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TRENDS RESEARCH & ADVISORY

A Deep Dive into the Meaning and Impact of January 6 Capitol Insurrection

Jeffrey Kaplan

Strategic Trends 3
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A deep dive into the meaning and impact of January 6 Capitol insurrection

Abstract

This article aims to enable readers outside the United States to better understand Washington DC's events on January 6, 2021. The invasion of the US Capitol Building with the intent to force legislators to reject the electoral college delegates is unprecedented in American history. It opens with a brief introduction describing the attack followed by explanations of the primary ideological strands that motivated the protestors: American populism, conspiratorialism, and the emergent alt-right. The article explains the constituencies of the protestors that stormed Washington and those that attacked the building, with particular reference to the organized militias that served as the shock troops in the capital invasion. It ends with a discussion of the legal and political ramifications of the events.

Introduction

When crowds of President Donald Trump supporters flocked to Washington in response to the President's claims of widespread election fraud, most Americans were unsurprised. Fantasy, which early in the Trump administration came to be known as 'alternative facts,' marked political discourse in America since Trump's improbable presidential campaign in 2016.¹ The conspiratorialism that powered these claims was nothing new in America. Conspiratorial fears have a long and checkered history in American culture, but they were largely relegated to the fringes of American politics until now. They were now rapidly being mainstreamed and took deep roots in the Republican Party. This offered a receptive national

1. 'Alternative facts' is the term coined by Trump advisor Kelly Ann Conway in the first days of the Trump Administration. For its amusing debut over Trump's false claims of a massive crowd attending his inauguration, see the NBC video at <https://nbcnews.to/3xpyTmM>.

milieu for repeated false claims of voter fraud, fixed voting machines, legions of illegal immigrants backed by zombie hordes of previously deceased Americans trooping to the polls to rob the heroic President of his rightful victory. The remarkably disparate crowd that descended on the capital to protest the congressional ratification of the election was, for most Americans, simply good television. In any case, the gathering of people was well within the law.

What followed, however, came as a shock to all but the most astute followers of all things Trump. Following rabble-rousing addresses from the President, his son Donald Trump Jr., and for a touch of the bizarre, from Trump attorney and one-time mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, a portion of the crowd, believing that Trump would lead them, descended on the Capitol building. In an act unprecedented in US history, the crowd attempted to stop the legislative proceedings by force in the belief that their efforts would ensure that Trump remains President. This was not the first terrorist attack on the Capitol. But it was the first attempt to affect the electoral process and the subsequent transfer of power in American history.²

History and ideology

Trump's election represents a first in the history of American populism – a populist candidate that won an election at the national level. Scholars debate the precise definition of the term 'populism.' However, it is defined, populism has a consistent set of salient characteristics. Populism is at base an 'us' against 'them' social and political movement that seeks to channel

2 . The best known of these was the March 1, 1954, attack by Puerto Rican nationalists which was led by a woman, Lolita Lebrón. Margaret Pour, "Puerto Rican Women Nationalist vs. US Colonialism: An Exploration of Their Conditions and Struggles in Jail and Court," *Chi.-Kent L. Rev.* 87 (2012): 463-79. For a primer on the others, see Chris Iorfida, "4 historic attacks at the U.S. Capitol," *CBC*, January 6, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3vhwFnH>.

popular fear or anger against the government or governing elites.³ It is based on class; nationalist or religious conflict and its leaders are invariably demagogues who appeal to emotions over reason. Populism seeks to identify, isolate, and demonize those seen to be somehow at fault for the troubles, real or imagined, in the lives of everyday people.

In populism's pre-Trump heyday during the Depression years of the 1930s, the Jews served this role for demagogues as disparate as the Catholic radio priest Father Charles Coughlin, Protestant revivalists like Gerald L.K. Smith, industrialists like Henry Ford, and Nazi sympathizers-cum-sycophants like William Dudley Pelly, Gerald Winrod and Fritz Kuhn.⁴ In 1936, Robert Townsend attempted to unite these forces into a presidential campaign behind a then fanciful proposal for a national retirement pension. He lost, but Franklin D. Roosevelt adopted the idea into policy.⁵

Until Donald Trump, populist demagogues raged at the margins of American politics, rarely threatening the center. These movements were short-lived. When the crisis passed, the phenomenon was replaced by a shared sense of national mission. When the public could rest assured that the government was in control of the situation, populist movements faded from

3. The us/them motive is found as often in the Islamic world as in the West. Imam Musa al-Sadr, the founder of the Lebanese Shi'ite group Amal employed the terms underdog/overdog to great effect in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s. Fouad Ajami, *The vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). Cf. Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach, *Islam in the world today: a handbook of politics, religion, culture, and society* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 515.

4. The best book on the phenomenon remains David Harry Bennett, *The party of fear: from nativist movements to the New Right in American history*, 2nd Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). For a broad overview, Rogers Brubaker, "Populism and nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (2020): 44-66.

5. Amenta, E. (2008). *When movements matter: The Townsend plan and the rise of social security*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

the scene. Depression-era populism disappeared with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the US entry into WWII. Also, the anti-communist zealots of the 1950s and early 1960s could not outshout such figures as Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) of the era.

Donald Trump was able to plug his appeal into a contemporary form of populism that played on fears of change, social and demographic, as well as an inchoate fear of the foreign or terrorist 'other'. In Trump's version of populism, the dreaded figure of the 'International Jew' was replaced by the 'Muslims as terrorists' construct ⁶ and the imagined wave of drug dealers and rapists flooding the nation from its porous southern borders. The latter was particularly graphic: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best . . . They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists . . . It's coming from all over South and Latin America." ⁷

While populism was only one strand of Trump's ideological appeal, it was a key factor linking the new conspiratorialism and the alt-right with the long tradition of American populist appeals. From its inception in 1776, America has been particularly susceptible to conspiratorial fears. Only two years after the American Revolution, fears of a Catholic-Masonic conspiracy swept the fledgling nation. Since then, no era has been free of conspiracy theories. ⁸ Most are harmless, some are amusing, and others probably have

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6. Khan, M. et al. (2019). Muslims' representation in Donald Trump's anti-Muslim-Islam statement: A critical discourse analysis," *Religions* 10/2. <https://bit.ly/32KYc4L>
 7. Sanchez, G. and Gomez-Aguinaga, B. (2017). Latino rejection of the Trump campaign: How Trump's racialized rhetoric mobilized the Latino electorate as never before. *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 42/2: 165-81.
 8. On this history, see Johnson, G. (1983). *Architects of fear: conspiracy theories and paranoia in American politics*. Boston: J.P. Tarcher. Butter, M. and Knight, P. (2020). *Routledge handbook of conspiracy theories*. New York: Routledge. Newton, M. (2005). *The Encyclopedia of Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theories*. New York: Facts on File. Hellinger, D. (2018). *Conspiracies and conspiracy theories in the age of Trump*. New York: Springer.

some basis. Popular American conspiracy theories range from the Grassy Knoll theory of the John F. Kennedy assassination to the many variants of the extraterrestrial visitations and subsequent military coverups.

In the Age of Trump and the rise of QAnon, conspiracy beliefs have been far less benign. Conspiracy theories that take root in a society, like crops, require fertile soil and just the right amount of light and shade. The QAnon-fueled world of conspiratorial alternate reality is based on an Ur narrative that reaches back into the 1980s and the era of the Satanism Scare.⁹ This was a transition period in American history where cold hard economics, feminism, and the American conservatism of the Reagan Administration collided.

By the 1980s, the era of one-salary families was done, and women were brought into the job market in large numbers. This change in the workforce balance left many families torn between traditional models of the mother as a stay-at-home caregiver versus as a working mother in need of child care. The problem is better negotiated in societies with extended families, but in the nuclear model, children had to be entrusted to strangers. What followed were bizarre stories of daycare centers run by Satan worshippers who used the children for sex and sacrifice. So devilishly clever were these Satanists that no physical evidence of their crimes was ever found, either in the bodies and memories of the children nor in the remains of those “sacrificed to the Devil.”¹⁰

The satanism scare burned hot for a few years and faded soon after. But in the cultic milieu of lost and proscribed ideas, nothing ever dies. Instead, it

9. This tangled and utterly bizarre history can be found in Kaplan, J. (2018). *Apocalypse, revolution and terrorism: from the Sicari to the American revolt against the modern world*. New York: Routledge, ch. 3.

10. On this strange history, see Finkelhor, D. et al. (1988). *Nursery crimes: Sexual abuse in day care*. New York: Sage Publications, Inc.

is combined with other ideas and adapted to new times and circumstances.¹¹ This brings us to the 2016 election and the singular figures of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Many said in 2016 that absolutely anyone not named Hillary Clinton could defeat Donald Trump. But Clinton was the Democratic Party nominee. She brought with her not only an incredibly negative public image – a remarkable minus 19 percent rating two months before the election – but the legacy of Bill Clinton (and his “Slick Willie” reputation), and the Clinton Administration’s corruption scandals as well.¹²

From this mélange of ill-will, the internet and right-wing and conspiracist talk shows, most notably Alex Jones and Infowars, came the conspiracy that came to be known as “Pizzagate.”¹³ Pizzagate took the child abuse motifs of the Satanism Scare and mixed them with suspicions of Hilary Clinton’s proclivities toward witchcraft, lesbianism, and in some versions, cannibalism to create a conspiracy theory that, like a variety program on television, had something for everyone. In this story, Clinton and a cabal of Democratic Party members held orgies marked by the sexual abuse and eventual sacrifice of children. Blood-drinking and other elements too gruesome to be named were also prominent features. Lest we find this too much to believe, Alex Jones and the other purveyors of the theory claimed to have police informants who shared with them videotapes of the events which we were assured took place in the ‘underground catacombs’ beneath the Ping Pong Pizzeria in Washington, DC (where else?).

11. Kaplan, J. and Lööw, L. (2002). *The cultic milieu: oppositional subcultures in an age of globalization*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

12. Newport, F. (2016). Clinton’s image at lowest point in two decades. *Gallup*. <https://bit.ly/3eJDhov>.
Taylor-Coleman, J. (2016). The dark depths of hatred for Hillary Clinton. *BBC News*. <https://bbc.in/3nmTS5o>

13. Fisher, M., Cox, J. and Hermann, P. (2016). Pizzagate: From rumor, to hashtag, to gunfire in DC. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3exY4ev>

Like the Satanism scare, Pizzagate soon faded from the headlines, helped along by the arrest of Edgar Welch, a North Carolina resident who, armed with an assault rifle, took it upon himself to investigate the Ping Pong Pizzeria. He found no child sex slaves or underground caverns, but following his arrest, the lawsuits fell like rain, and Alex Jones and company were forced to recant their claims.

Donald Trump was not yet part of the story, but that would soon come with the rise of QAnon. QAnon, said to be an individual rather than a composite, took the Pizzagate scenario and wedded it to an alt-right (see below) belief in the existence of a 'deep state' composed of elites in the upper reaches of American government who rule in their personal interest and the interests of their family, class or region. It is a term that has been adopted globally.¹⁴

QAnon, claiming to be a deep state insider who wishes to serve the people rather than the elites, adds Trump to the story as the hero who, almost alone, fights the evil machinations of the Democrat pedophiles and Satan worshippers. In QAnon's world, as in conspiracy theory generally, there is no accidental causation. There is a hidden hand behind every event. QAnon's writings are crafted to be oracular, in the form of puzzles and hints that the audience is challenged to interpret. QAnon thus emerges as a self-proclaimed prophet whose audience follows his or her every word with religious zeal. In many ways, conversion to the QAnon universe mirrors the conversion to a cult or high-pressure religious group that constitutes a sect whose congregations gather over internet bulletin boards and discussion groups.¹⁵

14. Butter and Knight, *Routledge handbook of conspiracy theories*.

15. The narratives are starkly reminiscent of the cult controversies of the 1960s-1980s. Jaffe, G. and Real, J. (2021). Life amid the ruins of QAnon: I wanted my family back. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/2QVS3jw>. Gilbert, D. (2021). How QAnon is tearing families apart. *Vice News*, <https://bit.ly/3gG80oO>.

What distinguishes QAnon from the earlier conspiracy theories is the ubiquitous presence of the internet and social media combined with a President (Trump) who is a conspiracy aficionado and social media addict. With this impetus, QAnon went mainstream and found particularly fertile ground in the Trumpist sections of the Republican Party. QAnon posits Trump as an imperial, almost eschatological figure who will be brought to permanent power by “the storm,” a revolutionary event of apocalyptic proportions.

QAnon’s collected writings are widely available. Here is one example: “A detailed report on the ‘Storm’ that is about to destroy the deep state that conspires against the United States and on the “great awakening” that will make America great again!”¹⁶ Another warns presciently: “As Morpheus said, ‘I’m trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You’re the one that has to walk through it.’ You’ll find out for yourself as you start to unravel the mysteries and solve the puzzles. Q doesn’t make it easy and the stakes are high. People have died. People will go to jail. This isn’t a game. We serve at the pleasure of the President.”¹⁷

The alt-right is the third and least understood leg of the Trumpist appeal. Journalists seized the term in the wake of the Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally in 2017 as an umbrella label for every racist and anti-Semitic group that participated in the event. Its origins could not have been more different. The alt-right took shape in conservative intellectual circles as an alternative to the kind of conservatism then prevalent in the Republican Party.

By the turn of the 21st century, American conservatism had become as fragmented as every other aspect of US society. As found in the mainstream

16. Paine, T. (2020). QANON PHENOMENON (Self Published).

17. Anon. (2018). The Secret Behind the Secrets: A Complete Collection of Q’s Drops October 2017-January (Self Published).

Republican Party and stuffy intellectual journals read exclusively by stodgy intellectuals, conservatives had become passé for those of a more radical temperament and greater exposure to the political realms of the American cultic milieu. Thus, Conservative morphed into neoconservative, and when that proved too weak a gruel for some, into paleoconservative for those who truly wanted a return to the imagined golden age of American conservatism.¹⁸ The neocons and paleoconservatives were the primary tributaries of the alt-right. Paul Wolfson, a prominent contributor to just the sort of intellectual journals that the alt-right despised, sums them up well: “They [paleoconservatives] are not conservatives so much as reactionaries or pseudo-radicals. The paleos can fairly be said to despise much of contemporary American life and would like somehow to move beyond the modern American political debate.”¹⁹

Like all intellectual movements, the paleos grouped together in think tanks and tax-exempt 501c institutes. One of the most important of these is the Rockford Institute in Rockford, Illinois. Founded in the Bicentennial year of 1976, the Institute served as a beacon for conservative thought with the mission to defend Western Christian Civilization. What makes the Rockford Institute perhaps the flagship of paleoconservative thought today is its magazine, *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. *Chronicles'* current mission seamlessly outlines the program of the alt-right, and it focuses on topics such as:

- Confronting Islam
- Immigration and Citizenship
- A Foreign Policy in the American Interest
- Regional and Local Autonomy

18. Scotchie, J. (2017). *The paleoconservatives: New voices of the Old Right*. New York: Routledge.

19. Wolfson, A. (2004). Conservatives and neoconservatives. *Public Interest*. <https://bit.ly/2PI8VQh>.

- The Sanctity of Life, Marriage, and Family
- Recapturing Education

With the alt-right, the enemy “other” had become Muslims rather than Jews, but the rhetoric otherwise changed little. This is ironic in that the intellectual roots of the alt-right were from Jewish thinkers who were utterly appalled at the doings in Charlottesville. From the perspective of the alt-right, paleoconservatives had the right ideas and their early warnings of the dangers of Islam, and immigration were correct, but in the end, they remained an intellectual movement that went over the heads of many potential supporters. Moreover, in movement circles, the biggest problem with paleoconservatives was less in their politics than in their ethnicity. As Paul Gottfried, himself a Jew who is often credited with coining the term alt-right, pointed out as early as 1986, “most paleo thinkers were Protestants or Jews.”²⁰ When Charlottesville happened, Gottfried was notably on the sidelines, expressing disgust with the collection of neo-Nazis and general wingnuts who took up tiki torches for the white race.²¹

In those early days of 2005-2008, Gottfried brought a young editor named Richard Spencer into the nascent alt-right. As Spencer quickly veered into racial politics, the partnership was short-lived, championing a Euro-American white race besieged by non-whites and Muslims as it valiantly struggles for survival.²² Spencer’s increasingly open anti-Semitism left no place for the Jewish Gottfried, whose writings Spencer ‘liberally’ quotes in his writings. On a deeper level, however, Gottfried is a deeply literate Humanist,

20. Gottfried, P. (n.d.) The decline and rise of the alternative right. *Unz Review*, <https://bit.ly/3exTXim>.

21. Gottfried, P. (n.d.). Paul Gottfried: Don’t call me the ‘godfather’ of those alt-right neo-Nazis. I’m Jewish. *National Post*. <https://bit.ly/3xm2u0C>.

22. Sheffield, M. (2016). A history of hate: How the alt-right became racist. *Salon*. <https://bit.ly/3nhLsfz>. This history is documented best by Hawley, G. (2017). *Making sense of the alt-right*. New York: Columbia University Press.

the Raffensperger Professor Emeritus of Humanities at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania. Being an acclaimed Humanist and holding an Emeritus professorship does not immunize one from racism or anti-Semitism. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, Revilo P. Oliver at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign did the same thing as he descended into racist and anti-Semitic paranoia, according to many. While Oliver was the intellectual darling of the radical right of his day, he was not Jewish, and Jews were not welcome in Spencer's version of the alt-right.²³

Thus, Gottfried may well have founded the alt-right and coined the term for the movement, but he had no truck with the racism, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism of Spencer and his followers. Spencer's young fans who flocked to Charlottesville could never believe that the intellectual godfather of their movement was an elderly Jewish scholar from an Eastern Liberal Arts college.

The alt-right tied the Trumpist appeal to the most conservative reaches of the Republican Party. Populism gave Trump's message historical resonance and conspiratorialism of the QAnon variety vastly expanded Trump's audience while imbuing them with both a sense of mission and the kind of apocalyptic excitement that since the Middle Ages has created violent revolutionary movements.²⁴

Washington 2021: Who heeded the call?

What struck most observers about the crowd that descended on Washington to answer the President's call was their diversity. Suburban soccer

23. Oliver's writings are voluminous, but an accessible introduction is the reprint of one of his more mainstream works: Oliver, R. (2006). *America's Decline: The Education of a Conservative*. Sussex, England: Historical Review Press.

24. First published in 1957, Norman Cohn's study of medieval apocalypticism remains the key text. Cohn, N. (2004). *The Pursuit of the Millennium: revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages*. London: Pimlico.

moms, teenagers and young adults, Evangelical Christians, a handful of Muslims, a scattering of racial minorities, and camouflage-clad military veterans appeared side by side with armed militia members and members of racist and neo-Nazi groups. It was a conservative version of the flash mobs made famous in the left-wing anti-globalization demonstrations of the 1990s.²⁵ The crowd had a chaotic, carnival-like atmosphere until the attack on the capital. That attack, however, was anything but random and appeared to have been long-planned.

At the first Biden-Trump presidential debate on September 29, 2020, in a seemingly off-hand remark, President Trump called out to a militia group supporting his candidacy: “Proud Boys – stand back and stand by.”²⁶ It was a clear call to arms by a President who was acutely aware that he was losing the election in the wake of his flailing and increasingly bizarre handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Trump was just as aware that he was in serious legal jeopardy (unlike any previous president), with the most serious threat coming from the New York Grand Jury investigation into his businesses and taxes. Given the legal storm clouds gathering on the horizon, this was an election that Trump simply could not afford to lose.

Charlottesville, where it all began

On August 12, 2017, the term alt-right leaped from the nether world of online blogs and bulletin boards to a national television audience and from there to the accounts of mainstream magazines and newspapers across the nation. The Unite the Right rally in the university town of Charlottesville, North Carolina, came as a shock to mainstream America. As Nazis in

25. Kahn, R. and Kellner, D. (2004). New media and internet activism: from the ‘Battle of Seattle’ to blogging. *New media & society*. 6/1: 87-95.

26. Hawkins, D., Wootson Jr. C. and Timberg, C. (2020). Trump’s ‘stand by’ remark puts the Proud Boys in the spotlight. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3tOGrNO>.

full regalia marched together with hooded Klansmen, skinheads, white nationalist groups of various kinds, neo-confederates, and a cross-section of ordinary Americans, the Charlottesville march seemed to most observers to be as unlikely a collection of protestors as could be imagined.

This mélange of actors was ostensibly drawn together to protest the Charlottesville City Council decision to remove a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. Beyond the Confederate flag, however, the disparate group of marchers had little to do with either Civil War nostalgia or the South. White nationalists and neo-confederates used a variety of takes on the traditional Confederate flag, although some created more explicitly Nazi symbols.

The chants at Charlottesville were every bit as eclectic as the symbols. “White lives matter” was a direct riposte to the African-American group Black Lives Matter. “Blood and Soil” was unretouched 1930s-era National Socialism. “You will not replace us” and its more explicit variant “Jews will not replace us” reflected the ubiquitous perception in the traditional radical right that a Jewish conspiracy, also known as ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government), are the secret masters of the United States.²⁷

The march culminated in a torchlight parade, and this is where it all started to fall apart. The torches were, in reality, citronella tiki torches, and the Twitterverse descended on the marchers with merciless mirth. From “Those were stolen from my mother’s patio” to less than positive critiques of the polo shirts that the marchers seemed to favor, the ridicule was far from the ominous impression that the marchers wished to make on the American public. Nor did the satirical onslaught wane. Here are a few samples:²⁸

27. Kaplan, J. (2000) Real Paranoids Have Real Enemies: The Genesis of the ZOG Discourse in the American National Socialist Subculture. In C. Wessinger (ed.) *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 299-322.

28. For highlights, see Solywoda, K. (2017). White supremacists hold a tiki torch-lit rally, get mercilessly roasted by Twitter. *Someecards*. <https://bit.ly/3nhoTaP>.

“Judging by the cloud of citronella off those tiki torches, they’ve “had it up to here” with the tyranny of bug bites.”

“The tiki torches make it look like they’re protesting Karen’s decision to include cilantro in the guacamole.”

“The master race has a Lowe’s membership.”

“White men with tiki torches! This is either a white supremacist rally/riot or a very aggressive backyard barbecue.”

“Looks like a low-class fraternity party gone bad.”

In the end, the aftermath of Charlottesville had many ramifications. President Trump’s initial tepid reaction seemed to embrace the rally’s message implicitly. Rally participant, James Alex Fields, Jr., intentionally plowed his car into a group of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer. The national revulsion was not long in coming, shaking both the Trump Administration and the rally organizers. For the latter, Christopher Cantwell, a rally organizer whose shirtless bravado before the cameras of HBO and Vice News morphed into a self-made video of Cantwell who, on learning that there might be a warrant for his arrest, posted a tearful video begging for help and advice from anyone who still cared.²⁹ From the dream of uniting the right, the polo-shirted tiki torch-bearing protesters led by persons such as “the Crying Nazi” had morphed into a contemptible national meme.

For the extremist groups, the most important outcome of the rally was President Trump’s apparent approval. “You had some very bad people in that group, but you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides. You had people in that group ... There were people in that rally – and I looked the night before – if you look, there were people protesting very

29. Turks, Y. (2018). Crying Nazi snowflake needs a safe space (VIDEO) YouTube, <https://bit.ly/3nhHMu0>. Moyer, J. (2018). Crying Nazi’ pleads guilty to assault committed during Charlottesville rally. Washington Post. <https://wapo.st/3nkg1B1>.

quietly the taking down of the statue of Robert E. Lee. I'm sure in that group there were some bad ones. The following day it looked like they had some rough, bad people – neo-Nazis, white nationalists, whatever you want to call them. But you had a lot of people in that group that were there to innocently protest, and very legally protest,” said President Trump on August 15, 2017.³⁰

Tacit approval that proved deadly

This apparent approval was key to what occurred in Washington on January 6, 2021. Radical movements of any stripe are emboldened by the perception that the government at least tacitly supports them. This tacit approval was made more explicit at the presidential debates when Trump refused to condemn white nationalism.³¹ After a generation in which overt expressions of racism or membership in radical right-wing groups were banished to the furthest reaches of American discourse, Trump's embrace of such newly emboldened far-right groups ensured that they would take to the streets to support him at his beck and call.

Those who answered Trump's call to descend on Washington were a fairly diverse lot, but they can be placed in two distinct categories: the unaffiliated and the organized groups. The unaffiliated came to Washington on their own, or in small largely ad hoc groups of family and friends. The affiliated were members of organized militia or white supremacist groups who came armed and ready for war. Reliable estimates of the crowd place it at 10,000 or less.³² Not a lot as such demonstrations go. Most important, though, was the competing agendas of the two constituencies.

30. Kessler, G. (2020). The ‘very fine people’ at Charlottesville: Who were they? *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3sUcbQd>.

31. *New York Times* (January 20, 2020). Trump Refuses to Denounce White Supremacy in Chaotic Debate. <https://nyti.ms/3aCPFFq>.

32. Doig, S. (n.d.) It is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the size of the crowd that stormed Capitol Hill. *The Conversation*, <https://bit.ly/3viJCO9>.

Although hard data remains sketchy, interviews with participants and subsequent investigations suggest that, while some of the unaffiliated intended to disrupt the congressional session at the Capitol, most went to Washington to lawfully demonstrate their support to the President and their rejection of an election they genuinely believed to be fraudulent. The affiliated, by contrast, came with vague plans to ignite a revolution that would keep their President in power, perhaps indefinitely. When violence happened and the attack on the Capitol occurred, a minority of the unaffiliated were also drawn to the Capitol building. Some, fired by the exhortations of Trump, Donald Trump Jr., and Rudy Giuliani, entered the Capitol knowingly, while others claim to have been caught up in the crowd and the frenzy of the moment and simply followed the surge without thinking of the repercussions. When the repercussions came, many of the unaffiliated expressed surprise, both at their arrests and, even more, at how easily they were identified. The two constituencies should therefore be examined separately.

The unaffiliated

Even as late as March 2021, hard data on the participants in the demonstrations and the attack on the Capitol remains sketchy. From public sources and the numerous interviews with those who took part in the events of January 6, two themes predominate intensive consumption of Trump's own social media posts and a deep dive into the world of QAnon conspiracy beliefs. The intersections of these beliefs produced among the unaffiliated a motley crew of zealots. Some were colorful characters such as Jake Angeli, the fur-clad QAnon shaman who foolishly expected a presidential pardon for his actions, and Jennifer 'Jena' Ryan, a Texas real estate agent who with family and friends flew to the capital in a private jet and who broadcast a commercial for her business from inside the Capitol. She too expected a pardon from Trump that was not forthcoming and later expressed surprise that her arrest was

not a boon for her real estate business – a complaint that was met with satirical derision by many.³³

Others were not so amusing. In an age when every football game as far afield as Great Britain features participants taking a knee before every game to protest the police violence and government complicity that came to be personified in the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the presence and eventual arrest of off-duty police from around the nation was a particularly ominous facet of the events of January 6. Worse, some on-duty Capitol police were complicit in the mob attack.³⁴

The Justice Department has made over 400 arrests as of March 2021, and the number will rise; 330 cases have made their way to the courts, and local grand juries have separately indicted 149. Investigators have gone through more than 15,000 hours of surveillance videos and issued over 900 search warrants. In addition to off-duty police, 37 of those arrested so far are active or former military members. Interestingly, only 52 are tied to extremist groups, most notably the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Three Percenters, and the Texas Freedom Force.³⁵

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33. Beer, T. (2021). ‘Q Shaman’ deeply ‘wounded’ and disappointed that Trump didn’t pardon him,” *Forbes*. <https://bit.ly/3gBOIAZ>. Burke, M. (2021). Texas real estate agent who took private jet is charged in Capitol riot. *NBC News* <https://nbcnews.to/3dONpwC>. Petri, A. (2021). I’m John Wilkes Booth, and now is probably as good a time as any to promote myself! *Washington Post* <https://wapo.st/3xmDyGf>.
34. Kindy, K., Bellware, K. and Berman, M. (2021). Off-duty police were part of the Capitol mob. Now police are turning in their own. *Washington Post* <https://wapo.st/2QTBwNc>. Wu, N. (2021). Capitol Police investigating 35 officers for Jan. 6 riot as union denounces ‘witch hunt.’ *USA Today*. <https://bit.ly/3tSxsLz>.
35. Hymes, C., McDonald, C., and Watson, E. (2021). What we know about the “unprecedented” Capitol riot arrests. *CBS News*. <https://cbsn.ws/3vhA99Y>. The statistics are based on an interview with federal prosecutor Michael Sherwin which was shown on *60 Minutes*. For interview, see Pelley, S. (2021). Inside the prosecution of the Capitol rioters. *60 Minutes*. <https://cbsn.ws/3dMbggu>.

What made the arrests at once so easy and challenging was the fact that most of the participants, both in the legal demonstrations and the attack on the Congress, obligingly documented their doings on social media. This helped the authorities but when the FBI made the videos public, they received over 20,000 tips within a week. Ex-wives and disgruntled teenage offspring of the rioters found an avenue to express their disaffection.³⁶ Where friends and relatives failed, a white hat hacker group combed Parlor, the favored and now off-the-air vehicle for the Trump faithful to express their rage, for posts from the event and identified them for the FBI using social media.³⁷

Thus far, the only academic analysis of the participants of the January 6 events is the one compiled by Robert A. Pape and Kevin Ruby from the University of Chicago. What they found concerning the group as a whole is that the participants were as atypical a group of protestors as could be imagined. Their study of 193 people charged with entering the Capitol is the only partial database available as of writing this. Pape and Rudy's study offer four key findings.

First, in court documents filed to date, nearly all asserted that they were following Trump's orders to prevent Congress from certifying Joe Biden as the winner of the election. Second, very few of those arrested had any previous ties to extremist organizations. Of the 193 people studied, only 20 were members or supporters of organized far-right groups or militias. Third, in sharp contrast to people arrested in right-wing violence in recent years, those arrested in the Capitol were older — two-thirds of those ar-

36. Gurman, S. (2021). FBI has received more than 200,000 tips on Capitol rioters. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://on.wsj.com/3gyO737>. Knowles, H. and Villegas, P. (2021). Pushed to the edge by the Capitol riot, people are reporting their family and friends to the FBI. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3dMbofY>.

37. Greenberg, A. (2021). This site published every face from Parler's capitol riot videos. *Wired*. <https://bit.ly/3gzL76n>.

rested were over 35. The average age of arrestees was 40 — and 40 percent were small business owners or have regular white-collar employment. Unlike members of the organized groups, those arrested in the Capitol had little to gain and much to lose. Fourth and most surprisingly, few of those arrested are from heavily Republican areas. Most came from states and counties either comfortably won by Biden or from areas where the election was closely contested.³⁸

The affiliated: A failed revolution?

Just as the unaffiliated citizens who descended on Washington did not match the profiles of those who took part in previous large-scale demonstrations of the left and right, the groups who took part too are quite different from the protesting groups of earlier years. Dating back to George Lincoln Rockwell's ragtag followers in his American Nazi Party in the early 1960s through the revolutionary right-wing groups of the 1980s such as Robert Matthew's "Bruders Schweigan," more popularly known as the Order or the remarkably eccentric Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord, violent right-wing groups followed a certain profile.³⁹ Young, primarily working-class males with little more than high school educations are drawn together in response to a political or religious imperative. By contrast, the groups most closely associated with the violence of January 6 are a more diverse lot who share little more than a sense of alienation

38. Pape, R. and Ruby, K. (2021). The Capitol rioters aren't like other extremists. *Atlantic Magazine*. <https://bit.ly/3aDHOYe>.

39. On the American Nazi Party, see Frederick J. Simonelli, *American fuhrer: George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). On the Order, see Kevin Flynn and Gary Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood: Inside America's Racist Underground* (New York: Free Press, 1989). On CSA, see Kerry Noble, *Tabernacle of hate: Seduction into right-wing extremism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011). On the milieu as a whole, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical religion in America: millenarian movements from the far right to the children of Noah* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

and in-group almost tribal consciousness.⁴⁰ In this, they resemble street gangs rather than religiopolitical movements.⁴¹

As we have seen, President Trump's embrace of groups like the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, and the Three Percenters was not only noted but returned with considerable zeal. Since the Proud Boys explicitly put on notice that their intervention on his behalf might be needed after the election, we will limit the discussion to this group.

The Proud Boys brought together the self-proclaimed western chauvinism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and a pervasive sense of male grievance. Mixed together, these ideas create more of a lifestyle than a political movement or even a coherent ideology. Fieldwork among the Proud Boys demonstrates how amorphous the group truly is, with members evincing an acceptance of some, not all of the group's messages.⁴²

Being white is implicit rather than explicit in the Proud Boys. The overarching concept of western chauvinism is a racist appeal to white supremacy for some members but a more general idealization of western civilization for others. This ambiguity enables the creation of a racially diverse group both at the leadership and membership levels. What most unites them on an action level is a shared rejection of Islam, with a subsequent demonization of the religion and its followers. Most notably, some of its signature actions are the 2017 attack on Islamberg, a Muslim community in New York

40. On the tribal ethos in Middle Eastern and African groups as well as the transnational radical right, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism: Terrorism's Fifth Wave* (London: Routledge, 2010). Cf. Jeffrey Kaplan and Christopher Costa, "On Tribalism, Auxiliaries, Affiliates and Autonomous Cell Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 1 (January-March 2014): 13-44.

41. A point best made in Shannon E Reid and Matthew Valasik, *Alt-right gangs: A hazy shade of white* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020).

42. Kutner, S. (2020). *Swiping Right: The Allure of Hyper Masculinity and Cryptofascism for Men Who Join the Proud Boys*. ICCT. <https://bit.ly/2QyiYlw>.

state, and the 2018 demonstration at a mosque in Quebec, Canada, under the satirical rubric of Hijab Hoax Day, are but two examples.⁴³

Islamophobia is where the Proud Boys and the Trump administration intersect strongly. From a governmental perspective, this represented a sea change in policy. For three months after the 9/11 attacks, the US experienced an unprecedented wave of attacks on Muslims, including Sikhs that Americans mistakenly identified as Muslims. This stopped when President George Bush, speaking from the Washington mosque, stated forcefully that this was not acceptable in America. Backing words with deeds, he assigned the Justice Department to crack down hard on Islamophobic hate crime.⁴⁴ Put mildly, that is not how Trump's Justice Department rolled.⁴⁵

As federal investigations into the Capitol invasion began to go beyond the immediate events, the Proud Boys as an organization came under intense scrutiny. A few had been arrested for actually entering the Capitol building, but by March 2021, 13 arrests had been made, including the Proud Boys' leadership in four states, and charged with conspiracy – a far more serious set of charges than the illegal entry that served as the first set of charges faced by those who entered the Capitol.⁴⁶ This was so predictable that the Proud Boys' national leader, Enrique Tarrio, had urged his members to

43. Kutner, *Swiping Right: The Allure of Hyper Masculinity and Cryptofascism for Men Who Join the Proud Boys*. For more detailed coverage of the group's violence against Muslim targets, see "PROUD BOYS," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://bit.ly/32IJDih>. A more ideological take on the group can be found in Alexandra Minna Stern, *Proud boys and the white ethnostate: How the alt-right is warping the American imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019).

44. Kaplan, J. (2006). Islamophobia in America. *Terrorism & Political Violence*. 18/11: 1-33.

45. Disha, I., Cavendish, J. and King, R. (2011). Historical events and spaces of hate: Hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims in post-9/11 America. *Social problems*. 58/1: 21-46. Zapotosky, M., Lowery, W. and Berman, M. (2016). President Trump's Justice Dept. could see less scrutiny of police, more surveillance of Muslims. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/32Nntvk>. Patel, F. (2017). The Islamophobic Administration. *Brennan Center for Justice*. <https://bit.ly/3aD2xeH>.

46. Goldman, A. and Feuer, A. (2021). Proud boys' leaders in four states are charged in capitol riot. *New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3tKPLIT>.

avoid entering the building at all costs.⁴⁷ Long-time observers of the American far-right were unsurprised that, not only was Tarrío's advice ignored but shortly after the events in Washington, Tarrío was exposed as a long-time informant for the federal government.⁴⁸ The American radical right has always suffered from such ignominies.⁴⁹ The less than shocking news led to the disintegration of the organization at the national level, leaving only autonomous state and local groups to claim the Proud Boys name.

The founder of the Proud Boys was an intellectual with a decidedly off-center sense of humor. A founder of the left-wing Vice News, Gavin McInnes recalls that the Proud Boys, popularly noted for racism, Islamophobia and the Men's Rights movement, was, in reality, an alternative for young male millennials to escape awkward social isolation. The Proud Boys, he stated, were to be proud of Western Culture again.⁵⁰ Until he left the group in 2018, the Proud Boys were notable for its remarkably diverse all-male membership. McInnes strongly repudiated racism and anti-Semitism, saving his particular animus for Islam.

"Every time I think about [my friend] Sprague, [who was traumatized assisting in the cleanup of ground zero]", McInnes writes, "I think of what many call a 'religion of peace', where a good 25 percent think suicide bombing is sometimes or often justified. Twenty five percent of the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world is 375 million."⁵¹

47. Hyman, A. (2021). Proud boys' leader: entering the capitol was a 'bad idea. *NBC Miami*. <https://bit.ly/3et25Rj>.

48. Feuer, A. (2021). Proud boys' leader secretly cooperated with F.B.I. and police. *New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3gCKDN6>.

49. For chapter and verse, see Kaplan, J. (1993). The Anti-Cult Movement in America: An History of Culture Perspective. *Syzygy: A Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*. 2/3-4: 267-96.

50. McInnes, G. (2016). Introducing: The Proud Boys. *Taki's Magazine*. <https://bit.ly/3sPzNFQ>.

51. The quote is extracted from his biography, Gavin McInnes, *The Death of Cool: From Teenage Rebellion to the Hangover of Adulthood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013). Quoted in Kutner, *Swiping Right: The Allure of Hyper Masculinity and Cryptofascism for Men Who Join the Proud Boys*, <https://bit.ly/3viiH57>.

Charlottesville splintered the organization and led to McInnes' departure. The Proud Boys had already been declared a terrorist group in its native Canada, but the involvement of a few Proud Boys members in the open racism and anti-Semitism of the Unite the Right rally – not to mention the violence and murder of a young woman – was too much for the group.⁵² The Biden administration's hardline on the group's involvement in the Capitol invasion, combined with the discrediting of its most recent national leader, Enrique Tarrio, may well spell the beginning of the end for Proud Boys as a group. In the aftermath of the January 6 events, their position and future are quite uncertain.

Conclusion: What next?

Clearly, what took place in Washington better fits the definition of an insurrection rather than a coup, the term used extensively by the media. A coup is a military takeover. While a few off-duty and former soldiers took part in the event, the military was no better disposed to Trump remaining in power than most Democrats. An insurrection is a popular revolt, and that is what took place that day in Washington. Most insurrections fail, and this was no different. We, therefore, close this study with some observations about what the events of January 6 portend.

For the Insurrectionists

In 1970, Dodge Challenger produced a television advertisement where a fat, cigar-chomping, and utterly stereotypical southern sheriff intones, "Boy, you in a heap of trouble." Some, however, are in more trouble than others. The determining factors are: first, whether they were affiliated or unaffiliated; second, what actions they can be proved to have undertaken in the Capitol building; and third, where in the US they reside.

52. Kutner (n.d.) *Swiping Right: The Allure of Hyper Masculinity and Cryptofascism for Men Who Join the Proud Boys*. <https://bit.ly/32IVfSg>.

In the weeks immediately following the violence, the Justice Department floated a trial balloon with the suggestion that not all who invaded the Capitol would be prosecuted, but only those who committed the most serious offenses.⁵³ The justification for the idea was the large number of defendants involved, the burden on Justice Department resources and the federal mandate that defendants be granted a speedy trial. However, when the videos of the violence that took place inside the building became public, combined with the news that over 140 officers were injured and one killed, that idea crashed.⁵⁴

The next question is: What will they be charged with? Around 400 people have been charged. The National Public Radio (NPR) provides a full list of the persons charged, along with a commentary on the evidence against each and the precise charges filed so far. Prosecutors emphasize that as the investigation continues, additional charges may and likely will be levied. The full list is well worth examining, as it reveals the complexity and diversity of the crowd.

In alphabetical order, the first on the list is Rasha N. Abual-Ragheb, a 40-year-old woman from Fairfield, New Jersey. Prosecutors cite an FBI affidavit saying that photographs on Abual-Ragheb's phone placed her inside the Capitol building on the day of the attack. A Capitol Police officer who looked at the photograph confirmed to authorities that it was taken on the Senate side of the Capitol building. According to the affidavit, a Facebook page the FBI has confirmed belonged to Abual-Ragheb in November 2020 showed her participating in Facebook and Telegram group chats with members of the New Jersey chapter of the American Patriot 3 percent, a far-

53. Castronuovo, C. (2021). Justice Department, FBI debating whether to charge all those involved in Capitol riots: WaPo. *The Hill*. <https://bit.ly/3niY2Lm>.

54. Jackman, T. (2021). Police union says 140 officers injured in Capitol riot. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3gB6nIW>.

right anti-government militia movement. In one of those chats, a user who the FBI believes was Abual-Ragheb said that a civil war was coming and that people needed to show support and rise up and fight for the Constitution. During an FBI interview, Abual-Ragheb allegedly told agents she was born in Lebanon and fled to Jordan when she was a child to escape the civil war there. She told agents she had been in the US for 21 years and was a Trump supporter, attended his rallies and was blocked from Facebook and Twitter for some of her pro-Trump postings.

The federal charges levied thus far are: Entering and remaining in a restricted building, disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building; violent entry and disorderly conduct in a Capitol building; parading, demonstrating, or picketing in a Capitol building.⁵⁵

By contrast, Christopher John Worrell, a 49-year-old man from Naples, Florida, is a Proud Boys member. In a criminal complaint, an FBI tipster alleges that Facebook videos show that Worrell is a member of Proud Boys who traveled to Washington with his girlfriend to participate in the riot. Worrell became “extremely agitated” when the FBI visited his home in Naples, Fla., on January 18, and he denied entering the Capitol building or committing any crimes. “The Proud Boys are not a racist white supremacist group like the media tries to portray,” Worrell told FBI agents, according to the complaint. According to court, Worrell’s girlfriend told the FBI that they carpooled to Washington with other Proud Boys members. The large group used radio communication devices to stay in contact as they marched down Constitution Avenue to the Capitol documents.

The criminal complaint includes multiple photos depicting Worrell sporting Proud Boys logos, including his tactical vest, flashing the “OK” hand gesture now connected with white supremacy, and unleashing a stream of pepper

55. NPR Staff (2021). The Capitol siege: The arrested and their stories. *NPR*. <https://n.pr/3vh9BFB>.

spray gel off-camera. “The likely intended target of Worrell’s pepper spray assault was the line of law enforcement officers present in these photographs,” the complaint alleges. Worrell’s attorney told CNN his client went to Washington and marched to the Capitol because he was inspired by former President Trump’s “invitation” to do so. In 2009, Worrell was charged with impersonating a police officer after deputies accused him of flashing a gold badge at a young woman to pull her over. Worrell had a loaded handgun, handcuffs, knives, and boxes of ammunition in his car at the time, according to a 2009 news release from the Collier County Sheriff’s Office in Florida. Court records show Worrell pleaded no contest and was sentenced in May 2010 to three years’ probation and two years of community supervision. Community supervision is a stricter form of probation in Florida that can require an individual to remain under supervision at home or within the community.⁵⁶

The charges he is facing now are: Knowingly entering or remaining in any restricted building or grounds without lawful authority; knowingly engaging in disorderly or disruptive conduct in any restricted building or grounds; violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds; obstruction of justice/Congress; knowingly engaging in the act of physical violence in any restricted building or grounds.⁵⁷

As the cases play out, Worrell and other affiliated individuals can expect further and more serious charges, most notably, sedition.⁵⁸ Sedition charges alone carry a 20-year sentence.⁵⁹ Sedition charges would be included in addition to the other current charges, and this could be added for violence against police and, very likely, homicide for those involved in the death of Officer Brian D. Sicknick.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Benner, K. (2021). Justice Dept. Said to be weighing sedition charges against oath keepers. *New York Times*. <https://nyti.ms/3viiPS9>.

59. Blake, A. (2021). Sedition charges for Capitol rioters? What it would mean, historically speaking. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/32IVlt6>.

Sedition charges are the last resort and have an extremely poor track record in US courts. The last major sedition trial was held at Fort Smith, Arkansas in 1989. It brought together a constellation of right-wing leaders of the day, including Aryan Nations leader Richard Butler and Church of Israel leader Dan Gaymon. All were acquitted and, reportedly, one of the jurors married one of the defendants after the trial.⁶⁰ There is probably little appetite for another Fort Smith fiasco among federal prosecutors.

What about Trump?

If those who entered the Capitol are in a heap of trouble, Trump is in a larger heap of trouble. This reality is surely at the root of his unprecedented resistance to surrendering office, although mental aberrations certainly played a role.⁶¹ Already under investigation in New York for his business practices and tax avoidance in New York, under audit from the IRS for evading tax payments and extraordinary refund claims, and facing no less than three sexual assault cases, Trump's post-election actions have brought on criminal investigations in Washington and Georgia so far, with the promise of more to come.

In a crowning irony given Trump's history of fending off criticism by filing lawsuits, there are now no less than 29 pending civil suits against him – a number that is sure to rise significantly.⁶² His lawyers are deserting him in droves, he is banned from social media and only Fox News covers his frequent commentaries and complaints, his properties have become toxic since January 6,⁶³ and his creditors, most notably Deutsche Bank, are holding \$340 million in loans now coming due. The bank is now reportedly willing to turn over his banking records

60. Kaplan, J. (1995). Right – Wing Violence in North America. *Terrorism & Political Violence*. 7/1: 53-58.

61. Frank, J. (2018). *Trump on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President*. New York: Penguin.

62. Mihm, K. Apkon, J. and Venkatachalam, S. (2021). Litigation Tracker: Pending Criminal and Civil Cases Against Donald Trump. *Just Security*. <https://bit.ly/3aCF7WF>. Josh Marcus, “Here are all 29 lawsuits Trump is facing now that he’s left office,” *Independent*, March 19, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3nl9XYY>.

63. Dawsey, J. (2021). David A. Fahrenthold and Jonathan O’Connell: Backlash to riot at Capitol hobbles Trump’s business as banks, partners flee the brand. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3dPFgrX>.

to federal prosecutors. ⁶⁴ His full tax records, sought by New York prosecutors since 2016, have already been turned over. ⁶⁵ Undaunted by reality, he has formed a presidential election committee and vowed to run again in 2024. ⁶⁶

George T. Conway III, one of his legions of former friends, partners, and advisors, writes that his wrongdoing is so pervasive that no single prosecutor or team of prosecutors could deal with it all. Instead, he suggests that the Justice Department employ no less than three special prosecutors tasked with examining his Russian connections and Russia's activities on his behalf in 2016 and 2020, his attempts to involve Ukraine in the 2020 election, his systematic violations of campaign finance laws, his involvement in bank, insurance and tax fraud, and finally, his post-election activities culminating in his summoning his followers to Washington and exhorting them to attack the capital. ⁶⁷

How will Trump's story end? Historians are poor seers, but it would be wise for the Biden administration, which has already cut off Trump's access to classified information and intelligence briefings, would do well to seize his passport and keep him off flights to Russia where he may, at last, be granted permission to build his much-desired Moscow hotel and begin anew unfettered by the restraints of US law. ⁶⁸

64. Ponciano, J. (2020). Report: Deutsche Bank 'eager' to dump \$340 million in loans to Trump businesses after election. *Forbes*. <https://bit.ly/32No0xk>.

65. Jacobs, S. Fahrenthold, D., O'Connell, J. and Hamburger, T. (2021). Trump's tax returns have been turned over to Manhattan district attorney. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3gyRfvP>.

66. Kumar, A. (2020). Trump tells allies he will run in 2024, but hints he may back out. *Politico*. <https://politi.co/3aDRHVQ>.

67. Conway III, G. (2021). Former president, private citizen and, perhaps, criminal defendant: Donald Trump's new reality. *Washington Post*. <https://wapo.st/3gz6KUw>.

68. Michael Cohen, his former attorney, writes that Trump's involvement in Russia and lionization of Vladimir Putin was motivated more by his desire to build a Trump Tower in Moscow than by ideology. Cohen, M. (2020). *Disloyal: A Memoir*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing. Cf. Alexander, D. and Behar, R. (2019). The Truth behind Trump tower Moscow: how Trump risked everything for a (relatively) tiny deal. *Forbes*. <https://bit.ly/3gxiO8O>.

About the Author

Dr Jeffrey Kaplan is an American academic who has written and edited 20 books and 90 articles on racism, religious violence, terrorism and the far right. His most recent monograph is *Apocalypse, Revolution and Terrorism: From the Sicari to the American Revolt Against the Modern World*, which was published by Routledge in 2019. He was an Associate Professor of Religion at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh (USA) and a member of the Board of Academic Advisors of the university’s Institute for the Study of Religion, Violence and Memory. Dr Kaplan sits on the editorial boards of the journals *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Nova Religio* and the *Pomegranate*. He is currently a Visiting Professor at the Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences, Óbudai University and a Visiting Fellow at the Danube Institute in Budapest, Hungary. He has also taught at Habib University (Karachi, Pakistan), King Fahd Security College (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) and Jilin University, School of International Relations and Public Affairs, (Changchun, China).

