

# Canada's political leaders nervously downplay Trump's coup attempt, claim US democracy strong

Roger Jordan, Keith Jones  
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In a display born more of fear than confidence, Canadian leaders from across the political spectrum have rushed to assert that American democracy remains strong following Wednesday's attempted fascist coup in Washington.

The leaders of all five parties in the national parliament have denounced the storming of the Capitol, where the US Congress sits, as an attack on democracy. But all blurred over the most salient fact: that the coup attempt was organized by Trump from the White House, with the support and complicity of the Republican Party leadership and significant sections of the military-security apparatus.

"Violence will never succeed in overruling the will of the people. Democracy in the U.S. must be upheld—and it will be," wrote Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on social media Wednesday evening. Earlier, while the Capitol building was still occupied by far-right Trump supporters, Trudeau told a Vancouver radio station, "I think the American democratic institutions are strong and hopefully everything will return to normal shortly. We're going to continue to do what we need to do to make sure that Canadians are well served in our relationship with the United States, regardless of how things unfold."

"Canada is deeply shocked by the situation in Washington D.C.," chimed in Trudeau's foreign minister, François-Philippe Champagne. "The peaceful transition of power is fundamental to democracy. It must continue and it will."

New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh said via Twitter, "The horror unfolding in Washington is frightening and it was incited by Donald Trump. He can end it now, but refuses to. Democracy must not be intimidated." Green Party leader Annamie Paul opined that the violent protests "underscore the importance of respect for the rule of law and the peaceful transfer of power."

Erin O'Toole, the leader of the Conservative Party, many of whose MPs have previously voiced enthusiasm for Trump, labelled the attempted coup "an astonishing assault on freedom and democracy," adding he was "deeply saddened to see chaos grip our greatest ally today." Yves-François Blanchet, leader of the pro-Quebec independence Bloc Québécois, tweeted that the "degrading situation provoked by Donald Trump" would allow Americans "to see that this man and this ideology have not served them."

The Canadian political leaders' pronouncements about the

health and resilience of US democracy were motivated in equal measure by the need to convince themselves and their anxiety over the impact of Wednesday's events on popular consciousness.

But they cannot disguise the fact that bourgeois democracy in America is at death's door.

Already, last October, after Trump had made clear in the first presidential debate that he would never accept a peaceful transition of power, Trudeau admitted that his government was preparing for "disruptions" during the vote and its aftermath.

Trump's coup unfolded in plain view over many months. Last June, he attempted to invoke the Insurrection Act and illegally deploy the military over the objections of the states to crush mass protests triggered by police violence and driven by the acute social crisis. While the *World Socialist Web Site* warned that this represented the first step in an attempted presidential coup, Trudeau infamously responded to a journalist's question about Trump's authoritarian moves by remaining silent for 21 seconds, and then avoided any criticism of America's would-be dictator.

Wednesday's attempted coup was foreshadowed by the far-right plot to kidnap and execute Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, and capture the state legislature. This operation, orchestrated by far-right and fascistic forces with close ties to the Trump administration, was virtually blacked out by the Canadian media and ignored by the political establishment.

The *World Socialist Web Site* summed up the consequences of Wednesday's attempted coup in its Thursday Perspective: "The hoary glorifications of the invincibility and timelessness of American democracy have been totally exposed and discredited as a hollow political myth. The popular phrase 'It Can't Happen Here,' taken from the title of Sinclair Lewis' justly famous fictional account of the rise of American fascism, has been decisively overtaken by events. Not only *can* a fascist coup happen here. It *has* happened here, on the afternoon of January 6, 2021.

"Moreover, even if the initial effort has fallen short of its goal, it *will happen again*."

The principal aim of Canada's political leaders, like their counterparts in and around the Democratic Party in the United States, is to cover up this political reality. Everyone from Singh and the NDP on the "left" to the Tories on the right proclaim with one voice that American democracy remains strong, and that "normalcy" will return as soon as the Democrat Joseph Biden

enters the White House.

In keeping with this, the manifest breakdown of American democracy is attributed almost entirely to Trump's authoritarian personality and fascist mindset, as if he has emerged from Hell to despoil a democratic Garden of Eden. But virtually the entire Republican Party supported Trump's attempt to nullify the election, hoping to reprise on a far grander and more brazen scale the Supreme Court-backed theft of the 2000 election. If 10 former Democrat and Republican Defence Secretaries felt the need to issue an urgent appeal to the military last Sunday to oppose a Trump coup attempt, it was because they knew that there is widespread support for an authoritarian government in the military and intelligence apparatus.

Two fundamental factors account for the Canadian political establishment and corporate media's attempt to cover up the extent and import of Trump's attempted coup.

First, Canada, more than any other major power in the world, relies on its decades-long strategic-military partnership with the United States to advance its imperialist interests around the globe; and thus, notwithstanding major concerns over Trump's America First agenda, the Trudeau government significantly expanded Canada's collaboration with Washington under Trump.

Nothing, not even a fascist coup, is to be allowed to endanger the "special" Canada-US relationship.

Secondly, the Canadian ruling elite fears investigation of Trump's coup attempt, the support it has received from sections of the US ruling establishment and what has led to it. This is because any examination of the breakdown of US democracy would reveal that the same basic social and political processes that are driving it—rising social inequality, decades of imperialist war, the emergence of far-right forces—have long been developing in Canada.

The visible putrefaction and collapse of American democracy delivers a shattering blow to the ideological propaganda used by the Canadian and US ruling elites to justify their global imperialist operations and intrigues. Throughout the Cold War, Washington and Ottawa styled themselves as leaders of the "free world" and defenders of "democracy." The virtually uninterrupted series of wars involving the United States and Canada in the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa, since the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union, have been variously justified as crusades for "human rights," "democracy," and "peacekeeping."

In recent years, the further integration of Canada's military and intelligence agencies into Washington's worldwide geostrategic offensives aimed above all at Russia and China has been portrayed as necessary to guard the world's imperialist "democracies" from the grave threat of "authoritarian" regimes like Putin's Russia and "dictators" like China's Xi Jinping. Now, a fascist coup led by the US president and supported by significant sections of the state apparatus has been attempted in the most powerful of these "democracies."

Trudeau, O'Toole, Singh and all the rest hope that by diverting attention away from this fact, Canadian imperialism will be able to aggressively assert its predatory interests in collaboration with Washington under a Biden administration as if nothing has happened. Canada is already deeply implicated in the US war

preparations against Russia and China, strategic offensives Biden has pledged to intensify, and it is likewise committed to massive military spending increases. These include the purchase of armed drones, a new fleet of warships, and hi-tech fighter jets. Ottawa is also committed to modernizing the bilateral North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). This could include Canada embracing the Pentagon's mad plans for waging "winnable" nuclear war by joining its ballistic missile defence shield.

At the same time, none of these political figures can afford to honestly examine what took place in Washington because similar tendencies are far advanced in Canada. Just over six months ago, a military reservist inspired by far-right conspiracy theories crashed his truck full of high-powered firearms through the gates of Rideau Hall and attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Trudeau. The military has since been forced to acknowledge it harbours a growing number of right-wing extremists and outright fascists within its ranks.

Like the US, Canada is a social powder keg. Governments at all levels and of all political stripes have overseen a calamitous response to the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed over 16,500 lives and infected well over 600,000 people. While workers risk their lives and those of their loved ones on a daily basis due to the criminal reopening of the economy spearheaded by the Trudeau government and supported by all establishment parties, the country's super-rich have never had it so good. Forty Canadian billionaires are more than \$50 billion wealthier than they were at the beginning of the pandemic.

Such a social order can only be maintained by state repression and authoritarian forms of rule. The Canadian ruling elite has already gone a long way to criminalize workers' strikes and job actions, while targeting protests for brutal police violence. Last February, when indigenous protesters blocked railways across the country as part of anti-pipeline protests, the Tories and much of corporate Canada bayed for the military to be deployed to crush them.

Prominent political figures, such as Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and Ontario's Doug Ford, are cultivating right-wing extremists. Employers have begun deploying far-right thugs against workers in labour disputes, most notably FCL last winter against locked out workers at its Regina oil refinery.

The reality none of the establishment politicians can publicly acknowledge is it is only a matter of time before similar anti-democratic fascist conspiracies emerge into the open in Canada. The only social force capable of preventing such a development is the Canadian working class, which must wage a unified struggle with workers in the United States on the basis of a socialist program to defend democratic rights and oppose the bourgeoisie's turn to authoritarian forms of rule.



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