

Trump's Coup and Insurrection: Biden's Challenge and Opportunity

INDERJEET PARMAR

City, University of London, UK

ORCID No: 0000-0001-8688-9020

ABSTRACT *President Donald Trump's attempted coup and insurrection's political effects are set to continue in the future because the enabling conditions have deep historical roots, its support reaches far into the U.S. state, broad sections of the Republican Party and electorate, military, and law enforcement. It will have national and global implications. There is a feeling that the imperial homeland is on the brink of a descent into the abyss. Although the U.S. political system appears to have squeaked through a major stress test, the political reverberations of Trumpism will remain for some time to come. There is no 'return to normalcy' the country craves for, without reforms to a system that advantages the politics of extremism in the Republican Party. President Biden has the challenge and opportunity to extirpate Trumpism and white supremacy from the U.S. body politic –but does he have the political will?*

Keywords: Donald Trump, Trumpism, Attempted Coup, U.S. Political System

Insight Turkey 2021
Vol. 23 / No. 1 / pp. 35-50

Received Date: 05/02/2021 • Accepted Date: 20/02/2021 • DOI: 10.25253/99.2021231.4

Introduction

President Donald Trump's attempted coup and insurrection's political effects are set to continue in the future because the enabling conditions have deep historical roots, its support reaches far into the U.S. state, broad sections of the Republican Party (sometimes referred to as the GOP or Grand Old Party) and electorate, military, and law enforcement. That it was a coup attempt is in no doubt – it was openly declared as an attempt to reverse the results of a democratic election. Yet, the very fact of the attempted coup, the insurrectionary attacks on the Capitol as well as on numerous state capitols across the country, and

There is no 'return to normalcy' the country craves, without reforms to a system that advantages the politics of extremism in the Republican Party

how the U.S. authorities handle the perpetrators will have national and global consequences. The U.S. may not be exceptional, but it is no ordinary state. It is the world's pivotal state, and what happens there reverberates around the world. There is a feeling that the imperial homeland is on the brink of a descent into the abyss.¹ Nevertheless, due to the courts, state and county-level election officials, the decisive elec-

toral defeat of Trump, and the sheer weight of popular opinion, the U.S. political system appears to have squeaked through a major stress test. But the political reverberations of Trumpism will remain for some time to come.² There is no 'return to normalcy' the country craves, without reforms to a system that advantages the politics of extremism in the Republican Party.³

The Legitimacy Crisis Is Deep, Historically-Rooted, and Has Global Implications

This quotation from an Italian revolutionary philosopher from a century ago sums up a core aspect of the crises of American elite legitimacy – the loss of popular authority of a hollowed-out shell of a state and its accompanying political parties:

At a certain point in their historical lives, social classes become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men or women who constitute, represent and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. When such crises occur, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic 'men of destiny.'⁴

America's recent uprisings, whether opposing institutional racism, police

brutality, and COVID-19 mismanagement, or supporting the baseless post-truth Trump-manufactured allegations of a 'stolen election' –tell the tale of a divisive, authoritarian, and incompetent president and America First's coercive ultra-nationalism. It is a story underpinned by a decades-long trend of rising inequality and declining life chances whose origins go back to the Reagan revolution and the end of the New Deal order. Since then, 'government' as an idea has been viewed by political elites as the problem, not the solution to social ills. According to a recent RAND Corporation study, economic inequality climbed in the 1990s and has seen a massive transfer of wealth from the lower 90 percent of the U.S. population to the ultra-rich of around \$47 trillion.⁵ A new report by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF) shows that "the collective wealth of America's 651 billionaires has jumped by over \$1 trillion since roughly the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to a total of \$4 trillion... Combined, just the top 10 billionaires are now worth more than \$1 trillion."⁶ America is reacting militarily and coercively as its global positions are increasingly challenged, its domestic governance structures hollowed out by decades of tax cuts and open hostility to the idea of government, a domestic population losing faith and challenging the establishment. It increasingly resembles a failing state, which a majority of its people think is heading in the wrong direction.⁷ Almost 80 percent of Americans agree that their country is 'falling apart.'⁸

The depth of the problem enables – an admittedly self-serving– Zimbabwean President Mnangagwa to tie U.S. sanctions against his country to the attack on the Capitol, arguing that "the U.S. has no moral right to punish another nation under the guise of upholding democracy."⁹ The Venezuelan government contended that the "political polarization and the spiral of violence" the U.S. is experiencing echoes "what it has generated in other countries with its policies of aggression."¹⁰ But more worryingly, core G7 states and allies like Canada made contingency plans to cope with post-election political violence in the United States.

The Insurrection Was Planned

According to the *Wall Street Journal* –a staunch ally of right-wing authoritarianism and the Trump regime– there was no "threat assessment" by either the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the Department of Homeland Security regarding the planned and much-publicized pro-Trump demonstrations.¹¹ Such assessments are, however, routinely made ahead of what have been largely peaceful leftist and anti-fascist demonstrations.

The *Washington Post* noted that the Department of Defense had disarmed the Washington D.C. national guard ahead of the rally, knowing it would delay mobilization and deployment should the need arise. The *Post* noted that "the Pentagon prohibited the District's guardsmen from receiving

The most significant driver in the development of right-wing populism arises from specific initiatives of billionaire right-wing donor networks, especially the Koch brothers' complex

ammunition or riot gear, interacting with protestors unless necessary for self-defense, sharing equipment with local law enforcement, or using Guard surveillance and air assets without the defense secretary's explicit sign-off..."¹²

Recent reports have emerged to suggest that some of the people who stormed the U.S. Capitol planned to kidnap and assassinate members of Congress. They were armed with automatic weapons, pipe bombs, tear gas, and restraints.

As numerous reports show, there are significant levels of white supremacist and right-wing militia infiltration of America's police and other law enforcement agencies. A 2017 FBI report indicated that white supremacists pose a 'persistent threat of lethal violence' that has produced more fatalities than any other category of domestic terrorists since 2000. Internal FBI policy documents also warned agents assigned to domestic terrorism cases that the white supremacist and anti-government militia groups they investigate often have 'active links'

to law enforcement officials. Unsurprisingly, few police departments prohibit officers from joining white supremacist organizations, while the Department of Justice has no strategy to deal with the issue.¹³

There are also indications that Trump has a strong following –possibly numbering in the thousands– within the U.S. military. Thomas Kolditz, a retired U.S. army brigadier general, argued that the January 6, 2021 assault on the Capitol was "an insurgency, a crime against the state," and called for Pentagon leadership to root out " sleeper cells...in the military who...think an insurgency is a good idea..."¹⁴

Billionaires Stand behind Trumpism

There is little that is truly spontaneous about what's been happening in U.S. right-wing politics for the past two decades at least. And despite our yearning to hold a specific individual responsible, individuals are enabled by structures, forces, and conditions beyond their control or making.

The most significant driver in the development of right-wing populism arises from specific initiatives of billionaire right-wing donor networks, especially the Koch brothers' complex. This includes the Mercer and DeVos families and Sheldon Adelson, among others who are central to Koch donor networks. They may disagree on aspects of Trump's 'conservatism' and leadership style but share



a love of limited government (with coercive policing), corporate welfare, low taxes, and a war on the poor.¹⁵

According to research at Harvard led by Professor Theda Skocpol, from around 2003, Koch *et al.* united and invested billions of dollars to build a major ecosystem of *faux* grassroots (astroturf) organizations, and networked with policy advocacy, ideological, and protest groups staffed by over 2.5 million largely paid ‘volunteers’ across the U.S.¹⁶

The Tea Party exploded onto the scene, with Koch network funding and organizational support in and around the GOP across numerous states, driving the party’s elected

representatives further to the right than the GOP’s own voters. They created the machinery for the extreme right that provided the platform for Trump’s racist ‘birther’ movement, his incendiary 2016 election campaign, and mobilization of white supremacists and neo-Nazis in the country.¹⁷

The GOP establishment called these right-wingers ‘bomb-throwers.’ They knew what was happening and aided, abetted and appeased the extreme right; indeed, they benefitted electorally in 2010, declaring President Barack Obama an illegitimate president leading an illegitimate political party. In 2020, they refused to challenge Trump’s lies about the election

U.S. President Donald Trump’s supporters gather outside before storming the Capitol building in Washington D.C., on January 6, 2021.

TAYFUN COŞKUN / AA

results. The gap between right-wing-inspired, propaganda-induced beliefs and real-world realities opened into a chasm, as the U.S. sank into post-truth politics.

But the Koch-constructed infrastructure of extremism was also aided by the likes of the Heritage Foundation, whose leaders had declared as far back as 1991 that they wished to build a 'conservative' establishment of media, think-tanks and advocacy groups to wrest power from liberals and the left. They were establishing the hegemony of conservative ideas, laws and institutions.¹⁸ Billionaire Rupert Murdoch's *Fox News* was surely one of their greatest triumphs, though it's now victim of the monster created by its own news division, under Roger Ailes.

That Koch-manufactured ecosystem blossomed, showered with millions of dollars of 'dark money,'¹⁹ and was used during the Trump years, particularly by the far right to organize protests, including armed resistance to COVID-19 lockdowns. Though encouraged by Trump, they were not and are not subject entirely to his or GOP control.

The Right-Wing Tip of the Spear

Yet, billionaire donor networks did not just build an ecosystem of advocacy groups; they helped sharpen the tip of the right-wing spear by urging direct political action at particular times and places. The Council for National Policy (CNP), which links

the forces of the Christian right with plutocratic donors and the political strategies of hard right Republicans, openly urged swing-state lawmakers to reject Joe Biden's election victory. CNP leaders were due to address the Capitol rally that led to the insurrection. In addition, well known major U.S. corporations fund numerous elected Republican officials who backed President Trump's 'Stop the Steal' campaign. The list of corporate funders includes *Comcast*, *Amazon*, *TikTok*, and defense companies like Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon, as well as Amazon, and Goldman Sachs.²⁰ The billionaire donors have broad support across the corporate spectrum.

The Republican Party –in the aftermath of the Trump era– appears to be divided between those who used Trump's popularity to push for conservative demands –such as appointments to the Supreme Court, corporate deregulation, and tax cuts– and those bent on breaking the establishment, and inaugurating a white Christian republic.²¹

Trump Administration and Far-Right Links

President Trump, however, played a key role in staffing his administration with supporters of the far-right whose main aim appears to have been to 'deconstruct the administrative state,' wage a war on what they called the 'deep state,'²² and promote white supremacy. Trump's appointees exhibit some important

differences from more conventional Democratic and Republican administrations in the post-Cold War era.²³ There were a far greater number of appointees without previous political or governing experience, more likely to be drawn from private-business backgrounds than from Fortune 500 transnational corporations, and more deeply-rooted in certain business conglomerates that are territorially-tied to the U.S. mainland such as construction, hotels, casinos, and real estate. In addition, contrary to the post-1945 norm, the Trump Administration's top foreign policy and national security picks had virtually no links to the traditional foreign policy or national security think tanks.²⁴ Those findings, viewed in the broader context discussed above, explain policy departures from a right-wing anti-globalist angle, opposition to the so-called 'deep state' of globalist cosmopolitans, and a rejection of democratic and constitutional norms.²⁵

Most significantly, Trump appointed Stephen Bannon as his White House strategist, and Stephen Miller as Senior Policy Adviser. Bannon had worked with the Centre for National Policy, advised Trump even after he was dismissed from the administration, orchestrated support for Trump's 'stolen election' claims, and anti-China strategies, and was rewarded with a presidential pardon.²⁶ In broad terms, there were at least 20 appointees from far-right organizations. Stephen Miller, the architect of Trump's anti-immigration policies and 'Muslim' travel ban, was further

Trump's appointees exhibit some important differences from more conventional Democratic and Republican administrations in the post-Cold War era

exposed as an extremist after a cache of 900 emails was leaked that showed his racist, white supremacist, and anti-immigrant obsessions in correspondence with *Breitbart News*.²⁷ Several Trump appointees were closely linked with Breitbart, Act! for America, and American Renaissance. The right-wing Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) was also well-connected via appointments to the Trump Administration, especially in the Department of Homeland Security. FAIR's president, Dan Stein claimed that pro-immigration laws are a form of retaliation against 'Anglo-Saxon dominance' by liberals.²⁸ In addition, linkages were found with one or more groups such as QAnon, VDARE, and Vigilant Patriots –all extreme right-wing white supremacist groups.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that the Republican Party, a key party of the American state, has shifted to the extreme right and now houses factions that support white supremacy, conspiracy theories, and armed opposition to the federal government.²⁹ The GOP is more Islamophobic than Viktor Orban's Fidesz in Hungary, an

openly authoritarian party.³⁰ House majority Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, has labeled the most extreme Trump congress members ‘the enemy within.’³¹

Nevertheless, Trump’s Republican voters remain loyal. Despite the Capitol building attacks on January 6, surveys showed strong, if reduced, support for Trump –at 77 percent.³² And despite Trump’s record of mishandling the global pandemic, recording almost 400,000 deaths and over 24 million cases by the end of his term of office, he managed to garner 74 million votes in the November 2020 elections. That represented an increase of around 11 million votes over his tally in 2016. The politics and style of Trump and Trumpism are likely to remain a powerful force in American politics, despite leaving the White House in disgrace as the first president to be impeached twice, and face trial in the Senate.

And It’s Not Over Yet... But President Biden Has an Historic Opportunity

An instructive report by the Brookings Institution after the 2020 election gives material credence to the ‘cult-like’ following that many professional psychologists claim Trump has developed.³³ Brookings tallied the number of counties across America that Biden and Trump won and calculated the proportion of U.S. economic activity those counties represented. They found that Trump won around 2,500 counties, while Biden won 477, of the nearly 3,000 U.S. counties nation-

wide. This is not especially surprising as Democratic voters are packed into densely-populated big towns and metropolitan areas. Trump’s voters are overwhelmingly white, live in sparsely-populated rural areas and smaller, especially de-industrialized towns. According to the Brookings study, Trump’s swathe of counties represents a mere 30 percent of U.S. economic activity while Biden’s 477 counties account for the remaining 70 percent.³⁴

Despite the popular imagery of (Make America Great Again) MAGA-hat wearing, flag-waving aggressive Trumpsters, large numbers of the counties Trump won can only be described as communities of despair –rife with high rates of depression, suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic and police violence.³⁵ *The Brookings* report says:

2020’s map continues to reflect a striking split between the large, dense, metropolitan counties that voted Democratic and the mostly ex-urban, small-town, or rural counties that voted Republican. Blue and red America reflect two very different economies: one oriented to diverse, often college-educated workers in professional and digital services occupations, and the other whiter, less-educated, and more dependent on “traditional” industries.

Of course, it’s more complex than that (there’s plenty of depression, suicide and police violence in America’s cities) but the point is that there are economic, geographical, and racial

divisions in the U.S. electorate that demonstrate a deep schism, a rupture, in the social fabric. Add to that support for Trump that appears relatively immune to his incitements to political violence against opponents, including Republicans, who dare stand up to intimidation.³⁶

Such divisions are magnified once we factor in rival sources of news and information, *Fox* for Republicans and *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *ABC*, etc., for Democrats. There appear seemingly unbridgeable rifts in American society. *Fox*, which has lost right-wing viewers since the 2020 election, seems to be winning them back with supportive coverage of the January 6 Capitol storming. Some of their interviewees peddled a new conspiracy theory: that anti-fascists had infiltrated the protest and instigated the insurrection, leading to five deaths. The 'false flag' conspiracy theory has been endorsed by numerous state Republican Parties and politicians across the U.S.³⁷

The mental maps occupied by American voters amplify the other divisions, fears and anxieties as well as their sense of the 'enemy within.' Mentally, they appear to live in different countries, in different realities, believing different truths.

Trumpism is not a fully unified hegemonic project, but it is a broad ambitious program that has shifted U.S. politics and economy to the authoritarian Right, challenges dominant U.S. identities, and embraces a reactionary ethno-racial neoliberalism.

According to the Brookings study, Trump's swathe of counties represents a mere 30 percent of U.S. economic activity while Biden's 477 counties account for the remaining 70 percent

The program combines corporate and governmental deregulation with tax cuts, 'deconstruction of the administrative state,' and a racialized politics of resentment against minorities and cosmopolitan elites. It is a movement that is both consciously led by elites to mobilize masses of disoriented and confused citizens, creating a new 'post-fact' commonsense. In addition, there is an historically-rooted 'psychological wage' associated with 'whiteness' that overrides material factors in mass backing for billionaire racist-populists like Trump. The devastation this causes among white men, in particular via climbing suicide rates, is recorded in great detail: it literally kills them in great numbers in Trump's America.³⁸ President Lyndon Johnson summed up in crisp fashion how elite-sponsored poor southern whites' racism worked: "If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you."³⁹ And Booker T. Washington said virtually the same thing many years earlier: no man can

This is President Biden's opportunity, which would both remove the fascistic threat and, possibly, divide and weaken the Republican Party for many years

hold down another in a ditch without staying down there with him.⁴⁰

It accords well with Gramsci's claim that political reality has its own laws especially in mobilizing the "irrational elements in the human psyche." Politics is the "creation of concrete fantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will."⁴¹ It successfully united and mobilized a record-breaking number of votes for Trump in the 2020 elections.

Despite public intellectual Henry Giroux's claims that "we no longer live in the shadow of authoritarianism... [but] have tipped over into the abyss," the public reaction to the storming of the Capitol, followed by calls for Trump's impeachment and removal from office, suggest that opposition to fascism remains powerful. The United States has also shown since the November 2020 election and the high-pressure campaign by Trump and his allies across the Republican Party and on the far right, that it has 'deep structures' and a culture of democracy. It should be borne in mind that the U.S. is neither

Weimar Germany nor 1920s Italy. It has 'deep structures' –constitutional norms, courts, federal, state and local officials independent of politics, and an array of civil society organizations within a democratic culture, which constrain authoritarian tendencies from taking the U.S. to anything resembling full-fledged fascism. Nevertheless, Harvard political scientist Daniel Ziblatt, an expert on the history and politics of conservative parties, has called the U.S. Capitol insurrection a "regime-threatening moment."⁴²

And post-Trump America appears more cognizant of the fragilities of democracy, and the necessity of protecting it.⁴³ This is President Biden's opportunity, which would both remove the fascistic threat and, possibly, divide and weaken the Republican Party for many years.

America's Perfect but Terrible Storm, Biden's Opportunity

Can Biden actually advance an agenda of change and handle the authoritarian after-effects of former President Donald Trump? He must, and simultaneously, because the challenges are interlinked. The coup attempt, insurrection, and impeachment trial's implications extend way beyond Trump alone, though he was and is the focal point. It involves numerous simultaneous congressional investigations into the power and connections of the far right, its extension into the GOP and law enforcement agencies, not to mention the underlying neo-



liberal philosophy underpinning and necessitating a coercive state to stem the tide of popular resistance and rebellion.

America's crises have converged into a near-perfect but terrible storm: at root, there are basic crises of democracy and election-legitimacy; incendiary partisan division; and discontent over inequality and police violence against minorities across America's cities. There are millions of working people and their children going to bed hungry in the world's lone superpower, its 'City upon a Hill.'

The COVID-19 pandemic, the mother lode crisis, is causing a devastating loss of life which shows few signs of abating anytime soon, and has generated a social and economic catastrophe for working people, while enriching the wealthiest bil-

lionaires at the same time. This alone represents a political tinderbox of unimaginable proportions. It has highlighted every nook and cranny of a political-economic system that offers little of anything resembling normal life let alone the American dream.

Political protest and violence appear to have become a feature of the American political landscape, a part of its political terrain. It has reared up every few years, but the eruptions of 2020 crossed a psychological line on January 6, 2021, it reached the very halls of government. It was not taken at all seriously by the Democratic Party's national leadership when the Michigan state capitol was invaded by heavily armed extreme right-wingers and white supremacists, threatening to kidnap and assassinate the governor. It's a different matter when members of congress House and Senate

U.S. President Donald Trump speaks at "Save America March" rally in Washington D.C., on January 6, 2021.

TAYFUN COŞKUN / AA

were forced to flee for their lives from Trump's insurrectionary foot-soldiers on January 6.

And it is clear that U.S. authority in the world system –among allies and foes alike– has diminished. This was part of a longer-term process, of course, as new powers emerged or re-emerged on the world scene, increasing/demanding multipolarity.

Trump's responses to the above deep crises –i.e., use of intense coercion, America First unilateralism, government and personal irresponsibility, and *laissez-faire* crony-corporate 'strategy,' anti-immigrant and racial divisions, authoritarianism and encouragement of far right, political polarization– failed. Not only did they fail, Trump's solutions to U.S. power crises exacerbated and deepened them and led to his decisive electoral defeat in November 2020, bringing his one term of office to a disgraceful ending with a second historic impeachment to his name and legacy –for 'incitement of insurrection' that left 5 people dead.

President Biden has control of the White House, the House of Representatives, and a wafer-thin advantage in the U.S. Senate. This provides him the 'political opportunity' to shift approach towards concerted state intervention, but Democratic Party 'ideology' and 'corporate donorship' threaten to place brakes on any radical agenda. On the other hand, the incendiary character of the political environment in America –as shown by the Capitol insurrection but also

in the nationwide uprisings against racist police violence– indicates the urgent need for far-reaching government and government-coordinated efforts to deal with underlying social, economic, political-ideological, racial-cultural issues and divisions.

In Biden, we may have the basis of 'pragmatic radicalism.' The sheer depth and extent of the pandemic, and economic, social, and international-systemic challenges or crises could be the mother of 'pragmatic radicalism' –meaning that no democratic government could or should continue in the old way of doing things because they have not worked or have only exacerbated the crises. This will not be driven by a change of philosophy but pragmatic realization that the old ways cannot deliver political stability or global power projection.

A key factor weighing towards pragmatic radicalism is Biden's age, and possibly health, which suggest a one-term-only outlook going into the White House. This brings into play Biden's sense of his legacy into calculations: how does he want to be remembered by history? Is it as a leader who extirpated Trumpism and the legacies of division and climbing inequality, or one who did business-as-usual elite politics? The latter may well pave the way for Trump II, or Trumpism without Trump. If Biden's claim is true, that what forced him to run against Trump was the president's support for the white supremacist and neo-Nazi riot at Charlottesville in 2017, then we should expect

a more thorough-going effort to get to the roots of Trumpism in the GOP.

But alongside managing all of the above, especially the pandemic, the extreme right-wing threat to the U.S. system of government must be one of the most urgent. It is probably the single most critical crisis that goes to the very heart of state power, as well as U.S. world power, global role and standing. That made the Senate impeachment trial, and a number of other congressional investigations into the long and short-term sources of the January 6 insurrection, central to the Biden agenda.

Senate Impeachment Trial, and Subsequent Congressional Investigations: An Essential Reckoning

This will clearly take time and attention from the enormous burden of immediate government business as I argue above. But there should be no stone left unturned in getting to the bottom of the power of the far right and its reach into the police, military, and the GOP. Any superficial truce on this matter only papers over the cracks in the name of 'national healing' and 'unity.' Burying the problem now will only store up a far greater explosion in the future. There should be no appeasement of the violent extreme right and their allies in Congress. The choice is between a superficial unity with the GOP, which appeases the increasingly extreme right-wing party, or a push for radical reform.

In the end, American government is 'party government.' And it is driven by short-term electoral calculations, and massive corporate donations

It is essential to draw a line under Trump's failed strategy and abuses of power, including of his extremist political faction of the GOP by full, public investigations and radical reform. We are not talking about a truth and reconciliation commission but something that exposes to the light: the roots, organizational power, networks, and reach of the extreme Right in America. The Senate impeachment process was only the most visible element of the entire array of congressional, Pentagon, and Justice Department investigations of the events and roots of the January 6 insurrection. It will expose and tackle the roles of law enforcement at all levels in the Capitol insurrection.

We should remember however that the national leadership of the Democratic Party said or did little after armed right-wing extremists invaded the Michigan State capitol building or after the FBI disrupted a plot to kidnap and assassinate Governor Whitmer. And nor has the Biden media spokesperson condemned the intimidatory behavior and rhetoric of white supremacist congresspersons that Nancy Pelosi dubbed the 'enemy

The future of U.S. politics and its global credibility lies with the nature of the Republican Party and the actions of the Biden presidency in the coming months

within.’ This silence may turn out to be instructive. As Gramsci noted, liberalism is an unreliable ally against fascism and violations of civil and workers’ rights, because ultimately it jettisons workers’ rights to “protect the economic interests of the privileged and powerful.”⁴⁴

There is an added political advantage in Biden and the Democratic Party pursuing full accountability of the GOP for January 6: it may further divide and weaken the Republican Party –auguring a probable ‘political’ win for the Democrats going into 2022 mid-term elections and beyond. It could extirpate Trumpism from U.S. politics.

In the end, American government is ‘party government.’ And it is driven by short-term electoral calculations, and massive corporate donations. But we are in unprecedented times and corporate patience with a Republican Party based on mass anti-expert anti-intellectualism was already running thin due to the mishandling of the pandemic.⁴⁵ This split has widened since January 6.⁴⁶ The future of U.S. politics and its global credibility

lies with the nature of the Republican Party and the actions of the Biden presidency in the coming months.

Will President Biden, who has reached the pinnacle of his long political career at so critical a moment, govern with the bigger picture in mind –embrace a politics of pragmatic radicalism and principled opposition to white supremacy? Or will his administration effectively appease the Far Right? Biden has the opportunity to uproot Trumpism. Does he have the will? ■

Endnotes

1. Timothy Snyder, “The American Abyss,” *The New York Times*, (January 9, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/magazine/trump-coup.html>.
2. Andrew Restuccia, “Trump Has Discussed Starting a New Political Party,” *The Wall Street Journal*, (January 20, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/trump-impeachment-biden-inauguration/card/90pPMzFPqr5f-Mzg1Bkbs>.
3. Sean Illing, “The Central Weakness of Our Political System Right Now Is the Republican Party,” *VOX*, (January 13, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/22151075/trump-republican-party-american-democracy-daniel-ziblatt>.
4. Inderjeet Parmar, “The Legitimacy Crisis of the U.S. Elite and the Rise of Donald Trump,” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2017), pp. 9-22.
5. Carter C. Price, Kathryn A. Edwards, *Trends in Income From 1975 to 2018*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), retrieved from https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WRA516-1.html.
6. “Updates: Billionaire Wealth, U.S. Job Losses and Pandemic Profiteers,” *Inequality.org*, (January 26, 2021) retrieved from <https://inequality.org/great-divide/updates-billionaire-pandemic/>.
7. Derek Thompson, “America Is Acting Like a Failed State,” *The Atlantic*, (March 14, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/>

archive/2020/03/america-isnt-failing-its-pandemic-testwashington-is/608026/.

8. Celine Castronuovo, "4 in 5 Say US Is Falling Apart," *The Hill*, (January 14, 2021), retrieved from <https://thehill.com/homenews/news/534204-4-in-5-say-us-is-falling-apart-survey>.

9. Simon Lewis and Humeyra Pamuk, "Biden's Global Leadership Ambitions Complicated by US Capitol Riot," *Reuters*, (January 20, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-challenges-foreignpolicy/bidens-global-leadership-ambitions-complicated-by-us-capitol-riot-idUSKBN29POIA>.

10. "Venezuela Condemns Political Polarization and Spiral of Violence in the US," *Gobierno Bolivariano De Venezuela Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores*, (January 6, 2021), retrieved from <http://www.mppre.gob.ve/en/comunicado/venezuela-condemns-political-polarization-violence-us/>.

11. Rachael Levy, "FBI, Homeland Security Intelligence Unit Didn't Issue a Risk Assessment for Pro-Trump Protests," *The Wall Street Journal*, (January 7, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/biden-trump-electoral-college-certification-congress/card/rghQKMAF2ju2wkrUlclj1>.

12. Paul Sonne, Peter Hermann, and Missy Ryan, "Pentagon Placed Limits on DC Guard ahead of pro-Trump Protests due to Narrow Mission," *The Washington Post*, (January 8, 2021), retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/trump-protests-washington-guard-military/2021/01/07/c5299b56-510e-11eb-b2e8-3339e73d9da2_story.html.

13. Michael German, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy, and Far-Right Militancy in Law Enforcement," *Brennan Center*, (August 27, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>.

14. Geoff Colvin, "Retired Brigadier General Says Trump Loyalists in Military Need Rooting Out," *Fortune*, (January 8, 2021), retrieved from <https://fortune.com/2021/01/08/trump-support-military-capitol-coup-attempt/>; Lauren Aratani, "One Dozen National Guard Troops Pulled from Inauguration Duties after Vetting," *The Guardian*, (January 19, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/19/us-army-national-guard-members-biden-inauguration-right-groups>.

15. Thomas B. Edsall, "Trump and the Koch Brothers Are Working in Concert," *The New York Times*, (September 6, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/06/opinion/trump-koch-brothers-alliance.html>.

16. "Research on the Shifting U.S. Political Terrain," *Harvard University*, retrieved from <https://terrain.gov.harvard.edu/>.

17. Thomas B. Edsall, "Trump Has a Gift For Tearing Us Apart," *The New York Times*, (December 12, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/11/opinion/trump-immigration.html>.

18. Edwin J. Feulner, "The Hegemony of Ideas," *The Heritage Foundation*, (May 3, 2007), retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20080304081057/http://www.heritage.org/Research/Worldwide-Freedom/hl999.cfm>.

19. Jane Mayer, *Dark Money*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 2017).

20. Brendan O'Connor, "The Capitol Riot Wasn't a Fringe Uprising: It Was Enabled by Deep Pockets," *The Guardian*, (January 18, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2021/jan/18/the-capitol-riot-wasnt-a-fringe-uprising-it-was-enabled-by-very-deep-pockets>.

21. Snyder, "The American Abyss."

22. David E. Lewis, "Deconstructing the Administrative State," *APSA Presidential Address*, (January 2019), retrieved from <https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-my/wp-content/uploads/sites/411/2011/12/03103333/presidential-address-final-030919.pdf>.

23. Nana DeGraaff and Bastiaan van Apeldoorn, "The Transnational US Foreign Policy Elite in Exile? A Comparative Network Analysis of the Trump Administration," *Global Networks*, (2019).

24. DeGraaff and van Apeldoorn, "The Transnational US Foreign Policy Elite in Exile?"

25. Blake Hounshell, "Trump vs. the Globalists," *Politico*, (February 13, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/donald-trump-vs-globalists-dubai-214776>.

26. Inderjeet Parmar, "Will Steve Bannon's Return Accelerate Trump's deconstruction?" *The Wire*, (May 21, 2020), retrieved from <https://thewire.in/world/donald-trump-steve-bannon-return>.

27. Michael Edison Hayden, "Stephen Miller's Affinity for White Nationalism Revealed in Leaked Emails," *Splcenter.org*, (November 12, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-watch/2019/11/12/stephen-millers-affinity-white-nationalism-revealed-leaked-emails>.

28. Overall, FAIR was the source of at least 9 appointments, mainly to the Department of Homeland Security. Those positions were mostly lower tier and focused on immigration policy implementation.
29. "The Republican Party Has Lurched towards Populism and Illiberalism," *The Economist*, (October 31, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/10/31/the-republican-party-has-lurched-towards-populism-and-illiberalism>.
30. Zack Beauchamp, "The Republican Party Is an Authoritarian Outlier," *VOX*, (September 2020), retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/21449634/republicans-supreme-court-gop-trump-authoritarian>.
31. Olivier Knox, "US Capitol Fencing Won't Keep Out What Pelosi Calls the Enemy Within," *The Washington Post*, (January 29, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/29/daily-202-us-capitol-fencing-wont-keep-out-what-pelosi-calls-enemy-within/>.
32. "Poll: Presidential Approval among GOP Voters Drops 10% after Capitol Riots," *The Hill*, retrieved from <https://thehill.com/hilltv/what-americas-thinking/533892-poll-presidential-approval-among-gop-voters-drops-10-points>.
33. John Martin-Joy, "Donald Trump and His Followers: Are They a Cult?" *Psychology Today*, retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/politics-psychiatry-and-psychoanalysis/202009/donald-trump-and-his-followers-are-they-cult>.
34. Mark Muro, Eli Byerly Duke, Yang You, and Robert Maxim, "Biden Voting Counties Equal 70% of America's Economy," (November 10, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/11/09/biden-voting-counties-equal-70-of-americas-economy-what-does-this-mean-for-the-nations-political-economic-divide/>.
35. Linda Carroll, "Suicide Rates Are Rising Especially in Rural America," *NBC News*, (September 6, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/mental-health/suicide-rates-are-rising-especially-rural-america-n1050806>.
36. Eric Lipton, "Trump Call to Georgia Election Official Might Violate State and Federal Law," *The New York Times*, (January 3, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/03/us/politics/trump-call-georgia.html>.
37. Astead W. Herndon, "How Republicans Are Warping Reality around the Capitol Attack," *The New York Times*, (January 17, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/17/us/politics/Capitol-conspiracy-theories-blm-antifa.html>.
38. Jonathan M. Metzler, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland*, (New York: Basic Books, 2019).
39. Bill D. Moyers, "What a Real President Was Like," *The Washington Post*, (November 13, 1988), retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1988/11/13/what-a-real-president-was-like/d483c1be-d0da-43b7-bde6-04e10106ff6c/>.
40. Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery*, Vol. 1, (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909), p. 124.
41. Walter L. Adamson, "Gramsci's Interpretation of Fascism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 41, No.4 (October-December 1980), p.618; Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution. A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*, (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1980), p.204.
42. Illing, "The Central Weakness of Our Political System Right Now Is the Republican Party"
43. Suzanne Mettler and Robert C. Lieberman, "The Fragile Republic," *Foreign Affairs*, (September-October 2020), retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-07/democracy-fragile-republic>.
44. Dante Germino, *Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p.177.
45. Andrew Edgecliffe-Johnson, "Trump's Corporate Trouble," *Financial Times*, (October 30, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/f74f00db-decc-4fb2-8c86-e95dd0b0d42e>.
46. "The Corporate World Ditches Trump in Wake of Capitol Riot," *DW*, (January 12, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/the-corporate-world-ditches-trump-in-wake-of-capitol-riot/a-51692344>.