

United States: Trump's 'Shakespearean' ploys to stay in power

Monday 7 December 2020, by [MIAH Malik](#) (Date first published: 7 December 2020).

Trump will likely reject the Electoral College's authority when it meets and votes on December 14 to confirm the election result.



After being labeled “cowards”, 75 Republican state legislators from Pennsylvania “disavowed their own election” and called on Congress to reject the state’s electors for Joe Biden on December 4.

United States President Donald Trump is being “enabled” by Republican leaders, who are unwilling to stand up to him, “even if many privately wish he would go away sooner rather than later”, the New York Times reported on December 5.

A [Washington Post survey](#) found that only 27 of 249 Republican members of Congress publicly acknowledged Biden’s victory. Trump has condemned them as “RINOS” - Republicans in name only.

Trump showed up in Georgia on December 5 to speak at a campaign rally for two Republican Senatorial candidates for the run-off election on January 5. He spent almost his entire speech railing against the refusal of Georgia’s Republican officials to “do the right thing” and overturn the election, and declare him the victor.

Trump said he has “worked harder over the last three weeks” since the November election than in his entire life. He and his lawyers have filed more than 46 lawsuits to overturn state elections, losing nearly all of them. Not a single judge, even Republican appointed, has accepted his no-evidence declaration that the election was “stolen” and “rigged”.

Yet, Trump has convinced many Republican state legislators to seek the overturn of the presidential elections in their states, which would also overturn their own elections.

Chants of “Fight for Trump” drowned out the two Republican Senatorial incumbents when they briefly spoke at the rally. Many Trump backers say that unless Trump is declared the winner in Georgia, they plan to stay home and not vote in the run-off election.

Harvard University Shakespearean scholar Jeffrey R Wilson, who published the book *Shakespeare and Trump* this year, described Trump’s actions as “classic Act V behavior”.

"The forces are being picked off and the tyrant is holed up in his castle and he's growing increasingly anxious and he feels insecure and he starts blustering about his legitimate sovereignty and he starts accusing the opposition of treason."

Following the Revolutionary War, the success of the new bourgeois democracy in the US was its ability to bend and absorb resistance as it happened. Voting was limited, at first, to white male landowners, then expanded every few decades as former slaves, women, indigenous people and other people of colour made demands for full equality and voting rights.

But African Americans did not win the right to vote throughout the country until the 1960s. Since then, that "right" has been weakened and suppressed in many ways by states.

Trump stepped in as president in 2016 and challenged accepted interpretations of constitutional law and traditions. He sees only his mainly white-nationalist base as true Americans, and everyone else as "enemies" and anti-American.

Trump will likely reject the Electoral College's authority, when it meets and votes on December 14 to confirm the election result. Under the constitution, the votes are then sent to the president of the Senate (current Vice President Mike Pence) who must confirm the vote on January 6. Only then will the president-elect become the next president with the inauguration on January 20.

Up until now, Pence has fully backed Trump's assertion that he won the election. Will Pence confirm the vote of the Electoral College, presumably for Biden?

Even if Biden enters office on January 20, Trump's vast supporter network will allow his "Stop the steal" and "I won" campaign to go on. He has already set up and raised funds for his "Save America" political action committee. His threats against Republican officeholders who challenge him will continue.

Before Trump, no previous president has declared themselves the winner after losing. There is a possibility that Trump will build his own event on January 20. What happens next is not known. Trump has placed many cronies in the Pentagon, State Department and other government positions to do his bidding.

So far, most people hope the Congressional Republicans will accept the peaceful transfer of power and declare Biden president. But what if they stay noncommittal, even on and after January 20?

It may seem farfetched, but the crisis of the US electoral system is real.

Malik Miah, California

P.S.

• Green Left Weekly. Issue 1292, December 7, 2020:
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/trumps-shakespearean-ploys-stay-power>