



P E R S P E C T I V E S

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Past As Prologue

“Our Fortunes, Our Lives, Our Sacred Honor”

Whether we like it or not, we are all witnessing something particularly horrific, an incredible tragedy, being televised for all the world to see as the January 6th Committee Hearings. The world's democracies are getting scared—as should all of us be. In Germany this week, President Biden was confronted by our closest allies who privately expressed concern whether the “American Experiment” will survive his term in office. They are right to raise the question. After approximately 250 years, it is entirely conceivable (some would say likely) that the “Experiment” will end this November or, at the latest, after the 2024 election, with the appointment of a demagogic, autocratic dictator. After Watergate, as bad as that was, no one worried we were in danger of losing our Democratic Republic. But this time it is much worse.

It's not just that Donald Trump's crimes far surpassed anything Nixon even attempted, as was detailed in this column last week. It's that we all must face just how close Trump actually came to overthrowing the last election and seizing power to remain in office.

According to the January 6th Committee, he pursued seven (7) separate ways to have the election tossed out so that he could illegally stay in the White House. Given the abuses rampant in Trump's first term, one cannot imagine what, if anything, he'd stop at. After all, what limits can we expect of a former President who subverts his successor's lawful election (Trump lost by over 7 million votes) and encourages the mob he invited to Washington to execute his own toady, Vice President Mike Pence? (To quote Trump in real time when he was told the mob was hunting Pence to hang him, the former president said, “maybe our supporters have the right idea,” and that Pence “deserves it.”) Don't think hanging Mike Pence was some sort of cocktail party “joke” or casual comment. As a confidential witness told the FBI under oath, some of the Proud Boys who breached the Capitol said if they had found Pence, “they would have killed him.”

Unfortunately, inciting rioters to kill the Vice President, as heinous as that is, was not the only crime Trump committed. Committee Member and law professor, Congressman Jamie Riskin has observed on national news shows, for himself and on behalf of other Members, that “they have uncovered sufficient evidence for the Department of Justice to launch a criminal indictment against Trump.” He wasn't referring to the Pence issue at all. He was referring to the seditionist, conspiratorial plot to overthrow the election itself and forcibly remain in power which Trump had begun orchestrating in June of 2020.

During the Hearings, Americans have seen with their own eyes the factual evidence of that criminal conspiracy which culminated in the violence on January 6th that injured 140 police officers, occasioned several deaths, and how it is now clear that this attack on the Capitol was not the end goal—it was the warmup. In furtherance of the felonious criminal conspiracy, Trump and his allies, among other things, have made it harder for people to vote, attempted to appoint bogus electors to overturn the will of voters, and intimidated state officials to change the results in multiple states.

What the public is seeing proves that Trump and his allies are part of an ongoing campaign to sabotage future elections. The extremist Republicans have already begun changing state laws in the seven key states that determined Trump's 2016 Electoral College victory. They threatened state officials and have every intention of doing it again. They have engaged in egregious gerrymandering to ensure that Black, brown, and poor Americans have less chance of casting a vote. And, because Trump himself observed, "Whoever counts the votes is more important than who votes," they have already begun packing election administration offices with Trump cultists. At the same time, Trump cultists are running for Secretary of State in numerous states so they will be in a position to ensure that the coup succeeds the next time.

Clearly, the fascist wing of the Republican Party wants the final say over election results no matter how the actual ballots are cast in a fair and free election. To make matters worse, the plan doesn't require Trump to even run for President. In fact, it is likely that a smarter, more dangerous, demagogic fascist-like Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida will take control of the Trump "base" and have himself installed as President in 2024.

In case you missed it, last week DeSantis publicly disavowed allegiance to Trump at the Conservative Political Action meeting in Florida. For his part, Trump claims to have "made" DeSantis, who was an obscure Floridian until getting his endorsement.

Nevertheless, we will continue to have gangsters claiming to have "made" their vassal politicians. It's just that the gangsters will have a new leader: "Mafia Don" will be replaced, and the mafia Trump created will live on. They will keep attacking our votes, our voices, and our very democracy until they succeed. Why? Because Mafia Don proved how coercion, lies, intimidation, promised rewards and all the "tricks" gangsters use to instill fear almost worked. He came so very close that the path for what to do is clearly illuminated. More than a few steps have already been taken down that path.

The renowned philosopher George Santayana famously observed, "Those who do not learn history are condemned to repeat it." In the context of this editorial, the fear is not that we'd have a repetition of Watergate. No, something far, far worse is on the horizon.

The history that we need to recall is what happened the last time an insurrection matching the scope of the attempted overthrow that Trump led occurred, which was on April 12, 1861. That's the only other time our Nation came close to extinction.

We are on the verge of a full-scale resumption of the Civil War which never ended—and never will until the side of democracy prevails in such a way that insurrection is no longer a legitimate outcome, including for the 35 percent of us who support the Big Lie. Let's all use every bit of "our fortunes, our lives and our sacred honor", as the founding Fathers did in 1776, to restore the Republic we have all been graced to love.

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