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Sen. Josh Hawley: The Face of New American Fascism?



Drawing by Nathaniel St. Clair

“No one other than President Donald Trump himself is more responsible for Wednesday’s [January 6th] coup attempt at the U.S. Capitol than one Joshua David Hawley, the 41-year-old junior senator from Missouri, who put out a fundraising appeal while the siege was underway.”

So opens the Kansas City Star’s coverage of January 6th storming of the Capitol in support of Trump’s effort to disrupting the congressional approval of the 2020 Electoral College results awarding Joe Biden the presidency.

On December 30, 2020, Hawley was the first senator to announce his plan to oppose the certification of Biden’s Electoral College win. He declared:

I cannot vote to certify the electoral college results on January 6 without raising the fact that some states, particularly Pennsylvania, failed to follow their own state election laws. And I cannot vote to certify without pointing out the unprecedented effort of mega corporations, including Facebook and Twitter, to interfere in this election, in support of Joe Biden. At the

very least, Congress should investigate allegations of voter fraud and adopt measures to secure the integrity of our elections. But Congress has so far failed to act.

According to the *Kansas City Star*, Hawley's action was "motivated by ambition," to get a jump start over other members of what is known as the "Sedition Caucus," Republican senators who Democrats accused of backing Trump's dubious objections to the election results and for "standing with the mob." His action led other Republican presidential aspirants, notably Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), to announce plans to challenge the Electoral College vote.

Two days before the scheduled vote, on January 4th, a group of a dozen or so apparent student protesters picketed in front to Hawley's home in North Virginia. The Senator ranted that the protesters threatened his family and "vandalized" his house. In a couple of tweets, he raged:

"[Tonight](#) while I was in Missouri, Antifa scumbags came to our place in DC and threatened my wife and newborn daughter, who can't travel. They screamed threats, vandalized, and tried to pound open our door. Let me be clear: My family & I will not be intimidated by leftwing violence."

He also wrote:

"If the [Antifa scumbags](#) can terrorize my family, they can do it to any family in America. People should be safe in their own homes. And we're not going to sit back and take it."

However, as Juan Vazquez, spokesman for the Vienna (VA) Police Department, observed, the "people were peaceful." "There were no issues, no arrests," he added. "We didn't think it was that big of a deal."

This is documented in a revealing [video](#) of the demonstration that shows protesters chanting "due diligence has been done, Biden-Harris has won" on the street in front of the senator's home. At one point, several protesters with signs walk up to the door and ring the doorbell as one of them speaks over a megaphone.

As the storming of the Capitol was unfolding, Hawley's campaign sent out a fundraising appeal promoting his planned objection to Pennsylvania's electoral votes. In an email, [he announced](#), "Many career politicians in the D.C. establishment want me to stay quiet. I suppose you can assume nothing I do will matter. That it won't matter if I object or not, so I should sit by and do nothing." He then insisted, "But this is not about me! It is about the people I serve, and it is about ensuring confidence in our elections."

Most stunning, as the pro-Trump rally mobilized and – encouraged by the President himself — participants moved on to assault the Capitol, a [photo](#) captures Hawley with his arm raised and his fist clenched, greeting protesters in the east side of the Capitol before the riot began. This is surely a sign of his support for those moving against the Congress.

After mayhem broke out, Hawley sought to soften his stance. In a statement to soft-pedal his previous stands, he wrote:

“Thank you to the brave law enforcement officials who have put their lives on the line. The violence must end, those who attacked police and broke the law must be prosecuted, and Congress must get back to work and finish its job.”

The *Kansas City Star* reminded its readers, “So modest, Senator, failing to note your key role in inspiring one of the most heartbreaking days in modern American history. We lost something precious on Wednesday, as condolence notes to our democracy from our friends around the world recognize.”

In an editorial, the *Star* said that Hawley had “blood on his hands” for what took place on the 6th. In response, Hawley insisted that he would “never apologize for giving voice to the millions of Missourians and Americans who have concerns about the integrity of our elections. That’s my job, and I will keep doing it.”

After the Trump supporters were driven from the Capitol and order reestablished, the Senate certified Biden’s victory. It voted 93 to 6 to dismiss Republican objection to Arizona’s results and voted 92 to 7 to reject the objection to the Pennsylvania vote. In both cases, Hawley objected. In the face of defeat, Hawley adhered to his original stand, insisting that it was appropriate for the Senate to debate unproven allegations about the election.

Josh Hawley is an all-American politician – a white male conservative. He was born in 1979 in Springdale, AK, the child of a banker and a teacher. Hawley graduated from Stanford University (2002) and Yale Law School (2006). He is an Evangelical Christian and a strong supporter of the Federalist Society. He clerked to Judge Michael W. McConnell, U. S. Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, and to U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, John Roberts. Hawley served as Missouri attorney general 2017-2018 and was elected to the Senate in 2018. He is married and a father of two young boys.

On his website, Hawley proclaims his ideological strengths:

Senator Hawley is recognized as one of the nation’s leading constitutional lawyers. He has litigated at the Supreme Court of the United States, the federal courts of appeals, and in state court, fighting for the people’s liberties. He previously fought Obamacare at the Supreme Court — and won — as one of the lead attorneys in the landmark Hobby Lobby case. He was also a lead attorney in the Hosanna-Tabor case at the Supreme Court, protecting the rights of churches.

He is author of a biography of Teddy Roosevelt and, as he told *The Washington Post*, “My great worry ... is an economy that works for a small group of billionaires and then everybody else gets their information taken from them and monetized.”

As Missouri’s attorney general, in 2017 he investigated Google and regularly threatened to break up Facebook. In a six-page letter, he challenged Facebook’s founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, “to illustrate that Facebook will make a positive contribution to American life is

on you.” Going further, he proclaimed, “The burden to protect the American people from forces parasitic on our national life is on me.”

Growing opposition to Hawley’s role in the Capitol debacle is evident in the [announcement](#) by the publisher, Simon & Schuster, to cancel his forthcoming book, *The Tyranny of Big Tech*. It declared, it “cannot support Senator Hawley after his role in what became a dangerous threat.”

Trump & company’s mobilization to forestall the outcome of the 2020 presidential election was an utter political failure. Lacking the true nerve to attempt a real *coup d’état*, Trump’s followers provoked a theatrical spectacle. They got a lot of media attention but seem to have accomplished less than nothing: Trump was forced to make a scripted apology and appears more of a failure than anytime during his four-year term of office. Hawley may well carry forward the same political stench.

The Capitol debacle reveals just how unprepared Trump’s “insurgents” were to take real power. They surely were not the Bolsheviks of old marching to take the Winter Palace. Trump’s insurgents seem to have pushed, stumbled, their way into the Capitol, suffering few casualties. Surely, one or more “leadership” groups gave direction to the multitude who came to rant and rave, but not seize power. One can only wonder who this “leadership” was and if they judge the day’s action a success?

Most consequential, the failed insurgent action on January 6th reveals just how unprepared (or complicit?) the security state — the Capitol Police and supporting groups — is in protected the central institution of American political life. Many media pundits have attempted to link the 2021 Congress occupation to the 1814 British capture of the then-young national capital. They forget the British captured the city, setting on fire the Capitol, the White House and a majority of other federal buildings. 2021 is not 1814!

Sadly, if Hawley survives a possible recall challenge, he might be a bell-weather of an increasing conservative, neofascist, rightwing. The elected Biden administration faces a daunting task – end the Covid-19 pandemic and rebuild an economy suffering a profound recession. The next two years will be critical in addressing these and other challenges – e.g., the next police killing on an innocent African American.

Unfortunately, one can anticipate Republicans, especially hardcore reactionaries like Hawley, attempting to subvert Biden’s effort and fostering growing resentment among disaffected Trump supports and others. This could set the stage for the 2022 election and a possible Democratic loss of the House of Representatives, setting conditions for a reenactment of the Obama presidency with Republicans stalling all efforts to resolve the crises facing the nation. Insight into Hawley’s strategic thinking is most evident in a formal [presentation](#) he gave to the National Conservatism Conference in July 2019. In it, he outlined what might be described as the postmodern vocabulary of American fascism. It is a recognition that the U.S. empire, built over the last 150 years, is losing its global hegemony. Going unsaid is the role

of the leaderships of the Democratic and Republican parties in this process, their complicity serving the ruling class in fostering the ever-growing inequality that defines American life and fuels popular resentment, especially evident among Trump supporters.

Hawley opens his lamentation by setting up a classic split between the “us” and the “them,” but invokes the old ploy against the “other,” historically Jews but now rebranded the “cosmopolitans”:

For years the politics of both Left and Right have been informed by a political consensus that reflects the interests not of the American middle, but of a powerful upper class and their cosmopolitan priorities.

He then details what marks cosmopolitans un-American:

This class lives in the United States, but they identify as “citizens of the world.” They run businesses or oversee universities here, but their primary loyalty is to the global community. They regard our inherited traditions as oppressive and our shared institutions—like family and neighborhood and church—as backwards.

What they offer instead is a progressive agenda of social liberation in tune with the priorities of their wealthy and well-educated counterparts around the world.

And all of this—the economic globalizing, the social liberationism—has worked quite well. For some. For the cosmopolitan class.

Hawley invokes a quasi-leftist critique of “the cosmopolitan consensus,” noting how it has failed to meet the needs of the vast majority of “middle” Americans:

Whom it has not served are the people whose labor sustains this nation. Whom it has not helped are the citizens whose sacrifices protect our republic. Whom it has not benefited is the great American middle.

And yes, in this bargain there are lots of jobs—jobs on Wall Street, or in Hollywood, or in Silicon Valley. Because the truth is, the cosmopolitan economy has made the cosmopolitan class an aristocracy.

At the same time, it has encouraged multinational corporations to move jobs and assets overseas to chase the cheapest wages and pay the lowest taxes.

And where has this left middle America?

With flat wages, with lost jobs, with declining investment and declining opportunity. We don’t make things here anymore—at least, not the kinds of things a normal person without a fancy degree can build with his hands.

He then calls for a new socio-economic order:

It’s time we ended the cosmopolitan experiment and recovered the promise of the republic.

That means challenging the economic concentration that stifles small producers and family enterprises.

That means new pathways for skills and job training, so Americans can get the tools they need, and the respect they deserve, without the mountain of debt that the higher-education monopoly now imposes—and I have proposed new legislation to this end just today.

...

It means an immigration system that rewards and nourishes American labor rather than devaluing it.

Hawley concludes his rant by invoking a Christian conservative, neofascist political agenda:

We must join together to renew the bonds of family life, to honor the claims of kinship and the covenant of marriage. Marriage should be prized in our national policy, not penalized. And from taxes to healthcare, families should get the support and pride of place they deserve. To rebuild our common purpose, we must protect our communities of faith. Because religious faith has fueled our history and shaped our aspirations and bettered our society.

It is not the role of government to promote Christianity or any religion. But let us be clear: our government should not hinder or diminish religious expression. We need strong religious communities, active in civic life, protecting the vulnerable, defending the weak. Because these communities have helped make us who we are as a people.

It's an open question as to whether Hawley will survive the January 6th rightwing political debacle. Whether he does so or not, the analysis and political agenda he is promoting suggests a postmodern, 21st all-American form of fascism. Yale professor Jason [Stanley](#) describes fascism as “a cult of the leader who promises national restoration in the face of humiliation brought on by supposed communists, Marxists and minorities and immigrants who are supposedly posing a threat to the character and the history of a nation.” Author of *How Fascism Works*, he notes, “The leader proposes that only he can solve it and all of his political opponents are enemies or traitors.”

The Italian writer Primo [Levi](#) warned, “Every age has its own fascism.” Author of *Survival in Auschwitz*, he wrote, “There are many ways of reaching [fascism], not just through the terror of police intimidation, but by denying and distorting information, by undermining systems of justice, by paralyzing the education system, and by spreading in a myriad subtle ways nostalgia for a world where order reigned, and where the security of a privileged few depends on the forced labor and the forced silence of the many.”

In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Wilhelm [Reich](#) reminds readers, “The word fascism is not a word of abuse any more than the word capitalism is. It is a concept denoting a very definite kind of mass leadership and mass influence: authoritarian, one-party system, hence totalitarian, a system in which power takes priority over objective interests, and facts are distorted for political purposes. Hence, there are ‘fascist Jews,’ just as there are ‘fascist Democrats.’”

And Hannah [Arendt](#), in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, observes, “The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom

the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist.”

Some within Trump’s legions are likely planning a farewell event for Inauguration Day, one that could outdo what happened on the 6th. Federal law enforcement is gearing up for a possible replay confrontation on the 20th. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “roughly 6,200 members of the National Guard from six states — Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland — will help support Capitol Police and other law enforcement in Washington for the next 30 days. Inauguration Day road closures may be altered.” In addition, tall, black metal fences designed to be impossible to climb have been erected on the Capitol grounds.

Trump [tweeted](#), “To all of those who have asked, I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th.” *Axios* reports that he is considering fleeing the White House on Marine One and, in a final Air Force One flight to Florida, will lead a political rally scheduled at the same time as Biden’s inauguration. Hawley has yet to announce his plans for the event.

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