

The Senate trial of Donald Trump: The questions that must be answered

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The Senate impeachment trial of Donald Trump, which begins today, arises out of an event without precedent in the history of the United States: an attempted coup d'état by the president of the United States, aimed at overturning the result of an election, violently suppressing Congress and establishing a one-man dictatorship. In the course of this attempted coup, the lives of senators, representatives and even the vice president were threatened. Several people were killed.

There is no question that Donald Trump is guilty of not only “high crimes and misdemeanors.” He has committed felonies of the most serious character. His impeachment should be followed by his indictment on criminal charges, trial, conviction and lifelong imprisonment. His many co-conspirators should be identified, subjected to criminal proceedings and thrown into high-security prisons along with him.

But this is unlikely to be the result of the Senate trial. While the 80-page Democratic House managers’ brief released last week lays out a detailed factual case documenting that Trump led a months-long campaign to prepare a coup d’état, the Democrats who control the Senate—not to mention President Biden—have no stomach for this fight. Although Trump’s conspiracy was either directly supported or facilitated by the Senate Republicans, the Democrats continue to bow politely before this right-wing riffraff and address them as “colleagues.”

To the extent that the Democrats’ trial strategy is directed to the Republican senators—i.e., persuading them to convict Trump—the proceedings will evade what should be its central purpose: to expose before the entire country the criminal conspiracy led by Trump and involving sections of the state, including the military-police apparatus and powerful sections of the corporate-financial elite.

There are a number of obvious questions that relate to

the operation of the conspiracy that must be answered, including:

- How was it possible that the Capitol Police, the DC National Guard, the FBI and other federal security forces were so completely unprepared for what was known in advance to be a violent attack?

- Why was there a virtual stand-down of Capitol security forces despite well documented plans for violence, involving fascistic militias like the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers?

- With whom were the leaders of the mob in contact during the assault? Who visited the Trump White House in the days leading up to the attempted coup? How did the fascists know the layout of the Capitol building?

But there are more fundamental questions that no one is asking, let alone answering. First and foremost: If the coup succeeded, what was the plan?

The Democrats’ own indictment lays out in extensive detail the months-long conspiracy to overturn the results of the election that culminated on January 6. Trump organized a mob to storm the Capitol and stop the congressional certification of the results of the election. This is precisely true. But if they succeeded in seizing hostages, what were they going to do?

And what were the forces within the state involved in this operation? In the months before the coup, Trump made critical changes to the military aimed at facilitating it. The military has just initiated a “stand-down” supposedly aimed at addressing the proliferation of “domestic extremism” within its ranks. Who within the military supported the operation, and what were their roles?

Who, moreover, was providing the financial backing?

As is well known, in order to uncover the roots of a criminal conspiracy, it is necessary to “follow the money.” Trump’s own cabinet was stocked with billionaires, including individuals like his former education secretary, Betsy DeVos, the sister of Blackwater founder Erik Prince. The DeVos family is known to have provided funding for right-wing demonstrations in Michigan to demand an end to restrictions on the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. What is the connection between the fascistic mob on January 6 and high-level support within the ruling class?

Finally, who were the Republican politicians and officials, at both the federal and state levels, who worked with members and leaders of the various fascist militia and vigilante organizations?

Many of the senators sitting as jurors in the trial either facilitated or directly participated in the events underlying it. This includes Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley, who led the drive to reject the Electoral College vote on January 6. It also includes all those, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who helped Trump promote the lie of a rigged election by refusing for weeks to acknowledge Biden’s victory.

The *New York Times* published a report yesterday, “‘Its Own Domestic Army’: How the GOP Allied Itself With Militants,” reporting on the political alignment of the Republican Party with fascistic militias involved not only in the January 6 insurrection, but also the plot to kidnap and assassinate the Governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, prior to the election.

The *Times* notes:

Following signals from President Donald J. Trump—who had tweeted “LIBERATE MICHIGAN!” after an earlier show of force in Lansing—Michigan’s Republican Party last year welcomed the support of newly emboldened paramilitary groups and other vigilantes. Prominent party members formed bonds with militias or gave tacit approval to armed activists using intimidation in a series of rallies and confrontations around the state. That intrusion into the Statehouse now looks like a portent of the assault halfway across the country months later at the United States Capitol.

throughout the country, along with local sheriffs and police departments, in facilitating and supporting the January 6 insurrection?

The Democrats oppose the full exposure of the conspiracy. Biden is seeking to distance himself completely from the Senate trial. “Biden’s strategy for Trump’s impeachment: Sit back and STFU,” noted a headline in *Politico* yesterday. “The Biden team,” *Politico* wrote, “has shut down question after question about where Biden stands on this week’s trial, even with its massive historical, constitutional and political ramifications. On Monday, press secretary Jen Psaki wouldn’t even say whether the president would receive daily updates on the trial’s progress.” It continued:

“The last thing Americans want to see right now is that conversation from the podium,” Karen Finney, a former Hillary Clinton campaign adviser and Democratic strategist, said of the White House talking about impeachment. “Part of what they’re trying to do here is say ‘it’s a new day it’s a new administration.’ They’re not going to use the White House and the tools of the presidency to engage in politics.”

In other words, it is necessary to “move on.” In particular, the Democrats want to cover up the complicity of its “colleagues” in the Republican Party, which has become an incubator for fascist forces and their integration into the political establishment.

What Trump expresses is the deep-rooted, anti-democratic and fascistic tendencies embedded in the state and the entire ruling class. The Democrats have no desire to expose the extent of the conspiracy, because this would involve an exposure of the underlying political and social conditions of which the Trump administration is an expression.



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What was the involvement of Republican Party officials