

The January 6 Insurrection Hoax

The following is adapted from a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on September 20, 2021, during a Center for Constructive Alternatives conference on “Critical American Elections.”

Notwithstanding all the hysterical rhetoric surrounding the events of January 6, 2021, two critical things stand out. The first is that what happened was much more hoax than insurrection. In fact, in my judgment, it wasn’t an insurrection at all.

An “insurrection,” as the dictionary will tell you, is a violent uprising against a government or other established authority. Unlike the violent riots that swept the country in the summer of 2020—riots that caused some \$2 billion in property damage and claimed more than 20 lives—the January 6 protest at the Capitol lasted a few hours, caused minimal damage, and the only person directly killed was an unarmed female Trump supporter who was shot by a Capitol Hill Police officer. It was, as Tucker Carlson said shortly after the event, a political protest that “got out of hand.”

At the rally preceding the events in question, Donald Trump had suggested that people march to the Capitol “peacefully and patriotically”—these were his exact words—in order to make their voices heard. He did not incite a riot; he stirred up a crowd. Was that, given the circumstances, imprudent? Probably. Was it an effort to overthrow the government? Hardly.

I know this is not the narrative that we have all been instructed to parrot. Indeed, to listen to the establishment media and our political masters, the January 6 protest was a dire threat to the very fabric of our nation: the worst assault on “our democracy” since 9/11, since Pearl Harbor, since the Civil War! (Really: Joe Biden said last April that the January 6 protest at the Capitol was “the worst attack attack on our democracy since the Civil War.”)

Note that phrase “our democracy”: Nancy Pelosi, Joe Biden, and various talking heads have repeated it ad nauseam. But you do not need an advanced degree in hermeneutics to understand that what they mean by “our democracy” is their oligarchy. Similarly, when Nancy Pelosi talks about “the people’s house,” she doesn’t mean a house that welcomes riff-raff like you and me.

I just alluded to Ashli Babbitt, the unarmed supporter of Donald Trump who was shot and killed on January 6. Her fate brings me to the second critical thing to understand about the January 6 insurrection hoax. Namely, that it was not a stand-alone event.

On the contrary, what happened that afternoon, and what happened afterwards, is only intelligible when seen as a chapter in the long-running effort to discredit and, ultimately, to dispose of Donald Trump—as well as what Hillary Clinton might call the “deplorable” populist sentiment that brought Trump to power.

In other words, to understand the January 6 insurrection hoax, you also have to understand that other long-running hoax, the Russia collusion hoax. The story of that hoax begins back in 2015, when the resources of the federal government were first mobilized to spy on the Trump campaign, to frame various people close to Trump, and eventually to launch a full-throated criminal investigation of the Trump administration.

From before Trump took office, the Russia collusion hoax was used as a pretext to create a parallel administration shadowing the elected administration. Remember the Steele Dossier, the fantastical document concocted by the “well-regarded” British spy Christopher Steele? We know now that it was the only relevant predicate for ordering FISA warrants to spy on Carter Page and other American citizens.

But in truth, the Steele Dossier was just opposition dirt covertly paid for by the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign. From beginning to end, it was a tissue of lies and fabrications. Everyone involved knew all along it was garbage—rumors and fantasies fed to a gullible Steele by shady Russian sources. But it was nonetheless used to deploy, illegally, the awesome coercive power of the state against a presidential candidate of whom the ruling bureaucracy and their favored candidate disapproved.

The public learned that the Democratic National Committee paid for the manufactured evidence only because of a court order. James Comey, the disgraced former director of the FBI, publicly denied knowing who paid for it, but emails from a year earlier prove that he knew all along. And what was the penalty for lying in Comey’s case? He got a huge book deal and toured the country denouncing Trump to the gleeful satisfaction of his anti-Trump audiences.

What was true of Comey was also true of the entire intelligence apparatus, from former CIA Director John Brennan to Adam Schiff and other Democratic members of the House Intelligence Committee to senior members of the FBI. All these people said publicly that they had seen clear evidence of collusion with Russia. But they admitted under oath behind closed doors that they hadn't.

General Mike Flynn had his career ruined and was bankrupted as part of a political vendetta. Meanwhile James Comey, Andrew McCabe, Lisa Page, John Brennan, Peter Strzok, and all the rest of the crew at the FBI, the CIA, and other intel agencies suffered nothing. When it came to light that an FBI lawyer altered an email in order to help get a FISA warrant—in other words, that he doctored evidence to spy on a political opponent, which is a felony—he got probation. Andrew McCabe, meanwhile, a former FBI deputy director, just got his pension restored notwithstanding the fact that an Inspector General's report concluded that he lied multiple times under oath.

The recent news that Special Counsel John Durham has indicted Michael Sussman, a lawyer who covertly worked for the Clinton campaign and lied to the FBI, is welcome news. Granted, it is too early to say where Durham's investigation will ultimately go, but Sussman's indictment seems like small beer given the rampant higher-level corruption that saturated the Russia Collusion hoax.

At least 74 million citizens voted for Donald Trump in 2020, which is at least 11 million more than voted for him in 2016. Many of those voters are profoundly disillusioned and increasingly angry about this entire story—the years-long Robert Mueller “investigation,” the two impeachments of President Trump, the cloud of unknowing that surrounds the 2020 election, and the many questions that have emerged not only from the January 6 protest at the Capitol but, even more, from the government's response to that protest.

Which brings me back to Ashli Babbitt, the long-serving Air Force vet who was shot and killed by a nervous Capitol Hill Police officer. Babbitt was a useful prop when the media was in overdrive describing the January 6 events as an “armed insurrection” in which wild supporters of Donald Trump, supposedly at his instigation, attacked the Capitol with the intention of overturning the 2020 election.

According to that narrative, five people, including Babbitt, died in the skirmish. Moreover, it was said, Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick was bludgeoned to death by a raging Trump supporter wielding a fire extinguisher. That gem of a story about the fire extinguisher, reported in our former paper of record, The New York Times, was instantly picked up by other media outlets and spread like a Chinese virus.

Of course, it is absolutely critical to the Democratic Party narrative that the January 6 incident be made to seem as violent and crazed as possible. Hence the crazed comparisons to 9/11, Pearl Harbor, and the Civil War. Only thus can pro-Trump Americans be excluded from “our democracy” by being branded as “domestic extremists” if not, indeed, “domestic terrorists.”

The Sixth Amendment of the Constitution accords American citizens the right to a speedy trial. But most of the political prisoners of January 6—many of whom have been kept in solitary confinement—are still waiting to be brought to trial. And although the media was full of predictions that they would be found guilty of criminal sedition, none has.

Indeed, the prosecution’s cases seem to be falling apart. Most of the hundreds who have been arrested are being charged with trespassing. Another charge being leveled against them is “disrupting an official proceeding.” This is a felony charge designed not for ceremonial procedures like the January 6 certification of the vote, but rather for disrupting Congressional inquiries—for example, by shredding documents relevant to a Congressional investigation. It originated during the George W. Bush administration to deal with the Enron case.

The indisputable fact about January 6 is that although five people died at or near the Capitol on that day or soon thereafter, none of these deaths was brought about by the protesters. The shot fired Capitol Police Officer Michael Byrd that hit Ashli Babbitt in the neck and killed her was the only shot fired at the Capitol that day. No guns were recovered from the Capitol on January 6. Zero.

The liberal commentator Glenn Greenwald further diminished the “armed insurrection” meme in an important column last February titled “The False and Exaggerated Claims Still Being Spread About the Capitol Riot.” The title says it all. Kevin Greeson, Greenwald notes, was killed not by the protesters but died of a heart attack outside the Capitol. Benjamin Philips, the founder of a pro-Trump

website called Trumparoo, died of a stroke that day. Rosanne Boyland, another Trump supporter, was reported by The New York Times to have been inadvertently “killed in a crush of fellow rioters during their attempt to fight through a police line.” But later video shows that, far from that, the police pushed protesters on top of Boyland and would not allow fellow protesters to pull her out.

Four of the five who died, then, were pro-Trump protesters. And the fifth? Well, that was Officer Sicknick—also a Trump supporter, as it turned out—who, contrary to the false report from The New York Times that went viral, went home, told his family he felt fine, but died a day later from, as The Washington Post eventually and grudgingly reported, “natural causes.” No fire extinguishers were involved in his demise.

The January 6 insurrection hoax prompts lots of questions.

Why, for example, did the government mobilize 26,000 federal troops from all across the country to surround “the people’s house” following January 6? Why were those troops subjected to loyalty tests, with those discovered to be Trump supporters sent packing?

Why is there some 14,000 hours of video footage of the event on January 6 that the government refuses to release? What are they afraid of letting the public see? More scenes of security guards actually opening doors and politely ushering in protestors? More pictures of FBI informants (read: “fomenters”) covertly salted among the crowd?

My own view is that turning Washington into an armed camp was mostly theater. There was no threat that the Washington police could not have handled. But it was also a show of force and an act of intimidation. The message was: “We’re in charge now, rubes, and don’t you forget it.”

In truth, there is little threat of domestic terrorism in this country. But there is plenty of domestic conservatism. And that conservatism is the real focus of the establishment’s ire.

It is important to note that while the government provides the muscle for this war on dissent, the elite culture at large is a willing accomplice. Consider, for

example, the open letter, signed by more than 500 “publishing professionals” (authors, editors, designers, and so on), calling on the industry to reject books written by anyone who had anything to do with the Trump administration.

These paragons pledged to do whatever they could to stop “enriching the monsters among us.” But here’s their problem: approximately 75 million people voted for Trump. That’s a lot of monsters.

Many people have been quoting Benjamin Franklin’s famous response when asked what sort of government they had come up with at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. “A republic,” Franklin said, “if you can keep it.” Right now, it looks like we couldn’t. It looks as if the American constitutional republic has given way, at least temporarily, to an American oligarchy.

As the years go by, historians, if the censors allow them access to the documents and give them leave to publish their findings, may well count the 2016 presidential election as the last fair and open democratic election in U.S. history. I know we are not supposed to say that. I know that the heads of Twitter and Facebook and other woke guardians of the status quo call this view “The Big Lie” and do all they can to suppress it. But every honest person knows that the 2020 election was tainted.

The forces responsible for the taint had tried before. Hitherto, their efforts had met with only limited success. But a perfect storm of forces conspired to make 2020 the first oligarchic installation of a president. It would not have happened, I think, absent the panic over the Chinese virus. But that panic, folded in a lover’s embrace by the Democratic establishment, was not only a splendid pretext to clamp down on civil liberties; it also provided an inarguable excuse to alter the rules for elections in several key states.

“Inarguable” is not quite the right word. There could have been plenty of arguments, and many lawsuits, against the way the executive branch in these states usurped the constitutionally guaranteed prerogative of state legislatures to set the election rules when they intervened to allow massive mail-in voting. But the Trump administration, though foreseeing and complaining about the executive interventions, did too little too late to make a difference.

Among the many sobering realities that the 2020 election brought home is that in our current and particular form of oligarchy, the people do have a voice, but it is a

voice that is everywhere pressured, cajoled, shaped, and bullied. The people also have a choice, but only among a roster of candidates approved by the elite consensus.

The central fact to appreciate about Donald Trump is that he was elected president without the permission, and over the incredulous objections, of the bipartisan oligarchy that governs us. That was his unforgivable offense. Trump was the greatest threat in history to the credentialed class and the globalist administrative state upon which they feed. Representatives of that oligarchy tried for four years to destroy Trump. Remember that the first mention of impeachment came 19 minutes after his inauguration, an event that was met not only by a widespread Democratic boycott and hysterical claims by Nancy Pelosi and others that the election had been hijacked, but also by riots in Washington, D.C. that saw at least six policemen injured, numerous cars torched, and other property destroyed.

You will search in vain for media or other ruling class denunciations of that violence, or for bulletins from corporate America advising their customers of their solidarity with the newly installed Trump administration. As the commentator Howie Carr noted, some riots are more equal than others. Some get you the approval of people like Nancy Pelosi and at least the grudging acceptance of oligarchs of the other party. Others get the FBI sweeping the country for “domestic terrorists” and the lords of Big Tech canceling people who defend the protesters’ cause.

Someday—maybe someday soon—this witches’ sabbath, this festival of scapegoating, and what George Orwell called the “hideous ecstasy” of hate will be at an end. Perhaps someday people will be aghast, and some will be ashamed, of what they did to the president of the United States and people who supported him: proposing, for instance, to put Senator Ted Cruz on a “no fly” list, or Simon & Schuster canceling Senator Josh Hawley’s book contract. Donald Trump is the Emmanuel Goldstein (the designated principal enemy of the totalitarian state Oceania in “1984”) of the movement. But minor public enemies are legion. Anyone harboring “Trumpist” inclinations is suspect, hence the widespread calls for “deprogramming” his supporters, who are routinely said to be “marching toward sedition.”

Michael Barone, one of our most perceptive political commentators, got it right

when he wrote of the rapid movement “from impeaching incitement to canceling conservatism.” That is the path our oligarchs are inviting us to travel now, criminalizing political dissent and transforming policy differences into a species of heresy. You don’t debate heretics, after all. You seek to destroy them.

Donald Trump’s accomplishments as president were nothing less than stunning. Trump was, and is, a rude force of nature. He accomplished an immense amount. But he lacked one thing. Some say it was self-discipline or finesse. I agree with a friend of mine who suggested that Trump’s critical flaw was a deficit in guile. That sounds odd, no doubt, since Trump is supposed to be the tough guy who mastered “the art of the deal.” But I think my friend is probably right. Trump seems never to have discerned what a viper’s nest our politics has become for anyone who is not a paid-up member of The Club.

Maybe Trump understands this now. I have no insight into that question. I am pretty confident, though, that the 74 million people who voted for him understand it deeply. It’s another reason that The Club should be wary of celebrating its victory too expansively.

Friedrich Hayek took one of the two epigraphs for his book, *The Road to Serfdom*, from the philosopher David Hume. “It is seldom,” Hume wrote, “that liberty of any kind is lost all at once.” Much as I admire Hume, I wonder whether he got this quite right. Sometimes, I would argue, liberty is erased almost instantaneously.

I’d be willing to wager that Joseph Hackett, confronted with Hume’s observation, would express similar doubts. I would be happy to ask Mr. Hackett myself, but he is inaccessible. If the ironically titled “Department of Justice” has its way, he will be inaccessible for a long, long time—perhaps as long as 20 years.

Joseph Hackett, you see, is a 51-year-old Trump supporter and member of an organization called the “Oath Keepers,” a group whose members have pledged to “defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic.” The FBI does not like the Oath Keepers. They arrested its leader in January and have picked up many other members in the months since. Hackett came from his home in Florida to join the Trump January 6 rally. According to court documents, he entered the Capitol at 2:45 that afternoon and left some nine minutes later, at 2:54. The next day, he went home. On May 28, he was apprehended by the FBI and indicted on a long list of charges, including conspiracy, obstruction of an official proceeding,

destruction of government property, and illegally entering a restricted building.

As far as I have been able to determine, no evidence of Hackett destroying property has come to light. According to his wife, it is not even clear that he entered the Capitol. But he certainly was in the environs. He was a member of the Oath Keepers. He was a supporter of Donald Trump. Therefore, he must be neutralized.

Joseph Hackett is only one of hundreds of citizens who have been branded as “domestic terrorists” trying to “overthrow the government” and who are now languishing, in appalling conditions, jailed as political prisoners of an angry state apparatus.

Hayek’s overriding concern in *The Road to Serfdom* was to combat the forces that were pushing people further along that road to servitude. His chief concern was unchecked state power. *The Road To Serfdom* was first published in 1944. In a new preface in 1956, Hayek noted that one of the book’s “main points” was to document how “extensive government control produces a psychological change, an alteration in the character of the people.”

“This means,” Hayek said, “that even a strong tradition of political liberty is no safeguard if the danger is precisely that new institutions and policies will gradually undermine and destroy that spirit.”

This dismal situation, Hayek continues, can be averted, but only if the spirit of liberty “reasserts itself in time and the people not only throw out the party which has been leading them further and further in the dangerous direction but also recognize the nature of the danger and resolutely change their course.” Note the power of that little word “if.”

It was not so long ago that an American could contemplate totalitarian regimes and say, “Thank God we’ve escaped that.” It’s not at all clear that we can entertain that happy conviction any longer.

That’s one melancholy lesson of the January 6 insurrection hoax: that America is fast mutating from a republic, in which individual liberty is paramount, into an oligarchy, in which conformity will be increasingly demanded and enforced.

Another lesson was perfectly expressed by Donald Trump when he reflected on

the unremitting tsunami of hostility that he faced as President. “They’re after you,” he more than once told his supporters. “I’m just in the way.”

Bingo.

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