

Yes, the Election Was Rigged. No, Not Like That.

Many (though not nearly all) of my friends on the Republican side of the bipartisan aisle are utterly convinced that the 2020 presidential election was “rigged” to produce a fake victory for Joe Biden — that Donald Trump actually won, and had his victory stolen via a vast conspiracy to manufacture false votes and fraudulently switch real ones.

None of my friends on the Democratic side are buying it. Neither, it seems, are the courts. Nor am I.

So far, the evidence produced to substantiate the claims isn’t just unconvincing, it isn’t evidence. In substance, the argument is that 1) if voter preferences didn’t change between 2016 and 2020, and 2) if the preferences of mail voters didn’t differ from the preferences of in-person voters, a Biden victory was so statistically unlikely as to be suspicious.

But voter preferences DO change between elections, often in numbers sufficient to change outcomes from election to election in “battleground” or “swing” states. That’s why that handful of states are called by those names. The margin between winner and loser in those states is always slim. Only a few minds need changing, or a few previously lazy voters motivated to turn out, to reverse the previous result.

As for mail versus in-person voter preferences, Donald Trump and the Republican Party spent the months leading up to the election telling their base that mail voting is suspect and in-person voting is better. The utterly predictable and completely non-suspicious result: Mail voting went Democratic in a big way, while some Republicans who intended to vote in person decided at the last minute to catch a *Seinfeld* re-run instead of standing in line in the rain for two hours to participate in the real-life show about nothing.

All that said, yes, the presidential election was rigged. The next American presidential election that ISN’T rigged will be the first in living memory.

No, it wasn’t rigged to ensure a Biden win, or a Trump loss.

It was rigged to ensure victory for the status quo and for our *de facto* one-party system.

It was rigged by party committees, by state legislatures, and by the Commission on Presidential debates.

It was rigged with committee rules, state ballot access laws, and debate requirements intentionally designed to keep both “major party” dissidents (e.g. Tulsi Gabbard) and third party and independent candidates as far off of voters’ radar as possible.

It wasn't rigged to benefit a particular person. It was rigged to preserve a system: The post-World-War-Two, military-industrial complex-centered "consensus" system.

The rigging worked. If you don't believe me, ask any progressive eyeing Joe Biden's cabinet appointment announcements. He's staffing his administration with corporate lobbyists, party loyalists, and long-time ladder-climbing sycophants.

Exactly like Donald "Drain the Swamp!" Trump did. His election victory was anomalous given his rhetoric, but even if he had meant what he said, the system's second line of defense — some people call it the "Deep State" — would likely have proven up to its job.

The election game is always rigged to produce business as usual.