

## Current topics in short

# Assault on U.S. democracy in 2021 – Bewertung der Vorfälle nach den US-Wahlen (S II)

Nach einer Idee von Waltraud Feger, Siegen



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Anfang Januar 2021 blickt die Welt schockiert in Richtung USA. Am Tag der offiziellen Bestätigung von Joe Biden als Präsident der Vereinigten Staaten stürmt ein gewaltbereiter Mob das Kapitol in Washington, D.C. Aber schon zuvor gab es unter der Regierung von Donald Trump öffentliche Ablehnungen demokratischer Prinzipien – insbesondere in Verbindung mit den Ergebnissen der 59. Präsidentschaftswahlen. Auch in Europa wurden in den vergangenen Monaten vermehrt anti-demokratische Tendenzen sichtbar. In dieser Kurzeinheit erarbeiten und bewerten die Lernenden die Vorfälle in den USA anhand eines Videos sowie mithilfe von Zeitungsartikeln.

### KOMPETENZPROFIL

<b>Klassenstufe:</b>	11/12 (G8), 12/13 (G9)
<b>Dauer:</b>	1–2 Unterrichtsstunden
<b>Kompetenzen:</b>	1. Hör-Seh-Verstehen: Kurzvideos zentrale Informationen entnehmen; 2. Sprechkompetenz: abstrakte Begriffe / Bedeutungen ( <i>democracy</i> ) und Einflussfaktoren diskutieren und austauschen; 3. Schreibkompetenz: Informationen zusammenfassen, schriftliche <i>comments</i> sowie eine <i>speech</i> verfassen
<b>Thematische Bereiche:</b>	American politics and society, democracy
<b>Material:</b>	Videos, Texte

## M 1

## Working with pictures



## Tasks

1. Describe the pictures below.
2. The pictures were taken on the same day. Briefly explain what happened on that day.



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## Democracy under attack?

M 2

### Tasks

1. Read the short commentary.
  - a) Highlight the threats to democracy mentioned in the text.
  - b) List the main threats to democracy common to various countries.
2. Name examples from Germany of the described tendencies.
3. Work with a partner and list possible consequences of anti-democratic tendencies.

I have been studying the international far right for almost 30 years now and have never seen them as emboldened as in the last years. To be clear, this is not just about Donald Trump or the US. Just last year mostly far-right anti-vaccine protesters tried to storm the Reichstag, the German parliament, also facing remarkably weak police resistance. And in the Netherlands, angry farmers, often led by the far-right Farmers Defence Force, have been destroying government offices and threatening politicians since 2019. Even further back, in 2006, far-right mobs stormed the Hungarian parliament and battled the police for weeks in the streets of Budapest – in many ways the start of the radicalization and return to power of current prime minister Viktor Orbán. [...]

How and why did we get here? First and foremost, through a long process of cowardice, failures, and shortsighted opportunism of the mainstream right. [...] In the past decades rightwing politicians and pundits have opportunistically pandered to the far-right electorate by defining them as “the real people” and declaring this loud minority to be an allegedly victimized silent majority. [...] Many mainstream politicians and other elites no longer dare to speak out against the far right, afraid to be personally and politically threatened by their mob. [...] It is [...] high time that liberal democratic journalists, politicians, and pundits finally see the far right for what it is: a threat to liberal democracy [...] We are not in the 1930s. Today, the vast majority of Americans and Europeans support liberal democracy. But they have become the silent majority, increasingly ignored and unprotected by its representatives. [...]

Source: Cas Mudde: *What happened in Washington DC is happening around the world*. In *The Guardian*, Jan 7 2021, found at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/07/what-happened-in-washington-dc-is-happening-around-the-world> [last access: 07.01.2021]



## M 3

## The United States of America – attacks on democracy?

The USA has one of the oldest democracies in the world. The results of the 2020 presidential election in the USA have led to disturbing and democracy-threatening events.

**Part A: Audio-visual comprehension: *Trump calls to halt vote counting, prematurely declares victory***



**Video:** [https://raabe.click/en\\_TrumpDemocracy](https://raabe.click/en_TrumpDemocracy) (0:00–2:52 min)

On November 3, 2020, the 59<sup>th</sup> **presidential election** was held. More than 158 million votes were cast in the election which corresponds to the highest voter turnout since 1900. The Democratic candidate, Joe Biden, has won the election with 306 electoral votes and 81,268,867 popular votes (51.31 %). Donald Trump, the Republican candidate, has lost with 74,216,747 popular votes and 232 electoral votes (46.86 %). Joe Biden was able to flip traditionally Republican states, e. g. Arizona and Georgia

**Vocabulary:**

**voter turnout:** the total number of votes cast in a presidential election – **predictable:** sth. is expected to happen – **ballot:** here: the piece of paper on which you write your vote – **legal action:** using a court to settle a matter – **(to) declare victory:** (to) say that you have won sth. – **fraud:** der Betrug – **embarrassment:** die Peinlichkeit – **legitimate:** sth. that is legal – **fraudulent:** dishonest or illegal

**Tasks**

- Watch the video twice and complete the following sentences.
  - On election night, Donald Trump claimed that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - At that time, millions of ballots \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Mike Pence, Donald Trump's vice president, said that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Donald Trump considers the election to be \_\_\_\_\_ and is of the opinion that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Donald Trump wants to take legal action \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Donald Trump is questioning legitimate votes that \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the video Donald Trump said: "We don't want them to find any ballots at 4 o'clock in the morning and add them to the list".
  - State what kind of votes he is referring to.
  - Comment on Donald Trump's claim that the counting of the votes should have been stopped. Also consider that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, many votes have been cast by mail and had to be counted days after the election.
  - Discuss: Do you think Donald Trump would have acted in the same way if he had won the election?
- In how far can Donald Trump's statements in the video be considered an attack on democracy? Discuss with a partner. Take notes.