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The “Summit for Democracy”: Biden gathers anti-democratic forces against Russia and China

The Biden administration staged the first day of a two-day “Summit for Democracy” on Thursday. The plenaries of the virtual event, which assembled 80 world leaders, displayed the extraordinary hubris of Washington, while its panel discussions were full of imperialist plots. The function of Biden’s summit is to escalate global pressure on Russia and China while dressing this up as a defense of “democracy” against “autocracy.”



President Joe Biden speaks from the South Court Auditorium on the White House complex in Washington, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, for the opening of the Democracy Summit, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken, right, looks on. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

President Joe Biden opened the event, seated at a table alongside Secretary of State Antony Blinken before an oversized video panel featuring the face of each of the assembled leaders. He addressed what amounted to a conference call of world capitalism, declaring that he had called the summit because of “sustained and alarming challenges to democracy, universal human rights ... all around the world.”

Biden’s speech, and the entire affair that followed, had a deeply farcical character, marked by the spectacular hypocrisy that is the trademark of US empire.

He larded his sentences with the phrases of democracy, words whose historical meaning have been hollowed out over the course of more than a century of American empire and capitalist rule. He spoke of “justice,” “free speech,” “free assembly,” “freedom of religion,” “free press” and “all the inherent human rights of every individual.”

Among the faces on the screen before him were an array of anti-democratic and fascistic figures, each personally invited by the White House.

Rodrigo Duterte, butcher of the Filipino poor, directly responsible for the police and vigilante murder of over 30,000 people in the last five years, was in attendance. As Duterte sat listening to Biden speak of “inherent human rights,” the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that the majority of his Anti-Terror Law was constitutional. The Philippine military and police now have the power to conduct warrantless wiretaps and surveillance and to arrest anyone alleged to be a communist or terrorist for up to 24 days without filing any charges. Duterte has been charged with crimes against humanity in the International Criminal Court.

Alongside Duterte was Jair Bolsonaro. The fascistic president of Brazil has been charged by the Brazilian Senate’s Commission of Inquiry with crimes against humanity for the “mass murder” of the Brazilian population through the homicidal strategy of herd immunity which he conducted in response to the pandemic.

Duterte and Bolsonaro, like every other leader in attendance, received a letter bearing the signature of Biden that read, “We recognize and appreciate your partnership in working to build democratic and human rights-respecting societies that allow all citizens to thrive.” The letter went on, telling Duterte and Bolsonaro that Biden looked forward to hearing

their ideas for “how we can foster a more democratic, equitable, inclusive and sustainable world.”

Biden repeatedly spoke of the need for a “free press” and “independent media.” A British High Court will hand down a verdict during the second day of Biden’s Summit for Democracy on the US appeal to extradite Julian Assange. Assange is fighting for his life against Washington, which has persecuted and hounded him, trumped up charges against him, and seen him locked away in prison because he dared to publish the crimes of the US empire. The fate of freedom of the press hinges on the defense of Assange, and the Biden White House, continuing the policy of Trump and Obama, is the single greatest enemy of press freedom in the world.

The United States has no right to lecture anyone about democracy. No power has destabilized and overthrown as many democratically elected governments around the globe as Washington. Nowhere is the erosion of democracy more marked than in the United States, the center of world reaction. The Republican Party is being transformed into the party of American fascism, and the Democratic Party conciliates, while it hides statues of Thomas Jefferson.

Less than a year ago on January 6, Donald Trump attempted to remain in power through a carefully orchestrated fascist coup. The Biden administration has done everything possible to downplay the events of January 6. The conspirators responsible for the plot against American democracy not only remain at large, they include numerous legislators who remain in office and continue their daily attacks on basic democratic norms.

Biden, who has worked to cover up a fascist coup in the United States, is consulting with Jair Bolsonaro and Rodrigo Duterte. Whatever substance there is to this summit amounts in fact to a conspiracy against democracy.

The essence of the summit emerged later in Biden’s remarks. Democracy was in decline, he claimed, because of “outside pressure from autocrats.” These autocrats, he claimed, were using the internet and other forms of subversion to increase “the dissatisfaction of people all around the world with democratic governments that they feel are failing to deliver for their needs.”

This line draws upon the lie of Russian meddling in the US elections, which was repeatedly and baselessly asserted by the Democratic Party and the *New York Times*. This claim is now being elaborated by the Biden White House into a global conspiracy. Unspecified “autocrats,” and here are insinuated Moscow and Beijing, are subverting democracy around the globe by cultivating popular dissatisfaction.

The idea that social discontent is the product of outside machinations is absurd. Approximately 800,000 Americans have died of COVID-19, while less than 6,000 have died in China, a nation with four times the population. Workers around the globe confront mass death, skyrocketing prices, stagnant wages, and the demand that they remain on the job.

Those in attendance at the summit do not represent democracies that would otherwise be thriving were they not being undermined by external subversion. They are representatives of the capitalist class confronting immense social explosions that they are seeking to suppress.

Biden continued, declaring that the unspecified autocrats “seek to advance their own power, export and expand their influence around the world, and justify their repressive policies and practices.” He might be reading off the White House mission statement when he gives this precise description of what are in fact the actions of Washington.

Behind the pretenses of defending democracy against meddling autocrats lies Washington’s drive to maintain its global economic hegemony.

The list of nations invited and snubbed had a clear geopolitical function. Most striking was the invitation extended to Taiwan. Under the One China policy, Washington does not recognize Taiwan as an independent nation. Inviting Taipei to participate in a discussion of “democracy” and excluding Beijing is a sharp provocation.

Juan Guaidó, billed at the event as “Interim President of Venezuela,” was in attendance. Like every other part of the affair, his presence gives the lie to its use of the word “democracy.” Guaidó is an unelected puppet figure, whom Washington has attempted to install as president of Venezuela by military coup through the ouster of Nicolas Maduro.

Biden concluded his remarks by calling on all those assembled—Duterte, Bolsonaro, Guaidó and company—to “lock arms” and “push back against authoritarianism.” Two closed door plenary sessions followed. The first was hosted by Biden and the second by Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, who as Defense Minister of Germany was instrumental in facilitating the growth of the far right and orchestrating the return of German militarism to the world stage.

Around the plenary sessions were panel discussions, hosted by partnerships between US intelligence and industry. Brad Smith, president of Microsoft, spoke of how to use “technology for democracy.” John Brothers, president of the billionaire investment giant T. Rowe Price, which holds a massive portion of Venezuelan debt, moderated a discussion on “responsible investment.” Kent Walker, president of Global Affairs for Google, which has publicly admitted to censoring the *World Socialist Web Site*, spoke of how private enterprises can aid “democracy.”

Samantha Power, head of the US Aid for International Development (USAID), an organization which is effectively a funding arm of the CIA, announced that her agency would be creating a Global Defamation Defense Fund, which would provide liability coverage for journalists who face prosecution for their coverage. The targeted use of this fund will without doubt function as a propaganda arm of US imperialism providing support to journalists who write in opposition to Washington’s rivals, while Julian Assange languishes in prison.

It was also announced that on Monday the White House would release a Strategy on Countering Corruption, which would be focused on the “transnational dimensions of this threat.” USAID, it was reported, would monitor and target such transnational corruption. Coming out of the summit, with its denunciations of Russia and China, coded as “meddling autocrats,” this initiative is another concrete step by Washington to escalate pressure on Moscow and Beijing.

At the beginning of this week, Washington announced its official boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics accusing China of committing “genocide,” without presenting a shred of evidence to back this up. Three days later, Biden assembled an array of forces, including authoritarian scoundrels and mass murderers, to “defend democracy.”

“Human rights” and “democracy” have no meaning in the mouth of Joe Biden, the head of US imperialism. They are lies endlessly repeated to justify Washington’s preparations for war, which are now far advanced.

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