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USA

Biden, Trump Trade Blows as Midterm Campaign Begins; the Left at the Margin

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President Joseph Biden and former president Donald Trump are exchanging attacks on each other as the mid-term election campaign begins, but the left is largely irrelevant to the political battle. Trump calls the Democrats socialists, while the Democrats push the few actual socialists to the margin. What's missing on the left is a mass movement with a political strategy.

Speaking on September 1 from Independence Hall in Philadelphia where both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were written, Biden told the American people, "As I stand here tonight, equality and democracy are under assault.... Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our Republic." (MAGA refers to Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again.") Earlier Biden had called their views "semi-fascism." He delivered the speech on the eve of Labor Day weekend, the date when national election campaigns begin.

Only a few days before Biden's speech, Trump had demanded that either he be made president at once, since he had actually won the 2020 election, or that a new election be held.

The former president faces serious legal threats with investigations in Georgia for interference in the election and a federal investigation into 11,179 documents 18 of them marked top secret and 54 secret that he illegally took from the White House when he left office. He could be charged with the felony of obstruction of justice. Trump has called the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI, "vicious monsters" for searching his home. His supporters have rallied around Trump, and polls show that 40 percent of voters support him and 10 percent believe the use of violence would be appropriate to change the government.

Some 69% of both Democrats and Republicans believe American democracy is in danger. While Biden talks about saving democracy, Trump is holding "Save America" rallies attended by thousands of loyal supporters at which he calls Biden "an enemy of the state" and attacks Democratic Party candidates as socialists. Trump called Biden's Independence Hall speech, "the most vicious, hateful and divisive speech ever delivered by an American president." He added, "Republicans in the MAGA movement are not the ones trying to undermine our democracy. We are the ones trying to save our democracy. The danger to democracy comes from the radical left, not from the right."

The radical left in the United States is actually small minority, though there are more socialists in Congress now than at any time in U.S. history. All of these socialists run as Democrats. There are altogether 535 members of Congress, 100 Senators and 435 representatives, of whom five are socialists: Senator Bernie Sanders and representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Cori Bush, and Jamaal Bowman. In New York state, there are three socialists out of 213 legislators, and few other states have any socialists in state-wide office. In primary elections this year socialist and other progressive candidates generally lost to moderates.

The largest socialist groups on the U.S. left, the Democratic Socialist of America which claims 94,000 members and the Communist Party with an estimated 5,000 members both run candidates as Democrats. The small far-left groups sometimes call for the creation of a labor party, while others run candidates as socialists, though few are elected, the almost sole exception being Kshama Sawant on the Seattle city council. The Green Party, with an estimated 50,000 members, runs candidates on its own slate, and has elected some candidates to local office, but it has no state or federal legislators. The last Green presidential candidate, Howie Hawkins, got only 0.2 percent of the vote in 2020.

Most leftists tend to look to the building of mass movement of workers, women, and people of color as the way to

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defend democracy, though they will vote for Democrats. Some 15 to 20 million people participated in the Black Lives Movement of 2020, and movements such as that must become political to change the balance of forces.

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