

## Is the US election rigged?

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The US media and political establishment have been consumed over the past two days with denunciations of Republican candidate Donald Trump's allegations that the presidential election is "rigged" in favor of his rival, Hillary Clinton.

There is an increasingly racist and fascistic character to Trump's charges, which combine attacks on the media for pushing allegations of sexual abuse with sweeping claims of vote-rigging, particularly in minority neighborhoods. Trump is urging his supporters to turn out en masse to "monitor" the polls, creating the possibility of violence on Election Day.

As always, Trump's statements are a mixture of half-truths and lies. While there is no doubt that the media establishment has lined up behind Clinton, Trump is using the "rigged election" claim to lay the basis for declaring the election to have been stolen. He is preparing to use the "stolen election" as the rallying cry for the development of an extra-parliamentary, far-right movement after November 8.

This does not, however, lend the slightest credibility to the self-righteous and hypocritical response of the Democratic Party and the political establishment in general. Their indignation over any suggestion that something could be amiss with the pristinely democratic American electoral system is absurd.

Trump's charges resonate well beyond the relative minority of his supporters who respond to racist agitation because his claims correspond to the bitter experience of broad masses of people with what passes for American democracy. This is, after all, a country that had a stolen election. The US Supreme Court shut down a vote recount in Florida and awarded the 2000 election to George W. Bush, who had lost the popular vote to Democrat Al Gore.

This was followed by the 2004 election, when George W. Bush was reelected based on disputed voting in Ohio and widespread charges of voter suppression.

The question, however, goes far beyond vote-rigging. Even by the standards of other major capitalist countries, the electoral system in the United States is among the least democratic. The two-party system is institutionalized, enforcing a political monopoly of two right-wing parties entirely beholden to the financial aristocracy—this in a vast and diverse country of 320 million people!

State ballot access and election laws impose prohibitive requirements, including the collection of tens of thousands of signatures, making it virtually impossible for "third party" and independent candidates to mount an effective campaign.

This political duopoly is reinforced by the unrestricted role of corporate money in US elections, corrupting the entire process to a degree, and with a brazenness, unmatched by any other major industrialized country. It is estimated that campaign spending by presidential and congressional candidates this year will hit a new record of more than \$7.3 billion. For all practical purposes, to win high office in America one must either have billionaire backers or be a multi-millionaire oneself.

The corporate-owned media does its anti-democratic part, depriving coverage to alternative parties. In this election, Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party and Jill Stein of the Green Party, who are respectively polling 7 percent and 3 percent nationally, are excluded from the televised presidential debates, not to mention Jerry White, the candidate of the Socialist Equality Party.

The result is a political system that is increasingly unviable because it is unable to address any of the concerns of the vast majority of the population. The fact that barely half of the electorate bothers to vote is a devastating commentary on the US electoral system.

The bitter experience of the Obama administration, brought to power on a wave of popular hatred for Bush and revulsion over his wars and attacks on working

class living standards, has further convinced tens of millions of people that neither their needs and concerns, nor their votes, have any impact on the policies pursued by the government. The candidate of “hope” and “change,” mistakenly believed to be an agent of progressive change because of his ethnicity, continued and deepened the policies of war and corporate plunder of his predecessor.

In the current election, the internal rot resulting from decades of economic decay and political reaction, presided over by both parties, has erupted onto the surface, placing a question mark over the survival of the two-party system. One measure of the system’s bankruptcy is the fact that an election cycle in which millions of people cast votes for a candidate who claimed, falsely, to be a socialist and opponent of Wall Street, Bernie Sanders, now presents the people with the “choice” between a billionaire quasi-fascist and a corrupt stooge of Wall Street and the military/intelligence establishment.

The transcripts of Hillary Clinton’s speeches to Goldman Sachs, released by WikiLeaks, show the real relationship that exists between the politicians and Wall Street. They are the paid servants of the financial oligarchs who run the country.

The fundamental and gigantic fraud that dominates the election is the total disconnect between the populist claims of both candidates and the reality of the programs they intend to implement. The real agenda, regardless of which one wins in November, is war, austerity and repression.

Is the election rigged? Of course it is—to produce an outcome acceptable to the ruling class. The entire political system is rigged and fundamentally undemocratic because capitalism is a system of class exploitation in which real political power is concentrated in the hands of a corporate-financial oligarchy.



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