

# United States: Trump's Bonapartism

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The Republican National Convention centered on two interrelated themes.

One was adulation of Trump as the strong leader who can save the country, and he must hold onto power come what may.

The other was his means to do this – blatant racism through mobilizing an assault on the Black Lives Matter movement, charging that it was violent thugs intent on physically destroying the country, and he would crush it in the streets.

Trump dominated each session with his presence and speeches, culminating in his long acceptance speech with the White House as his backdrop.

In that speech he said, “We must never allow mob rule. In the strongest possible terms, the Republican Party condemns the rioting, looting, arson and violence we have seen in Democrat-run cities all, like Kenosha, Minneapolis, Portland, Chicago, and New York and many others. There is violence and danger in the Democrat-run cities throughout America.”

The convention did not adopt a platform – what the Republican Party stands for is what Trump stands for, even if that changes with each tweet he sends out.

Trump kicked off the convention to shouts of “Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!”

Trump replied, “Now, if you really want really drive them crazy, you say ‘12 more years.’”

The delegates dutifully shouted back “Twelve more years! Twelve more years! Twelve more years!”

Trump responded, “Because we caught them doing really bad things in 2016. Let’s see what happens.” In 2016 Trump charged the the Democrats had organized over three million undocumented people to vote, overturning the real popular vote for Trump (Trump won the Electoral College but lost the popular vote).

Trump could not win twelve more years legally unless there was a Constitutional amendment allowing more than the presently stipulated two terms, something which is impossible to do unless the Democratic Party were to be suppressed.

This amounted to another example of Trump saying he would not accept the vote in November if it went against him. That would take a putsch to actually carry out.

A feature of the convention was the speeches given by Trump’s wife Melania, daughters Ivanka, Tiffany, and Lara, sons Donald Jr. and Eric, and Donald Jr.’s girlfriend Kimberly Gullfoyle. Together they took up 30 percent of air time over the four days of the convention, and at least one of them spoke every evening.

With what the New York Times called the “Trumpsphere” took up another 30 percent of the

speaking time. The Times said these people were largely new voices not widely known, that Trump has elevated because of their “staunch defense of a Trumpian worldview” which has “earned his retweets and big influence. Their collective speaking time was evidence of their place in the current Republican pecking order.”

No former Republican presidents or allies of the Bush, McCain or other prominent Republican families spoke.

What Trump has said and done since the convention has gone in the same direction. He has defended the police in all the recent murders by cops of Black people. He has done the same with his supporters who have come armed to BLM protests to back up the cops, even when one of these self-styled “militia men” shot dead two unarmed protesters and injured a third.

He continues to boast about how great he is, and is bound to win the election unless it is “rigged” against him.

Trump has openly embraced supporters of the far-right QAnon conspiracy group. A reporter asked him, “At the crux of the [QAnon] theory is this belief that you are secretly saving the world from this satanic cult of pedophiles and cannibals. Does that sound like something you are behind?”

Trump answered, “Well I haven’t – I haven’t heard that, but is that supposed to be a bad thing or a good thing? I mean, if I can save the world from problems, I’m willing to do it.”

A Georgia Republican, Marjorie Greene, recently won a Republican primary election for Congress. She attributed her winning to her support of QAnon’s weird theory.

Trump praised her win, and said she is a “rising star” in the Republican Party. Another time he said of QAnon, “They like me” – the key to win his approval.

Part of QAnon’s belief is that “dark forces” are behind those in this satanic cult, including the Democrats.

In a recent interview on the pro-Trump Fox News, Trump said, “I don’t like to even mention Biden, because he’s not controlling anything. They control him.”

The interviewer then asked him, “Who do you think is pulling Biden’s strings? Is it former Obama officials?”

He replied, “People you never heard of. People that are in the dark shadows.”

“What does that mean?” the interviewer interjected. “That sounds like conspiracy theory: ‘dark shadows.’ What is that?”

“No, people that you haven’t heard of,” Trump replied. “There are people on the streets. There are people controlling the streets. We had somebody get on a plane from a certain city this weekend, and in the plane, it was almost completely loaded with thugs wearing these dark uniforms, black uniforms.”

“Where was that?” he was asked.

“I’ll tell you sometime, but it’s under investigation.”

Whether Trump believes this or not, his core followers do.

Reflecting the old racist fears of the Jim Crow period, that led to many lynchings, of the danger to white women from Black men, Trump said "You have this beautiful community in the suburbs, including women, right?"

"Women. They want security. I ended where they build low-income housing projects right in the middle of your neighborhood. I ended it." He is referring to an Obama-era "fair housing" rule.

"If Biden gets in, he already said it's going to go at a much higher rate than ever before. And you know who is going to be in charge of it? [African American Senator] Cory Booker. That's going to be nice."

Marxists have used the term "Bonapartism" to the rise of such strongmen.

Marx analyzed this in the rise of Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of his famous uncle Napoleon Bonaparte. Unlike Napoleon, Louis was a mediocre political figure, like Trump today. But, like Trump, he was a clever maneuverer and demagogue. Also like Trump, Louis had ties to "organized crime", that is, illegal capitalist enterprises.

There are other similarities. Louis was elected president of France at the end of 1848. In February there had been a revolution against the monarchy, part of the democratic revolutions that swept Europe. In June-July in the first time in the history of capitalism workers rose up and took over a capital city, Paris. They were crushed in blood by the army.

After this defeat of the workers, the different capitalist parties in parliament were in disarray, fighting each other and between factions within each. Louis presented himself as something like his uncle, a strongman who could cut through the disarray and set things right.

After he was elected president in December 1848, there were years of continuing bickering among the capitalist parties and factions. Louis maneuvered amongst them. At times it looked like he would be curtailed or even impeached, but he won out each time. The population was increasingly exasperated.

Louis built up his own base in the army. Finally, conditions reached the point early in 1851 when he could stage a coup, and proclaim himself Emperor Napoleon III (Napoleon II can be ignored).

For different reasons than at the end of 1848 in France, in the present U.S. what workers' organizations exist play little or no role in politics. Like Louis, Trump presents himself as a strongman. Like in 1849 - '51, the bourgeois parties are continuously bickering between themselves, achieving little, except for bipartisan agreements like adopting ever increasing military budgets.

Louis embraced France's Napoleonic past for legitimacy and made himself Emperor. Trump looks to U.S. history, especially the Jim Crow period. He seeks to solidify authoritarianism with bourgeois democratic trappings while greatly restricting democratic rights, something like the regimes in the Jim Crow South, but with himself at the top.

Trump is also building up an armed force loyal to him. Federal forces are not supposed to interfere in domestic politics. But since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security [DHS] after 9/11, federal forces under its jurisdiction have been used in domestic situations, often wearing uniforms that identify them as "police."

These appear to have been the forces that violently cleared peaceful demonstrators in front of the White House, for a Trump photo-op.

We have seen in Portland, Oregon, where such forces were used over the objections of local authorities to violently attack Black Lives Matter demonstrators, making arrests, using gas weapons and “less lethal” ammunition which did cause physical harm including a fractured skull in one instance. Reporters recording the violence were also targeted.

Federal employees wore combat-style uniforms identifying them as “police” but had no badge numbers, name tags or other personal information. It was not even revealed what agency these federal cops were actually employed by. They appeared to consist of direct employees of the DHS, the Border Patrol, the Federal Protective Service that is supposed to protect federal property, the U.S. Marshal Service, and possibly the FBI.

There were even reports that some were mercenaries hired especially for the occasion. We have also seen the emergence of the armed “militias” who have attacked BLM protests.

These “police” do not appear to be actual members of the military. Instead, they are a paramilitary force answerable only to Donald Trump.

We will see how this plays out in the next two months leading up to the election and after the election itself. At this stage, nothing can be ruled out.

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