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America's Continuing Crisis of Democracy

This past week's events are a harbinger of worse to come on January 6th and 20th. Contrary to Democrat Party leaders, the political crisis will not end on January 6, 2021 when Congress confirms the electoral college vote; nor on January 20 when they say Trump will be removed from the White House.

These two milestone dates will simply reveal how deep the crisis of America's truncated, capitalist form of limited Democracy has become. And how likely it will continue and deepen into 2021 and beyond.

January 6 and 20 is not the 'endgame' of the attack on Democracy by Trump and his radical right wing supporters. Those dates may mark the beginning of renewed attack on a new level and the commencement of a more dangerous period thereafter.

Last week at least a dozen Republican Senators—led by Ted Cruz the heir apparent and would-be 'prince of Trumpism'—publicly declared they will challenge the electoral college results on January 6. In the US House, Kevin McCarthy, Cruz's echo, will lead a group of at least 140 Republican Senators parroting the same challenge. Behind them stand tens of millions of American voters who have been convinced by Trump and his Congressional allies that the recent election was stolen—a theme reminiscent of Weimar Germany in the 1920s when millions were similarly convinced by the Nazis that victory in World War I was ripped from them by the 'liberal' politicians back in Berlin who 'stabbed them in the back'. They did not lose. Victory was 'stolen'.

The Trumppublicans in the Senate and House will not succeed in over-turning the Biden election. But they know that. So why are they proceeding on January 6? Is it just out of fear that Trump will retain enough influence with their base sufficient to deny them their next primary endorsement? Are they just pandering to future Trump base voters? Or is there something more to it longer term. Something more beyond what the mainstream media and the Democrats say is a futile attempt to disrupt the election results on January 6? Are Cruz

and friends so politically dumb they can't see the futility of an overturn of the election results on January 6? Or are they not so dumb maybe! And their game is about what comes after January 6?

The Maybe 'Not So Dumb' 12 & 140

There may be a longer term strategy behind the chaos that will happen on January 6. And make no mistake, January 20 will prove no less chaotic.

The Cruz-McCarthy led circus that will take place on January 6 may be about building momentum and support for a January 20 protest in DC in the short run. And something even bigger in the longer run. The January 6 events will clearly define the line in the sand between Trump loyalists and traditional Republicans in the Senate and House for all the Republican base to clearly see. Who's 'with us and who's against us'. The vote January 6 will be relevant to running for House seats in 2022 and for Senators up for re-election that year as well.

Cruz & McCarthy know they can't overturn the results on January 6. Apart from shaking out Republican Senators and Reps still on the fence by forcing a vote on the 6th, what's their longer run game? The more support Trump sycophants in Congress can gather on January 6—i.e. the more defections in the Senate and House beyond the 12 and 140 they can get on the 6th—the greater the call to the radical forces in Trump's base to come to Washington on the 20th to defend the president! The greater the vote against the electoral college results, even if insufficient to change the Biden election, the more Cruz & McCarthy legitimize Trump's message the election was stolen. And that encourages a greater turnout of Trump supporters on the 20th, with who knows what other 'calls to action'.

Democrats keep saying Trump will have to leave office on the 20th or 'he'll be removed'. But Trump isn't calling his Proud Boys to Washington on the 6th to be mere observers? That call is a warning to intimidate Republican fence sitters and to prep the protestors for an even greater turnout on the 20th? The era of street politics and its manipulation by elites has come to America!

As this writer has been forewarning since this past summer, Trump will likely encourage his Proud Boy and street thug friends to come to DC on the 20th in order to physically defend him in the White House. What police force, local or federal, will then want to crash the Proud Boys defense line around the White House and drag Trump kicking and yelling from his oval office in front of nation-wide media coverage? It will certainly make great video fodder for Trump's political base and the radical right, to be used again and again to mobilize and further radicalize his followers in the weeks and months that follow.

None of this is an impossible scenario come January 6 and January 20. It should be clear by now there are no lengths to which Trump will go to hold onto power or to protect himself and his financial interests once out of office.

In short, what's going on this past week, and what will likely transpire on the 6th and 20th, is not just Trump's attempt to over-turn the Biden election. That may be the appearance.

However, in essence it's about his fight to ensure his continued control of the Republican party. Only continued control of the party after January will check the Democrats going after him legally and financially, and ensure him a second run at the presidency in 2024. If he loses control of the party, all bets are off he can weather the counter-offensive by his opponents or secure the nomination for another run at the presidency.

Trump certainly knows the traditional Republican establishment will try to marginalize him when he's out of office. To protect himself he will even risk splitting the Republican party if he has to, driving more of the moderates out while retaining himself control of the party apparatus, thereafter rebuilding it in his image even more so before the 2022 election. It is a process purging and then rebuilding a party in his image not unlike that pursued by Hitler within the Nazi party in the mid-1920s, when challengers and moderates were purged or driven out after 1925. Hitler only became the indisputable leader in 1926-27 after that process was completed. Trump must hold onto control of the party to protect himself legally while out of office and to ensure his ability to define who gets to run under its banner for Congress in 2022. Only then can he re-run for the presidency in 2024 himself.

Epigones, Sycophants & Opportunists

By their announced plans for January 6, Cruz and McCarthy have signaled they are on board with Trump for the next political cycle in 2022 and 2024. They are committed to ensuring his and their control of the Republican party by forcing a vote in Congress to reject the Biden election on the 6th, a move which, in turn, will likely exacerbate events on the 20th.

Trump needs more chaos on the 6th and 20th, not less. The message to the Republican base on the 6th and 20th will be: not only has the 'deep state' denied Trump the election but a large and growing percentage of Reps and Senators in Congress agreed on January 6 the election was stolen. Come out on the 6th to give more of them courage to come forth and support Trump. The second message to the radical right base is the same deep state is planning to physically attack Trump on January 20, so come out and defend him in the White House. By implication this latter message to the base is the deep state will soon come after you too and physically take away your freedoms as well. So defend Trump now in order to defend yourselves next.

The ideologues around Trump see that by creating more visible chaos around January 6 and 20 it will raise the opportunity to build an even more radical movement in 2021-22, with growing influence both within Congress as well as without.

Dual Power as Pre-Revolutionary Situation

The obvious objective of the Cruz-McCarthy faction in Congress is to de-legitimize the Biden administration and the Democrat Congress in the House (and Senate should they win Georgia's runoff elections on January 5) among the 74 million of Trump's political base. The stronger that de-legitimization is achieved, the more possible it will be for Trump forces

to get red state legislatures and other government state institutions to refuse to cooperate on various levels with the Biden administration once it is in power.

That de-legitimization leads to a situation called ‘dual power’, a condition not seen in the USA since the 1850s when the legislatures in the Confederate Southern states simply ignored federal laws and executive directives from Washington and governed independently for a period. When they moved to eject all federal forces from the southern territory that precipitated the military phase of the civil war. But preceding that phase, civil war in the form of exercising of dual power at the state level was already occurring. ‘Dual power’ thus refers to a set of competing authorities and institutions that vie for legitimacy as the sole authority with the sole right to govern. A situation of dual power is a clear indicator of a pre-revolutionary situation. But in this case, the pre-revolution is a right wing radical and often proto-fascist revolutionary condition.

Trump As Shadow President?

Over the weekend Trump has upped the stakes for his followers in the Senate and US House. A recording of his conversation with Georgia State election commission officials, Raffensberger, and his legal team, revealed how far Trump is prepared to go to refuse to acknowledge the electoral college results and to refuse to leave office.

According to the Washington Post that obtained a copy of the recording of Trump’s call to Raffensberger (and CNN’s leaking of parts of the conversation this weekend on air), Trump demanded that Raffensberger ‘find’ the votes necessary to overturn the election in Georgia in his favor—despite three vote counts with paper trail having been conducted in Georgia since November 3. Trump then warned Raffensberger if he didn’t find the necessary votes, it would be a criminal act on his, Raffensberger’s, part. In other words, if you Republicans don’t do as I ask, then some day you’ll legally pay for it. Trump’s recorded conversation with Raffensberger is a signal fence sitting Republicans should not ally with the Deep State and stab Trump in the back. Should they do so, then a price will be paid and collected at some future date for such “criminal activity”, as Trump called it.

It is not an impossibility that, after January 20, Trump will attempt to act like he’s a “shadow president”. And some red state legislatures might follow him, depending how strong the Cruz-McCarthy vote is on January 6 and what chaotic events take place around January 20 and after.

Trump as shadow president could ‘govern’ by issuing Executive Orders and national emergency declarations. Some red states with deep Trump support may follow his lead and legislate in support of Trump’s orders and declarations in turn. That would then require the Biden government to challenge those states in Court—a long drawn out process—or even have Congress pass new laws to clearly over-ride those states’ legislation—also a process that might not get the support in Congress needed given Trump’s supporters there. The same could apply to those rogue states’ courts. They could issue decisions in support of Trump and

their legislatures, requiring higher federal courts to overturn. That would mean more delay. In the interim, the Trump ideology media machine would continue to deepen its conspiracy theories among Trump's grass roots followers, and use the crisis to still further de-legitimize the Biden administration and the US government in general.

It should not be forgotten that behind Trump, behind his sycophants in Congress, and behind the ideological apparatus are Trump's media arm of Breitbarts, NewsMax, QAnon, and Fox News evening talking heads. And behind that lies the big money radical capitalists that have supported Trump from the very beginning—and still do. That includes the Mercer family (Cruz's big money source as well), the Adelsons, Singers, and all the rest of the radical finance capitalists who want to see a further truncated form of Democracy in America in order to ensure their recently amassed wealth is not threatened.

Roots of US Democracy's Decline

What's happening to limited Democracy in America this year, and next, is not an isolated development. This is not just about Trump and the 2020 election. The process of destruction of Democracy in America has been underway for at least a quarter century. It is only now accelerating at a faster rate for all to see.

The process first erupted into the open with the success of New Gingrich's 'Contract for America' movement in the early 1990s when he and his radical friends wrested control of the US House of Representatives with the 1994 election. Gingrich publicly declared at the time his objective thereafter would be "to create a dysfunctional government" that the public would lose faith in. Then there was the election of 2000, when Al Gore lost to George W. Bush as a result of the US Supreme Court stopping the recounting of votes in Florida, in effect 'selecting' George W. Bush. Gore and the Democrats let it happen, deciding it was a 'one off' event and that the system would return to the political shell game in which the competing elites would trade off ruling every four or eight years. Then came the 'Citizens United' decision of the Supreme Court in 2010 that declared dollars spent by corporations were a form of 'free speech' protected by the Constitution's 1st amendment. Corporations were 'people' and had the same rights as the rest of us, even though they never died and amassed massive dollars and thus votes. In 2013 that same Supreme Court gutted the 1965 civil right act, opening the door to widespread voter suppression that ensued in dozens of red state Republican legislatures, that would thereafter used their entrenched control to gerrymander and ensure their control for decades to come. That too was endorsed by the Supreme Court. The Patriot Act after 2001 then sliced away long standing protections of civil liberties and civil rights for US citizens, measures later extended annually by National Defense Authorization Acts.

Not least, technology developments in the last decade have solidified control of broad segments of public opinion in favor of Trump forces and right wing interests in general. Without the Facebooks, YouTubes, and the Internet it would not have been possible to create

the 70 million adherents to Trumpism in today's US body politic or the countless conspiracy theories that serve as a kind of secular religion that ties the congregation to the interests of their clever politician priests. Naïve techies promised that technology and the internet would deepen democracy in America; time will show, as it is already, that technology has instead deepened government surveillance of the public, assisted tighter control of public assembly and protests, and enabled the manipulation of the electoral process as never before. Technology too is undermining Democracy in America and the clever elites and radicals know it.

All that was needed for this political conflagration was the proper fire lit under tens of millions of Americans desperate for change. The match was lit by the deep discontent across America with the direction of governance by the elites, Republican and Democrat alike. That discontent developed since the mid-1990s as well, in parallel with the rise of the radical right, with the offshoring and destruction of millions of decent paying jobs, the hollowing out of industrial America and the middle class, the destruction of Unions, and the replacing good paying jobs with low pay/few benefits tens of millions of part time, temp, and gig work.

To the collapse of jobs and wages was added the privatization of health care with its ever rising costs that denied access health access for 50 million and rising premiums, copays and deductibles for the rest; the destruction of the once decent pension and retirement system; and the indebting of a generation grasping at a chance at higher education to escape it all. Meanwhile, \$15 trillion in tax cuts were granted to corporations, investors and the wealthiest 1% households starting in 2001 and continuing to this day. Alongside that massive income shift was the launching of never ending wars and war spending for the next 20 years costing at least \$7 trillion more. (Both of which add up to about the \$22 trillion in US national debt as of 2019).

Then came the 2008-09 great recession and crash, from which tens of millions of average Americans never recovered, while banks and corporations were quickly bailed out by fiscal and monetary policies that accelerated income and wealth inequalities in America several fold. As tens of millions struggled to stay afloat during the so-called 'Obama recovery', corporations distributed more than a \$trillion dollars a year—every year for a decade on average—in dividends and stock buybacks to their investors. Obama era policies not only failed to mend this conditions, fit exacerbated it, thus further providing the ideological fodder for the radical right and the rise of Trump and Trump's political base.

All this too has been part of the decline of Democracy in America—by providing the conditions for the evolution and deepening of anti-Democratic impulses and support for radical right alternatives by wide segments of the American public.

In short, the elites in general—traditional Republican and Democrat—have created the conditions over the past quarter century for the assault on Democracy that is now intensifying throughout the USA. Their shared failure explains why there is such intense political hatred

of elites of both parties in the country, on both the right and left, and in turn why wide swaths of the public is willing to abort the remnants of Democracy. Democracy hasn't been working for them. So why defend it. And they see little evidence it will change. So they throw in with clever politicians like Trump, Cruz, and others who are willing to use failing Democracy as the excuse for their discontent.

Get rid of the liberals and we'll return to a former period of prosperity, aka MAGA—i.e. the exact same claim of the Nazis in the mid-1920s. The main target of Fascism in the period of its rise and support by the public is always the 'liberal politicians' who are responsible for the system not delivering, i.e. who are 'stabbing us in the back'.

Biden and the Democrats have only 12-18 months to fundamentally change the conditions that are giving rise to the attack on what little is left of US Democracy. However, the likely scenario is not optimistic. Should they not win in Georgia, it will be a continuation of Grinch McConnell's Senate preventing any significant change in policies. McConnell will only pass small measures for which he can extract on behalf of further concessions for investors, the wealthy, and their corporations. And should the Democrats win both seats in Georgia on January 5, it is likely that Biden's policies and measures will still be minimalist and thus insufficient. He will resurrect Obama's 'bipartisanship' approach which resulted in little basic changes then and even less now. Biden will gain little from McConnell even with Republicans in a minority role in the Senate. And 50-50 is hardly a minority position at that. Pelosi in the House will achieve not much more with her minimal 11 vote margin either- a sliver thin margin that the recent Census 2020 will erode to a mere half dozen.

With Biden championing 'bipartisanship' with McConnell it is unlikely he'll be aggressive with Executive Orders and other tactics. The most likely outcome is therefore not the fundamental measures and change desperately needed in 2021-22, but a minimalist 'go slow' approach similar to Obama's in 2009-10. Obama's bipartisan approach resulted in working households waiting for six years to recover lost jobs and then at wages well below that of pre-2008—while investors and stock holders amassed literally trillions in dividends and stock buybacks.

As Biden fails to create fundamental change, the emerging Trump-Cruz-McCarthy forces will attack him and the Democrats ever more aggressively as they move toward building a 'dual power' situation within the red states legislatures, Governorships, and state courts.

The more likely scenario is the 2022 midterm elections will be a disaster for Democrats, much like 2010 was for them as well. After that, the same cycle returns. But this time with tens of millions far worse off than before and with an even more radical right entrenched in Congress and a majority base in the heartland.

Clearly both wings of the Corporate Party of America—Trumpublicans and Democrats—share responsibility for how we got here. And even more for where we may be going.

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