

Campaign 2022 Endgame Sees Likely Political Assassination Attempt

By Don Sutherland

With early voting underway and the 2022 mid-term election just weeks away, there was a brazen attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The suspect, a QAnon adherent, demanded to know where the Speaker was with the likely goal of assassinating her. This attack is an outcome from the toxic combination of festering right-wing extremist movement that dehumanizes its political opponents, a movement that rejects President Joe Biden's 2020 electoral victory, and a disturbing lack of prosecution of those responsible for the January 6, 2021 coup attempt.

Back on January 11, 2021, this blog noted:

Going forward, false appeals for unity aimed at heading off the urgent and necessary effort to hold people—President Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani, Senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley, among many others—fully accountable for the failed coup attempt need to be rejected. Safeguarding the constitutional framework takes precedence over all other political considerations. It is that framework that makes policy and politics possible within the context of elected self-government.

Similarly, false appeals to “election integrity” need to be knocked down. Calls for bodies or commissions to examine the election need to be rejected outright. The overwhelming body of evidence demonstrates unequivocally that the 2020 election was free, fair, and transparent. The creation of such bodies would only provide misplaced legitimacy to the “Big Lie” of a “stolen election” around which the coup attempt was organized.

More broadly, the Trumpist movement needs to be discredited, disgraced, and delegitimized. Without decisive and sustained efforts to hold those accountable for inciting or abetting the failed coup and discrediting the broader movement that made it possible, the nation's democratic government and institutions would remain in danger.

To date, Attorney General Merrick Garland has not brought any charges against Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani, Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, or others who played leading roles in the attempt to overturn the 2020 general election. It is difficult to imagine any country's senior law enforcement officials doing less following a failed coup attempt. Mr. Trump may well seek the Presidency in 2024 and, if he wins it, could be in a position to inflict enormous institutional and political damage on the United States and its people.

The cost of inaction in holding those responsible for January 6 and those who sought to overturn the election is high. Last week's assault of Mr. Pelosi demonstrated that this cost is still rising. Following the attack and perhaps emboldened by a lack of accountability, individuals with a degree of influence ranging from political commentator Larry Elder to Elon Musk have reacted to the assault by dismissing the gravity of the attack or peddling a range of conspiracy theories to deflect from the reality of the attack.

The questions raised back in January 2021 reverberate with even more urgency today. Will the nation's democratic framework and institutions recover fully from the terrible events of January 6? Will that framework face additional challenges that weaken it further until it collapses?

One thing remains certain. The measures taken in response to the failed coup and emerging political violence that has occurred in its wake will have great influence on the nation's trajectory in the years ahead.