

The indictment of Donald Trump: A politically bankrupt diversion

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31 March 2023

Donald Trump is expected to turn himself in on Tuesday for arraignment on indictments handed down by a New York grand jury, reportedly in connection to payouts made on Trump's behalf to a former porn star. The first-ever charges against a former president of the United States mark a new stage in the degradation of American politics.

There are no issues of democratic import in the indictment. Rather, the Democratic Party has chosen to focus on the flimsiest and most inconsequential matter possible. Trump is being accused of falsifying the nature of payments to the porn star, Stormy Daniels, made in 2016 before he was president, which were channeled through Trump's longtime "fixer"-turned-government witness, Michael Cohen.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg is reportedly planning on leveraging this charge, which is a misdemeanor that has exceeded the statute of limitations, into a felony by arguing that the business records were falsified to cover up an illegal donation to Trump's campaign, namely the money from Cohen to pay off Daniels.

The tenuous and convoluted character of the charges has promoted concern within sections of the Democratic Party itself. The *Washington Post* in its editorial on Friday worried that "of the long list of alleged violations, the likely charges on which a grand jury in New York state voted to indict [Trump] are perhaps the least compelling."

The Democrats' decision to focus on this issue will serve to strengthen the fascist wing of the Republican Party and even provide Trump with the opportunity to posture as a martyr. Trump is already denouncing the "political witch-hunt," while Republicans are rallying around the former president. Trump's former vice president, Mike Pence, whom the Democrats have

upheld as a paragon of democracy, denounced the indictment as an "outrage."

The indictment has nothing to do with the many grave crimes of which Trump is clearly guilty—above all, the January 6, 2021 fascist insurrection that sought to overturn the results of the 2020 elections and establish a presidential dictatorship. The *Post* notes that "a failed prosecution over the hush-money payment could put" all other investigations into Trump's actions "in jeopardy."

Indeed, this may be the intention on the part of a section of the Democratic Party establishment. It would certainly conform with the stated aim of the Biden administration to "look forward" rather than backward, as part of Biden's efforts to establish a bipartisan consensus for the escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia and preparations for war against China.

During Trump's presidency, the entire approach of the Democratic Party was a combination of subservience and complicity. Its opposition to Trump was centered almost entirely on matters of foreign policy, in particular on Ukraine and the demand for a more aggressive policy against Russia—the focus of the first impeachment of Trump in 2019.

The Democrats responded to the January 6 coup with fecklessness and cover-up. After the coup failed, not through any action on their part, the immediate response of the Biden administration was to exculpate the Republican Party and its leaders and to ignore entirely the role of sections of the military and police in the coup.

The second impeachment of Trump in February 2021, based on the charge of incitement of insurrection, was a pro forma affair held over four days, with the Democrats not even bothering to call witnesses. The various congressional hearings into the fascist coup,

whatever facts and details they have revealed, have gone nowhere. In the end, only minor bit players have been prosecuted.

The Democrats turned the focus first on “state secrets,” in relation to allegations that Trump took classified documents from the White House to his Mar-a-Lago resort, and now on charges of hush money paid out to suppress a sex scandal. These issues appeal to two of the main components of the base of the Democratic Party: the military-intelligence-state apparatus and affluent layers of the middle class that are relentlessly focused on issues of racial and gender identity.

The indictment of Trump for the payout to Daniels has nothing to do with educating the population about the real dangers posed by the fascistic transformation of the Republican Party. Rather, it diverts attention from issues of deadly seriousness into a political circus. The “national debate” is now to be focused, with the assistance of the media, on whether or not Trump paid off an actress to cover up an affair.

While a trial of Trump on this basis may energize the upper-middle class base of the Democratic Party, the working class will view it with indifference. The Republicans will exploit the obvious hypocrisy on such matters by the Democrats, whose own leaders, including Clinton, were involved in the Jeffrey Epstein scandal.

While the Democrats have sought to maintain “bipartisan” unity on the basis of war, behind the indictment are ongoing and intense divisions within the ruling class, accelerated by a series of crises facing American capitalism—economic, geopolitical and internal.

The American presidency has been wracked by crisis for more than half a century, extending back at least to the assassination of John F. Kennedy 60 years ago. As the White House is the cockpit of the capitalist national security state and imperialist war planning, it has been the focal point of conspiracies against democratic rights (i.e., the Watergate crisis of 1972-74 and the Iran-Contra scandal of 1986-87) and bitter conflicts within the ruling class itself. The Republicans made use of a sex scandal in their failed attempt to remove Clinton from the White House.

Both the Watergate crisis and the Iran-Contra scandal were followed by extensive public hearings and even the criminal indictments of high-ranking figures in the

Nixon and Reagan administrations, even though the presidents were exempted from the legal consequences of their crimes. There has been no comparable investigation into the January 6 coup, which was at a far higher level of criminality than Nixon’s involvement in the break-in of the Democratic National Committee headquarters and Reagan’s sanctioning of the violation of a law passed by Congress.

Issues raised in the January 6 coup have the potential to expose not only the criminality of Trump but the extent of a far broader anti-democratic conspiracy, which reached into the highest echelons of the military. The Democrats have been opposed to this because they are far more fearful of the development of popular opposition from below than the conspiracies of fascists that dominate the Republican Party.

The working class should not be misled by this politically bankrupt diversion from the central issues of war, social inequality and the growth of political reaction. Regardless of the outcome of the indictment, the fascistic conspiracies will continue.

The antidote to the filth and rot of the entire political system is the development of the class struggle, which is emerging powerfully in the United States and throughout the world. The Biden administration, wracked by crisis, leans on the Republicans for support in the prosecution of war abroad and the suppression of the class struggle at home.

The Socialist Equality Party opposes the fascistic policies of Trump and the Republican Party on the basis of the independent organization of the working class, in opposition to both the Democrats and the Republicans, and the fight for a socialist alternative to capitalism.



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