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What Biden did *not* say in his national address on the January 6 coup attempt

Yesterday, Joe Biden delivered a speech from the U.S. Capitol in which he told the population there had been an attempt to overthrow the Constitution and establish a dictatorship in America. Biden warned that the danger had not passed and that the conspirators were actively planning to overturn upcoming elections.



President Joe Biden speaks from Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol to mark the one year anniversary of the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol by supporters loyal to then-President Donald Trump, Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022, in Washington. (Greg Nash/Pool via AP)

January 6 was “an inflection point in history,” he said. A network of plotters “held a dagger at the throat of American democracy,” and “right now, in state after state, new laws are being written not to protect the vote but to deny it. Not only to suppress the vote but to

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subvert it.” Biden declared, “As we stand here today, one year since January 6, 2021, the lies that drove the anger and madness we saw in this place, they have not abated. So we have to be firm, resolute and unyielding in our defense of the right to vote and to have that vote counted.”

The principle that governs national presidential addresses is to avoid saying what must *not* be said. The purpose of the speech was not to expose the truth of what took place on January 6, 2021 but to deflect and obfuscate.

The real truth can only be extracted by reviewing what Biden did *not* say.

First, Biden’s speech did not explain why, if the country is under the imminent threat of dictatorship, his administration delayed giving this speech for an entire year.

Yesterday’s speech was the first time Biden has delivered an address to the nation about the events of January 6. He compared January 6 to the events of Pearl Harbor, but Franklin Delano Roosevelt did not wait until December 7, 1942 to address the population about an attack that took place the previous year.

There was almost no public notice of the timing of the president’s speech. Presidential speeches are usually major political events, the timing of which are announced in advance to ensure the broadest viewership. But Biden’s speech took place almost by surprise, without advance forewarning, at 9:00 a.m. Eastern time, 6:00 a.m. Pacific time. The timing was arranged to ensure the smallest possible audience among masses of working people. The administration felt it could not avoid recognizing the anniversary but did not want the population to hear what Biden had to say.

Biden’s speech did not lay out any concrete action to stop the plotters in their tracks and did not make any proposals for holding those responsible to account. It did not explain why, if “we have to be firm, resolute and unyielding,” his administration has done nothing.

His speech did not refer to the chief conspirator by name, referring to Trump only by the officially used title, “the former president.” This reflected weakness and was a concession to Trump, who should have been referred to not as “former president” but as a criminal and aspiring dictator. Biden’s speech also did not name a single individual responsible for the plot, either its leaders in the Senate (Hawley, Cruz, Tuberville, Marshall, Kennedy,

Lummis and Hyde-Smith), in the House (Gosar, Biggs, Taylor Greene, Boehbert, Brooks, Gaetz, Cawthorne, and many more), in the White House (Stephen Bannon, Peter Navarro, Steven Miller), or in the military (Christopher Miller, Charles Flynn).

Biden's speech did not call the plot by its real name, either. The wording used by Biden and the many speechwriters who reviewed and carefully edited the remarks show the authors aimed to conceal the most dangerous and alarming aspects from the population. He said there existed within the country "forces that value brute strength over the sanctity of democracy" that aim to "transform" the Republican Party from a conservative party "into *something else*," he said, avoiding using the term "fascist." The words "authoritarian," "dictatorship" or "police state" do not appear in Biden's speech.

He did not explain what would have happened if the coup had succeeded. If the mob had succeeded in taking Congressional hostages, the Democrats would have entered into negotiations with Trump for an arrangement keeping him in power.

The president's speech did not describe the role played by the police and military in facilitating Trump's plot. Biden presented the security forces as defenders of democracy, calling law enforcement "the heroes who defended this Capitol." He said, "Outnumbered in the face of a brutal attack, the Capitol Police, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, the National Guard and other brave law enforcement officials saved the rule of law."

Biden did not expose the Republican Party for supporting Trump's plot. Instead, he praised those "courageous men and women" within the Republican Party who are "standing against" Trump, "trying to uphold the principle of that party" without referencing the fact that 147 Republican congresspersons supported parliamentary objections to the certification of the electoral college. He called for unity with the Republicans, declaring, "Whatever my other disagreements are with Republicans who support the rule of law and not the rule of a single man, I will always seek to work together with them, to find shared solutions."

He did not address any of the underlying social and historical processes that gave rise to Trump and Trumpism. Biden said Trump was motivated by his "bruised ego," adding, "the former president who lies about this election and the mob that attacked this Capitol could not be further away from the core American values." But if the danger stemmed

only from Trump's "ego," then there would be no danger. Biden made no attempt to explain how it is that millions of Americans believe Trump's lies, and why a substantial section of the political and media establishment promotes them. Whenever Biden touched on a subject that would have been worth exploring, he moves on immediately, as when he made a tantalizing reference to the role of "the greed of the few" in fueling dictatorship.

But Biden did not explain why, as president, he adopted Trump's "let it rip" policies in response to the pandemic, while rejecting any economic assistance to the public because the White House does not want "to write checks to incentivize people to sit at home."

The Democratic Party is intrinsically unable to defend democracy. It is fighting a war on two fronts. On the one hand, the Democrats would prefer to avoid a fascistic takeover because this would undermine the interests of American imperialism around the world. For decades, the Democratic Party has justified neo-colonial wars and coup plots on humanitarian grounds, fraudulently claiming their brutal military interventions are necessary to protect "democracy" and lecturing half the world on the importance of "free and fair elections."

Even in Biden's speech about the threat of dictatorship coming from within the American political system, he managed to blame "China and Russia" for "betting that democracy's days are numbered." The Democrats are aware that their pretense for foreign intervention in general and against these two adversaries in particular would be made untenable by a coup.

On the other hand, the Democrats are waging war on a second front against the working class. As it struggles to suppress wages and force workers and students back to their workplaces and schools in the midst of the pandemic, the Democratic Party must also downplay the threat of dictatorship to prevent a social explosion. For this reason, it has made no popular appeal to masses of people during the events of January 6. The Democratic Party is terrified that if the working class becomes fully aware of the danger, a mass movement would develop that threatens corporate profits and the soaring stock markets.

In one telling moment in his speech, Biden explained that the events of January 6 were without precedent in American history. "For the first time inside this Capitol," he said,

protesters waved “the Confederate flag that symbolizes the cause to destroy America, to rip us apart. Even during the Civil War that never ever happened. But it happened here in 2021.”

The American Civil War took place in the period of the rise of American capitalism. There was a section of the ruling class, the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln, that was prepared as a class to take action to defend the Constitution and abolish the slave system. The Republican Party mobilized masses of people who sustained the revolutionary struggle even at the cost of tremendous hardship and hundreds of thousands of lives. The Confederate insurrectionists certainly tried to wave the stars-and-bars in the Capitol building in Washington, but an army of two million Northern soldiers stood in their way.

Today, in the era of the terminal decay of world capitalism, January 6 shows there is no constituency within the ruling class for the defense of democratic rights. The entire political establishment has been poisoned by massive levels of social inequality, permanent imperialist war, the militarization of the police, mass deportation, relentless assaults against jobs and living conditions. The Democrats cannot mobilize the masses to defend democracy because the Democrats are terrified of the masses.

The working class is the social force that can carry forward the struggle to defend democratic rights and oppose the threat of fascism, inspiring and leading behind it progressive elements of the middle class. This requires rooting the fight against dictatorship in the fight against the capitalist system from which fascism and dictatorship draw their strength.

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