

The American Coup of 2025

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What is a coup?

A coup is when a person or group of people take over the powers and functions of government for themselves without the consent of those who currently hold or have the right to the power and functions of the government. On January 6, 2021, Donald Trump attempted to lead a violent coup. He failed. On January 20, 2025, there was a bloodless coup where the government changed from an oligarchic republic (constitutional oligarchy) to a fascist oligarchy. Donald Trump and his supporting oligarchy took the power and functions of government into their own hands.

What is the power of government?

As the sociologist Max Weber pointed out, a government is the one institution in a society that holds a monopoly on the use of violence. Only a government goes to war. Only a government incarcerates people or permits slavery. Only a government can murder citizens through capital punishment. Only a government can confiscate property. With this monopoly on violence a government enforces its plan for the functions of government. Land that is not in contention has only one government.

What is the function of government?

The function of government to be the institution with final authority to define and manage the relationships between the inhabitants (citizens). These are rules (laws) with the support of customs and habits. In a monarchy, a person or family makes the rules with the support of customs and a police force or military. Monarchy was rejected by the Americans who rebelled against the British King George.

The victorious colonists wrote a constitution that defined the institution they would use to establish laws and enforce them. They called the nation a Republic. The word "republic" came from the Romans who designed a government where men with particular positions in the society participated as citizens. The American founders should have called their government a constitutional oligarchy.

What is an oligarchy?

Aristotle defined an oligarchy as a social system where a small group of people control the government. This is for their own benefit and usually at the expense of the general population. The founder's requirement for participating in the government was to be a man and to own property. They understood the definition of property included owning people who were enslaved.

Over the years Americans adopted some characteristics of democracies while a wealthy oligarchy continued to govern. Yet, until January 20, 2025, the interests of the wealthy determined the dominant customs, wrote the laws, and controlled when and how violence would be used.

What is a democracy?

A democracy is not just when there is a system of voting. A democracy is a system of government when the functioning of the government is controlled by the people. In a Democracy the management of the monopoly of violence becomes a function of the government, so violence is only used under the control of the people (citizens). Examples of changes in the Constitution that moved America toward becoming a democracy are the 15th amendment (1870) that gives voting rights to men regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude” and the 19th Amendment (1920) that gives women voting rights.

On January 20, 2025, with Donald Trump’s leadership, the American oligarchy dissolved the Constitutional oligarchy and established a fascist oligarchy. Like the previous government had some characteristics of a democracy, the new government has some characteristics of a tyranny.

What is tyranny?

Aristotle described tyranny as a government that claims its own authority and uses violence to oppress the people and maintain power. The Trump coup moved quickly to take control of the military and other institutions that carry out the government’s monopoly on the use of violence. But the coup did not stop there. It added the government strategies of fascism to its new government.

What is fascism?

Fascism goes beyond tyranny with its violence by using laws and non-governmental institutions to control the people. Examples of how fascism works are illustrated by some of the first actions of the coup. Trump’s administration is taking specific actions against their identified scapegoat: immigrants. They have already identified another scapegoat, people who do not identify as a man or a woman. The German Fascist government scapegoated Jews and homosexuals. Another fascist strategy is requiring people to spy on their neighbors or co-workers. The first example of this was an executive order that requires all federal workers to report on federal employees who are not supporting a ban on DEI programs. Because the coup depended on the oligarchy to win the election, we can expect that the fascist strategy to control all media will soon be evident. In February 2025 we are seeing just the beginning of the rapid reorganization of American society into a fascist oligarchy.

What can we do?

There are three paths out of a fascist oligarchical society: the fascists overreach and collapse, the fascists are violently defeated by external or internal armies, or the citizens persist in non-violent resistance. For American citizens we only have the third option since the coup is rapidly taking over the American military and they have the atom bomb.

At the beginning of February, the oligarchy began an aggressive takeover of departments like the Treasury and the Office of Personnel Management. This is led by Elon Musk whose authority is unclear. The Musk team obtained all the computer files from these agencies and locked out the legitimate federal employees. Since this is against the law, it is possible that the courts will step in to limit what the oligarchy can do. The legislative branch has already caved into the coup. We are waiting to see if the judicial branch follows.

Non-violent resistance is the best defense against a fascist oligarchy and the only way to defeat it. This is because non-violent resistance removes Fascism's ability to use violence and fear. Therefore, you and I can no longer put off learning about the lives and teachings of people like Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. And there was non-violent resistance by enslaved people before and during the Civil War. We can learn a great deal from Martin Luther King Jr. who adopted non-violent resistance tactics against the constitutional oligarchy in the United States.. But we need to hurry before access to books and movies is restricted and the right to free assembly is removed.