The fact that the election is so close, however, is a devastating indictment of the Democratic Party and its inability to present any progressive alternative to the fascistic politics of the Trump administration.

As of this writing, a narrow victory in the Electoral College is possible for either Democratic candidate Joe Biden or Republican President Donald Trump. Due to delays in counting mail ballots, which became a predominant feature in the election because of the threat of the coronavirus, the results in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania may not be known until the end of the week.

Trump has captured Florida, Texas and Ohio, and he held a narrow lead in North Carolina and Georgia, all states he carried in 2016. But he failed in efforts to win New Hampshire and Minnesota, where he had come close in 2016, and appeared likely to fall short in Nevada as well.

If Trump were to pull out a victory in the Electoral College, he would become the second US president to be reelected by a smaller margin than in his initial victory. The first was Barack Obama.

Even if Biden ekes out a victory, it will be nothing like the landslide that would be expected when running against an incumbent responsible for the deaths of 235,000 Americans in the global coronavirus pandemic, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and open efforts to mobilize fascist forces and establish an authoritarian regime in Washington.

Early Wednesday morning, Trump declared victory based on the initial results and made clear his plans to challenge the full counting of the votes. "As far as we are concerned, we already have won," Trump said in a speech at the White House, adding "We will be going to the US Supreme Court. We want all voting to stop."

In the days leading up to the election, Trump repeatedly insisted that the results of the election had to be decided on Election Day, which has no basis in law or the Constitution. Trump, who is in no position to declare victory, is continuing his political conspiracies.

The Democrats did everything they could to suppress popular opposition to Trump's conspiracies and his incitement of fascistic violence in the runup to the election. They deliberately downplayed Trump's threats of violence, even when they were directed against Democratic governors like Gretchen Whitmer in Michigan and Ralph Northam in Virginia.

The Democratic Party has been unable to win over any substantial section of the rural and small town workers who voted for Trump in 2016. It chose to run a campaign based on

identity politics, appealing to the affluent upper-middle class on the basis of race and gender, while never advancing an economic program to deal with the social crisis triggered by the pandemic.

In 1932, the Democrats under Franklin D. Roosevelt were able to win a landslide by promising a “New Deal” for American working people in the midst of the greatest economic crisis in history.

The Democrats, however, long ago rejected any policy of social reform or an appeal to the class interests of workers in favor of cultivating an upper-middle class social base tied to the performance of the financial markets, using appeals for the sharing of privileges based on race and gender.

Their opposition to Trump throughout his first term in office has been focused on foreign policy, in which they have demanded a more aggressive policy towards Russia, while seeking to mobilize support within the military-intelligence apparatus. They have deliberately sought to divert and suppress any broader social opposition to Trump’s right-wing policies.

Now in 2020, as with Clinton in 2016, the Democratic Party has proven incapable of offering any program to deal with the social crisis facing the working class in vast portions of the country, particularly economically devastated areas like Appalachia and Midwest towns and cities hit by deindustrialization.

In Ohio, for example, Trump was able to win both Trumbull and Mahoning counties, including the cities of Youngstown and Warren, laid waste first by the steel industry, which began closing mills in the 1970s, and more recently by General Motors, which shut its huge Lordstown plant last year with the collaboration of the United Auto Workers union.

In Michigan, Trump was even ahead at this writing in Genesee County, where the city of Flint suffered the horrific lead poisoning crisis, as well as in Saginaw County and Bay County. All three counties were once dominated by GM factories, most now closed. And Trump carried Macomb County, the center of auto production in the Detroit suburbs.

The results of voting in congressional elections are just as inconclusive as in the presidential vote. It is unclear whether the Democrats will capture the three to four seats required to gain a majority in the Senate.

The Democrats captured Republican-held Senate seats in Colorado and Arizona, while losing the seat of incumbent Doug Jones in Alabama, but the outcome of Senate contests in Maine, North Carolina and Montana remains uncertain. Republicans held onto seats against well-financed Democratic challengers in South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Kansas, Iowa, Texas and Kentucky.

The Democratic Party retained its majority in the House of Representatives while suffering a number of defeats, including two seats in south Florida where first-term congresswomen were defeated by Cuban-American Republicans running strident anticommunist campaigns. The Democrats gained two seats in North Carolina after a court-ordered redistricting.

It is thus entirely possible that the political configuration in Washington, with Trump in the White House, Mitch McConnell as Senate Majority Leader and Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House, will continue into 2021, despite a year of nonstop social, economic and political convulsions. This only demonstrates that the political structures in the United States are entirely impervious to popular pressure and incapable of responding to the deepest social crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

While the conclusion of the presidential elections remains uncertain, the entire course of the election has demonstrated the correctness of the perspective of the Socialist Equality Party, which in its own campaign rejected all efforts to subordinate the working class to the Democratic Party and the Biden campaign.

However the situation develops in the coming days, the class struggle will and must develop. The working class must be armed with a socialist program in opposition to both parties and the entire capitalist system.

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