Biden Chooses His Cabinet; the Left Sees its New Adversary

written by Dan La Botz | November 30, 2020



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Even as President Donald Trump claims that the presidential election was rigged, President-elect Joseph Biden has begun the transition to the next administration by choosing several members of his cabinet. Biden and his team will have to attempt to govern with a weaker Democratic Party presence in the Congress and with a conservative Supreme Court. Already it is clear that progressives have had little impact on Biden and the far left will have to organize to confront a government incapable of passing any major reforms. At the same time tens of millions of Republicans, convinced that Biden is an illegitimate president, will continue to be led by Trump, rightwing media, and conspiracy theories such as QAnon.

Biden, the Democrats, and the American capitalists face enormous challenges. Most immediately, the coronavirus pandemic that continues to rage out of control with 270,000 dead, over 90,000 hospitalized, and 14 million cases. While vaccines distribution begins next month, it will take several more months before they are available to the public. The U.S. economy is still in crisis with tens of millions unemployed, and federal benefits and eviction protection are ending in December. The world economy is in crisis as well—except for China, the U.S. rival for economic domination.

Biden hopes to confront these crises in party be reestablishing the U.S. alliance with Western Europe and retaking command of the world's political and economic capitalist system. As Biden says, "The U.S. is back and ready to lead." The U.S. will rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, and will seek a new START treaty. Biden will try to reassert America's role as the world superpower, a position from which it has been slipping. The new cabinet will also have to work with Biden to rebuild the government agencies wrecked by Trump.

Some progressives and some on the far left had hoped that Biden would appoint reformers like Senator Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders to his cabinet, but he has rejected them. Instead Biden has turned to veterans from former President Barack Obama's administration and the Democratic Party establishment. Biden has chosen as Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, a former deputy secretary of state under Obama. Blinken, a supporter of Israel, called for a stronger U.S. military intervention by the United States in Syria and Libya. The fight against U.S. imperialism will clearly have to continue under the Biden presidency.

Biden's choice of Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, appointed by Obama to serve as chair of the Federal Reserve (the U.S. central bank), has generally supported low interest rates and government

incentive programs to boost the economy, but she is also concerned about growing federal debt, so very much a centrist.

John F. Kerry, who under Obama succeeded Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, will serve as Biden's envoy on climate issues and also sit on the National Security Council. Ironically, the climate envoy has supported the expansion of fossil fuels and wants to use the market and regulation to put a price on carbon emissions. Don't expect a dramatic reduction of carbon fuels.

Then too we have Avril D. Haines, Biden's pick for Director of National Intelligence who worked for Obama and George W. Bush in the National Security Council, the State Department, and the C.I.A. The *New York Times* described her as "the architect of the Obama administration's program targeting terrorists with drones, some of which killed civilians."

Given Biden's moderate politics and the likelihood of legislative gridlock, the progressive's and left's principal projects—the fight for "Medicare for All" and the "Green New Deal"—will probably be stalled. Still, the depth of the national health and economic crisis might force both Democrats and Republicans to take more dramatic action than they wish. But the left will have to be in the street to make change.