

# The attack on Paul Pelosi and the crisis of American democracy

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There are many factual details about the violent assault on Paul Pelosi, husband of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, early Friday morning in their San Francisco home, which remain to be determined: what security system was in effect and why Pelosi was entirely unguarded; how the attacker was able to gain entry without setting off an alarm; whether the man arrested for the assault, David DePape, had any accomplices or assistance.

But of the political significance of this attempted murder, there can be no doubt: The growing threat of fascist violence in America, fanned by Donald Trump and the Republican Party, has reached the point that the husband of the top Democrat in Congress, the second in line of succession to the presidency, was beaten within an inch of his life.

Trump & Co. are the moral authors of this attack, whether or not DePape was assisted, directed or manipulated in his actions. An endless deluge of violent propaganda targeting Pelosi has been a staple of Republican Party election appeals for more than a decade, and this has escalated since Trump's rise to the position of largely unchallenged leader of the right-wing party.

DePape used both the language and the tactics of those who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021. After encountering Paul Pelosi, he reportedly began shouting, "Where's Nancy?", the same question chanted by the fascist mob as they ransacked the Speaker's offices in the Capitol, while threatening her with death. DePape came equipped with zip ties, similar to those carried by many fascists as they entered the Capitol, hoping to take prisoners. He evidently planned to use them on Pelosi if he found her.

The first reviews of his social media postings suggest that DePape, once an advocate of the Green Party and

nudism, had moved drastically to the right and become a devotee of fascistic conspiracy theories such as QAnon. He was a fervent supporter of Trump's "stop the steal" campaign and election denialism, which has the backing of more than half of all Republican candidates for federal and major statewide offices in the 2022 elections.

There is every reason to believe that just as the 2020 kidnap-murder plot against Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer was an anticipation of the January 6 attack on the Capitol, the potentially deadly assault on the Pelosi household is an anticipation of more violence to come, during and after Election Day 2022.

If the Republican Party loads the weapons and supplies the targets for such attacks, however, it is the Democratic Party which makes it possible for them to go forward. That is the meaning of a 2022 election campaign in which Biden, Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and other leading Democrats have sought to downplay the threat of fascist violence, describing their Republican opponents as their "friends" and "colleagues" and even declaring, as Biden did after the January 6 attack, that he wanted a "strong Republican Party."

In eight days, Biden may well get his wish, as the Republican Party, dominated by candidates who deny the very legitimacy of his presidency, could take control of the House of Representatives and may gain a majority in the Senate as well. Republicans are threatening to overturn Democratic-controlled state governments, not only in battleground states like Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, but in traditional Democratic strongholds like New York and Oregon.

How is it possible that a party indelibly associated with the first-ever attempt to overthrow a presidential election and negate the decision of American voters is

in a position to return to power? How is it possible that the Republican Party can make only the most perfunctory response to the attempt to kill the top congressional Democrat, including total silence from Trump himself, without fear of the consequences?

The responsibility must be laid at the doorstep of the Democratic Party and the Biden administration, which have deliberately disarmed the American people in the face of the mounting threat to what little remains of democracy.

Even on the infrequent occasions when Biden and the Democrats have raised the escalating threat to democratic rights, as in Biden's solitary speech during the 2022 campaign, the issue is quickly dropped. In the two months since Biden declared that "an extremism ... threatens the very foundation of our Republic," he has hardly said a word on the subject.

As for the January 6 attacks, while hundreds of violent foot soldiers have been prosecuted, the top organizers have gone scot-free, and many mid-level operatives, who helped finance and conduct the attack, are running as Republican candidates in 2022, in states ranging from Pennsylvania to California.

Thousands of death threats have already been recorded against candidates, officeholders and election workers, the vast majority from the fascist right. Since Trump's election in 2016, the number of death threats against members of Congress alone is up by 967 percent.

The response of the Biden administration is to spread complacency or to blame the threat of violence on "Russian disinformation," in that way seeking to blunt popular concern over the fascist danger and leverage it to bolster its war policies in Ukraine.

Even when the attack on Paul Pelosi forced him to address the subject, President Biden could not bring himself to declare that Trump and his acolytes want violence and actively seek to instigate it. "What makes us think that one party can talk about stolen elections, COVID being a hoax, that it's all a bunch of lies, and it not affect people who may not be so well balanced?" he said at a Pennsylvania rally.

DePape is certainly an unbalanced, perhaps insane, individual. But he reflects the social reality of a country that seems more and more unbalanced and insane, in a fundamental historical and class sense: a tiny handful of the super-rich monopolize the wealth produced by

hundreds of millions of working people, while at the same time using their political monopoly, through the two-party system, to block any challenge from below.

The Democratic Party is opposed to any movement from below against the ongoing threat of fascist violence and dictatorship in the US. Its principal concern over the possibility that the Republicans take control of Congress is that it not impact the US-NATO war against Russia. Nothing will divert Biden from this conflict, critical to the interests of Wall Street and American imperialism, but arousing zero enthusiasm among working people.

The central task facing American workers, and the only way to defeat the mounting threat of dictatorship, fascist violence, and imperialist war, is to break out of the political straitjacket of the corporate-controlled two-party system, and to take the road of independent political struggle for a socialist and internationalist program.



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