

# Anxiety in South Asia over US president's attempted coup

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Concerns have been voiced in South Asia about the fascist mob incited by US President Trump that stormed the Capitol in Washington last week. Comments have also been made expressing hopes for an “orderly transition of power” to President-elect Joe Biden and the “ultimate prevalence of democracy” in the US.

This nervousness has nothing to do with any allegiance to democracy. Biden does not represent “democracy” any more than Trump, and defends US imperialism and the same ruthless class interests.

Throughout the region, the ruling classes are moving towards autocratic forms of rule amid the political and economic crisis intensified by the global coronavirus pandemic. They fear that the coup attempt in the US exposes to the working class the collapse of bourgeois democracy, not just at the centre of global capitalism but in their own countries.

The South Asian ruling elites are heavily dependent economically and strategically on US imperialism and the political instability in Washington directly impacts on them all.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a tweet on January 7, declaring: “Distressed to see news about rioting and violence in Washington DC. Orderly and peaceful transfer of power must continue. The democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests.” Significantly, he did not condemn the fascist coup nor even did use the word “coup.”

Modi's statement reflects specific concerns about the implications of events in Washington for India's relations with the US.

Indian governments over the past two decades have developed ever closer military, economic and political relations with Washington. The Indian bourgeoisie

hopes that its strategic alignment with the US will boost its regional and global ambitions against arch rival China.

These relations are being pushed by the US because of India's central importance in Washington's strategic and military offensive against Beijing. In a war against China, the US needs to block Indian Ocean sea routes, vital for Chinese imports of energy and raw materials.

Close geo-strategic relations with the US began under the Congress government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, which was backed by India's two Stalinist parties. Under Modi, India has been transformed into a frontline state fully integrated into Washington's war plans. Trump visited India last February to further cement these ties.

New Delhi has signed basing agreements with the US allowing its forces to use India's military ports and airports. On October 27, less than ten days before the US presidential election, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited India to sign the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement. This will allow sharing of high-end military technology and classified satellite and other data between the two countries.

India has also emerged as a key member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad—a quasi-military alliance involving the US, Japan, Australia and India against China. New Delhi's relations with Washington provoked border tensions with China last year, posing the danger of a war between the two nuclear-armed countries and involve the US and other major powers with global catastrophic consequences.

The mainstream media and the ruling elites in the US and India promote themselves as great democracies—America the world's oldest democracy and India the world's largest. These claims are false to the core.

Trump's attempted coup d'état has revealed the long-developing collapse of American democracy and moves by key sections of the ruling elite for a fascist regime to crush the eruption of revolutionary struggles by the working class. Similarly in India, Modi's Hindu-supremacist government is entrenching authoritarian rule.

The Indian media has published several comments on the January 6 events. Many note Trump's role in inciting the attack on the Capitol and describe it as a "coup." They conclude, however, that the situation will somehow return to normal.

An *Indian Express* editorial on January 8, for example, declares that the storming of Capitol Hill "is deeply unsettling" and a "dangerous moment." America, however, it continues, "will overcome this moment, as it has its other big crises... It still has institutions that can stand up to excesses by the country's political leadership, even its highest office."

The *Economic Times* was more explicit. Denouncing the actions of Trump's supporters as deplorable, it states that, "yet, on its worst day the US showed its commitment to the republic and democracy." Biden becoming president, the newspaper hoped, would "not just to deal with the pandemic and its economic consequences, restore US to its traditional global leadership role, but also to heal the rift that divides America and renew the politics of compromise and consensus."

These are sheer illusions.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has consistently explained, Trump is not some "evil personality" but the representative of the criminal financial oligarchy in the US. Biden and his Democratic party represent the same ruthless ruling class interests.

In Sri Lanka, neither President Gotabhaya Rajapakse nor his brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse has uttered a word about the attempted fascist coup in Washington.

The cash-strapped Sri Lanka government, which faces an economic crisis worsened by the coronavirus pandemic and dependent on Chinese investments and loans, however, is nervously studying political developments in the US.

In late October, Pompeo visited Colombo where he met with Rajapakse and other political leaders and thuggishly declared that the government should end its

relations with Beijing and fully align itself with the US interests.

While the Rajapakses are maintaining an official silence about Trump's attempted coup, the Sri Lankan media has commented.

An opinion piece by *Daily Mirror* international affairs editor Ameen Izzadeen declared: "What happened on January 6 was a coup d'état of sorts to subvert democracy... Just as the 9/11 terrorists brought down the Twin Towers, Trump's terrorists—some of them armed—tried to bring down the edifice of democracy so that the demagogue could continue as president for four more years."

The *Daily Mirror* columnist went on to pompously declare that, "By defeating Trump, Biden saved the soul of America"—comments designed to maintain the myth that the Democrats are some sort of progressive alternative.

What is happening in the US, the centre of world capitalism, is the key to understanding the political situation everywhere.

The attempted fascist coup d'état in the US is the counter-revolutionary reaction of a capitalist class in deep crisis and fearful of emerging working class struggles that pose the prospect of revolution.

Like the authoritarian turn by its counterparts in India, Sri Lankan President Rajapakse is rallying fascist forces as he seeks to establish a dictatorship based on the military. The developments pose the urgency of fighting for an international socialist movement of the working class based on the program of world socialist revolution.



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