Final presidential debate: Candidates silent on Trump threat of political coup

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The final debate between President Trump and his Democratic opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden, deliberately excluded the most important question posed by the 2020 presidential election campaign. One would never know from the 90 minutes of wrangling, mudslinging and nonstop lies that the election is being conducted under the shadow of a threatened political coup.

The president of the United States, Donald Trump, has repeatedly declared that he will not commit himself to accept the outcome of the vote which concludes on Election Day, November 3. He has denounced mail ballots, which more than half of all voters are expected to use because of health concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic, as fraudulent and illegitimate.

Trump has taken the unprecedented step of nominating a new Supreme Court justice, Amy Coney Barrett, with the intention of ramming through her confirmation by next Monday so that she can be on the court to rule on his behalf when the Republican Party challenges the counting of millions of mail ballots, or makes other demands aimed at suppressing the vote.

The president has called for the mobilization of tens of thousands of "ballot watchers" to go to the polling places and counting centers in heavily Democratic areas in a brazen effort to intimidate voters and discourage them from voting. In Michigan, where a dozen fascists were arrested only two weeks ago in the midst of active preparations to assassinate the state's Democratic governor, pro-Trump groups are howling because state election officials have banned the open display of assault rifles and other firearms at the polls.

But by the decision of all those involved in the preparation and conduct of the debate—Trump, Biden, and the moderator, Kristen Welker of NBC News—there was not a word said in the course of 90 minutes about any of these issues. The name of Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, the Democrat targeted for political murder, was not mentioned, nor Trump's nomination of Judge Barrett, nor his threats not to honor the result of the election and transfer power peacefully if he loses.

At the vice-presidential debate held two weeks ago, moderator Susan Page waited until the last question to ask about Trump's refusal to commit himself to a peaceful transfer of power. Both Senator Kamala Harris and Vice President Mike Pence evaded the issue.

As the WSWS noted at the time, "This is the question of questions. Indeed, it is the only serious issue that remains in an election where voting has already begun and is to conclude on November 3…"

Now that Trump continues to trail Biden in both the national polls and in key "battleground" states, less than two weeks before voting concludes, the question is even more critical. The reason for Trump's silence is obvious: he is moving heaven and earth to prepare for a confrontation on and after November 3. What explains the silence of the corporate media, represented by Welker, and the Democratic wing of the ruling elite, represented by Biden?

The Democrats are well aware of Trump's intention to defy the results of the vote and mobilize his supporters in political, legal and physical warfare against an increasingly likely electoral defeat. They are in intense discussions with officials in the military-intelligence apparatus, and there have been open calls by leading Democrats for the military leadership not to endorse Trump's refusal to leave office.

The Democrats are determined that the political crisis will be settled within the framework of the capitalist state, with the national-security apparatus calling the shots. What they fear most is that Trump's actions will provoke the independent political intervention of

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working people and young people in the United States and internationally, which would have devastating consequences for American capitalism both at home and abroad.

Hence their refusal to call for mass protests against the effort by the Senate Republicans to push through the confirmation of a new Supreme Court justice only days before the election, and their silence on the Michigan assassination plot and other warning signals of fascist violence during and after the election.

It is clear that high-level decisions were made to exclude these issues from the debate. Instead, in the upside-down world created by official lies, rebroadcast uncritically by the media, Kristen Welker posed a question that presented Russia, China and Iran as the main threats to the successful conduct of the November 3 vote—not the president who was standing on the stage only a few feet from her.

She asked what each candidate would do to prevent foreign powers from interfering with the election, thus allowing both Trump and Biden to issue bellicose threats against the countries which are the main targets of American imperialism, while ignoring the fact that Trump has declared on numerous occasions that he will not respect the outcome of the vote.

In what appears to be a law of political physics, the less the candidates talk about the real issues in the election, the lower they descend into the gutter, with a torrent of smears, personal attacks, and brazen lies.

Trump and Biden were only able to speak the truth when each accused the other of policies that have harmed the interests of working people. In fact, if you measured American society based solely on what they said about each other, the resulting composite would be one of complete devastation.

Biden pointed to the 220,000 dead of coronavirus in the United States, the worst impact of the pandemic of any country in the world, because of Trump's incompetence, indifference and deliberate sabotage of any effective public health response.

Trump baited Biden repeatedly on having failed, during the eight years of the Obama-Biden administration, to accomplish any of the achievements which Biden now promises if he is returned to power.

Significantly, Biden feels no need to pretend any sympathy for the Sanders wing of the Democratic Party or the millions who supported the Vermont senator because they want a radical shift to the left. He boasted of his rejection of any significant reform of American capitalism.

The only conclusion for working people and young people viewing this disgusting spectacle, aimed at disarming them in the face of the fascist danger and drowning them in political muck, is that the working class must break with the entire two-party system and build a revolutionary socialist alternative.

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