

Nineteen months after January 6, Biden discovers the threat of fascism

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On Thursday, Joe Biden will deliver a national address from Philadelphia in which he will tell the country that “our democracy is at stake” and that a year and a half after Trump’s attempted coup of January 6, 2021, “our rights and freedoms are still under attack,” according to a preview by a White House official.

These statements, combined with Biden’s assertion last Thursday that Trump is a “semi-fascist,” are a staggering acknowledgement that the United States has come to the precipice of fascist dictatorship.

For 19 months following the coup attempt, the Democrats have downplayed the danger and attempted to absolve the Republican Party and military-intelligence apparatus of any blame. Now, nine weeks before the midterm elections in which Trump candidates are heading the Republican ticket, Biden announces that the danger is greater than ever. He would not be making a rare prime time address, with Independence Hall as his backdrop, if his administration did not feel that it was confronting a political crisis of unprecedented proportions.

The events of the past three weeks testify to a conflict so intense that the capitalist newspapers regularly publish articles pondering the imminence of civil war. On August 8, the FBI raided Trump’s Florida palace and seized boxes of evidence which the Justice Department claims include state secrets. Subsequent document releases show the raid was based on assertions that prosecutors had probable cause to believe Trump was obstructing justice and violating the Espionage Act.

On August 26, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines announced that the intelligence agencies were investigating the documents Trump took from the White House and were recovered in the Mar-a-Lago raid. On August 27, the *New York Times* editorial board published a statement entitled “Donald Trump Is Not Above the Law,” in which the most influential Democratic Party newspaper called for Trump’s prosecution, even though

such a move “could inflame the bitter partisan divide, even to the point of civil unrest.”

Trump and his allies have responded with naked threats of violence.

After the Mar-a-Lago raid, Trump’s attorneys delivered a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland that contained a mobster-like threat: “President Trump wants the Attorney General to know that he has been hearing from people all over the country about the raid. If there was one word to describe their mood, it is ‘angry.’ The heat is building up. The pressure is building up. Whatever I can do to take the heat down, to bring the pressure down, just let us know.”

On August 28, January 6 co-conspirator Lindsey Graham (Republican-South Carolina) appeared on Fox News and declared: “Most Republicans, including me, believe when it comes to Trump, there is no law. It’s all about getting him. And I’ll say this: If there’s a prosecution of Donald Trump for mishandling classified information after the Clinton debacle... there’ll be riots in the streets.”

These threats of violence are credible and must be believed. After all, this is Trump’s modus operandi. In recent days, he has engaged in a whirlwind of activity on the far-right platform Truth Social, whipping up his fascist supporters and sharing lewd and degraded images of his political opponents in the Democratic and Republican parties. In one post Tuesday morning, Trump shared an image from an account called “Patriot Party” implying that he was going to break with the Republican Party and form an “ultra MAGA” party of the extreme right.

But the statements and actions of the Biden administration make clear that the Democratic Party is not fighting fascism; it is paving the way for the further strengthening of the far right.

A White House official told the press that Thursday’s

speech will frame the fight for democracy at home as inextricably linked to the fight for “democracy” abroad against America’s “authoritarian” enemies, Russia and China. The official said that Biden will warn that America’s “standing in the world” is at stake as a result of January 6. NBC White House reporter Lauren Egan said Tuesday, “We know that he is going to say America’s reputation on the world stage is still on the line. He’s going to say our credibility with our foreign allies is on the ballot this November.”

This argument is fraught with contradictions that Biden cannot answer. How can the United States spread democracy abroad if a fascist network threatens to take power at home? How is the fight for “democracy” against fascists at home advanced by providing fascists in Ukraine with billions of dollars in weapons?

From the Alien and Sedition Acts to the Palmer Raids, the Japanese-American internment and Kent State, war means strengthening the repressive apparatus and the far right to crack down on political dissent and crush strikes and protests by workers. Dozens of books have been published on these subjects, including Zechariah Chafee’s *Freedom of Speech in War Time* and Geoffrey Stone’s *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime*.

Biden is also working aggressively to save the Republican Party, which the Democrats need to prosecute war. In the same speech calling Trump a “semi-fascist” last week, Biden called for “national unity” with the same Republican Party which is responsible for carrying out the coup and blocking efforts to hold its perpetrators accountable.

Biden said unity between “mainstream Republicans” and Democrats was necessary to counter Russia and China and overcome the damage Trump did to the interests of US imperialism. He stated, “I underestimated how much damage the previous four years had done in terms of America’s reputation in the world.” In his remarks, he was careful to distinguish between “MAGA Republicans” and “mainstream Republicans,” asserting that the latter “love this country.”

Biden’s administration is promising to increase the power of the repressive forces of the state that Trump relies on as a base of support. Yesterday in a speech in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, Biden attacked “MAGA Republicans” not as opponents of democracy, but as opponents of police who were injured by the rioters on January 6. During his remarks, Biden denounced calls to “defund the police” and said he planned to increase funding for the police.

On social policy, the Biden administration is pursuing a ruthless policy of raising interest rates in order to drive down workers’ wages, collaborating with the trade unions to suppress the class struggle and keep wages below the inflation rate. It is not possible to fight for political democracy while ensuring that the corporations expand their dictatorial power over the whole economy. To the extent that Trump is able to develop a mass base, it is due to the devastating consequences of the policies of the Democratic Party, which has abandoned any past association with social reform.

Trump himself emerged as a political figure out of a reactionary political climate impacted by decades of permanent wars, attacks on democratic rights and the transfer of trillions of dollars from the working class to the financial aristocracy.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were accompanied by the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the expansion of the National Security Agency’s surveillance. The Democratic Party bailed out the banks in 2008 and provided the corporations with trillions of dollars through the CARES Act in 2020. It has slashed social programs, while handing over billions to Wall Street through years of quantitative easing. This is the climate of militarism, chauvinism and parasitism that fertilized the soil out of which Trump and his movement grew.

The struggle for democracy at home will succeed to the extent that it is linked to opposition to war abroad and rooted in the fight against declining wages and the skyrocketing cost of living, in defense of immigrants scapegoated for the social crisis, and in defense of all democratic rights. This cannot and will not happen through the Democratic Party. Genuine democracy can only be defended by the working class through its independent political mobilization against the entire capitalist political establishment.



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