

Biden's national address warns of imminent threat of dictatorship

Eric London
1 September 2022

US President Joe Biden's address to the nation Thursday night, delivered in prime time with Philadelphia's Independence Hall as the backdrop, was extraordinary both for what he said and what he did not say.

In the first half of his 24-minute speech, Biden described a nation on the very knife's edge of dictatorship. "Equality and democracy are under assault, and we do ourselves no favor by saying otherwise," he said. Donald Trump and his supporters are "a clear and present danger," who "placed a dagger at the throat of our democracy" on January 6, 2021.

The threat is live. Trump and his network of far-right backers within the state are engaged in "preparation for the 2022 and 2024 elections" to "nullify the votes" of tens of millions of Americans, Biden said.

While stating that "not every Republican" is a pro-Trump "MAGA Republican," Biden for the first time declared, "There is no question that the Republican Party today is dominated and intimidated by MAGA Republicans, and that is a threat to this country."

He continued, "MAGA Republicans do not respect the Constitution, they do not recognize the will of the people, they refuse to accept the results of a free election. They are working right now in state after state to give power to partisans and cronies, empowering election deniers to undermine the elections. They are determined to take this country backwards, backwards to a country where there is no right to choose, no right to privacy, no right to contraception, no right to marry who you love."

Biden said that Trump and "MAGA Republicans" are engaged in "more and more talk about violence as an acceptable tool in this country." Referencing Trump and Lindsey Graham's comments threatening "riots" if Trump is prosecuted, Biden said, "Public figures are predicting and all but calling for mass violence and rioting in the streets. This is inflammatory, it's dangerous, it's

against the rule of law, and we the people must say this is not who we are."

"We are at an inflection point, one of those moments that determine the shape of everything that is to come after," Biden said. "We are still at our core a democracy," he said, defensively, adding, "American democracy is not guaranteed, we have to defend it."

These statements are a staggering self-indictment of the Biden administration and Democratic Party's role in covering up the plot for 19 months since January 6.

If Trump is "a clear and present danger" against democracy, why has Biden allowed him to remain free? If "we do ourselves no favors" by denying the threat, why did Biden say in his March 2022 state of the union address that "the State of the Union is strong," that "we are stronger today than we were a year ago," and "we will be stronger a year from now than we are today?"

Furthermore, if the Republican Party is "a threat to the country," why has Biden and every other Democratic politician referred to them as their "friends" and "colleagues" for the last year-and-a-half, as Biden worked to forge a bipartisan unity to wage war abroad and an assault on the working class at home?

Are Americans to believe Biden's pledge that he "will not stand by and watch elections be stolen" when this is exactly what he and the Democrats did as the events of January 6 were playing out? Not only did Biden stand by, he even called on Trump to appear on national television and address a national audience in the middle of his coup!

While the first half of Biden's speech laid out in the starkest terms yet the danger of dictatorship (significantly, he did not use the word "fascist" in this speech, as he did in a speech last week), the second half showed why the Democratic Party is incapable of stopping it.

Biden and the Democrats are organically incapable of explaining the true source of the danger. So fearful is the ruling class of telling the truth about the degeneration of

American capitalism that they can only talk to the American people like they are children. Speaking like a Catholic priest, Biden claimed Trump sprang like the devil from the depths of hell. Trump's rise, he said, was a product of "hate," "chaos," "darkness" and "evil."

He made no references to the immense social inequality that dominates American social life, to the wars abroad that have had devastating consequences for so many of the towns and cities where Trump won votes, to decades of deindustrialization, to rising opioid deaths, to the corrupting influence of the right-wing media, to the climate of extreme nationalism and anti-immigrant hysteria that has dominated under the War on Terror. He made no attempt to explain how Trump won 70 million votes in the 2020 election, including in many areas that once voted overwhelmingly Democratic when the party was still associated with a policy of social reform. He could not do so, because he and his party are responsible for creating the very social crisis from which Trump draws strength.

Biden's presentation of contemporary social conditions and of the response of his own administration to the pandemic flatly contradicts the everyday experiences of tens of millions of people. He presented America as a land of "opportunity," asserting that under his administration "millions of Americans have been lifted out of poverty," even as millions are thrown into poverty as a result of soaring inflation.

With the pandemic continuing to ravage the US and the world, Biden declared that his administration had "lifted America from the depths of COVID, and today America's economy is stronger than any other advanced nation in the world." He did not once recognize the extraordinary toll the pandemic has taken—and continues to take—on the population, including an unprecedented decline in life expectancy of three years. After rattling off the various pro-corporate legislative giveaways his administration and the Democratic Congress have passed since taking office, he said, "Cynics and critics tell us nothing can get done, but they're wrong."

Such statements, and the pro-corporate policies that he pledged to continue, will only pour fuel on the flames of the far-right threat. The US Federal Reserve is expected to announce further interest rate hikes that are aimed at driving down wages and throwing millions into unemployment and poverty. What are the soon-to-be-unemployed going to make of Biden's claim that his administration is "opening doors," "creating possibilities," and "focusing on the future?" Biden

denounced Trump for relying on "lies told for profit and power," but he is only a pot calling the kettle black.

There were several additional notable elements of the speech.

Hecklers could be heard shouting "F- Joe Biden" in the background throughout the speech, and this distracted the president to the point where he was forced to recognize their presence twice.

The question of war against Russia was notably absent, and Biden did not attempt to connect the fight against Trump to the waging of war abroad. The administration evidently felt that any attempt to do so would only weaken the limited popular appeal it was attempting to make in the lead-up to the midterm elections, in which Trump's Republican Party may win back control of the House or Senate. This was a recognition that the war has almost no public support outside the affluent middle class that forms the base of the Democratic Party.

Finally, before the speech began, two US Marines in dress blues walked out of the doorway of Independence Hall, saluted the cameras, and stood on either side of the door. They remained there throughout Biden's speech, backlit in a menacing red color, their white gloves illuminated by ground lights. The message was: Biden is the representative of law-and-order and wields the repressive power of the military and the intelligence apparatus.

He concluded his speech with the same tired appeal to "vote, vote, vote" for the Democrats in the midterm elections. But the outcome of the election will have no impact on the long-term threat of fascist dictatorship, which draws its strength not from Trump the individual, but from the crisis of American capitalism and the rot of its oligarchic political system.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact