

The Delray Democrat

Democracy Is Holding – Or is it...¹

Rob Resnick

The nation has known all along that Donald Trump disfavors democracy while displaying a clear preference for authoritarianism. His supporters include extremists who share his more repugnant and un-American views, as well as traditional Republicans, supporting their party and its ideology while downplaying the danger Trump represents. Perhaps the latter believed, as Democrats hoped and prayed, that our institutions would hold, enough people would do the right thing, and our centuries-old democratic institutions would ride out the storm. As we approach the Biden inauguration, most people believe that democracy held, but the jury is still out.

Until the inauguration occurs and Biden enters the White House the country remains at risk. Trump poses a twofold threat to the nation. First, there is the documented opposition to democracy, support for authoritarianism, and ongoing efforts to steal the election. Second, there are his demonstrated mental health challenges, leading to erratic, illogical, counter-intellectual behavior. Trump has an uncanny and unnerving susceptibility to even the most outrageous conspiracy theories. Combined, they equate to a profound threat to the nation and continued democracy, including the peaceful transition of power across the entire federal government.

As we approach the end of his term, more and more of his staff has run for the hills in part to prevent being associated with Trump's profoundly seditious conspiracies and in part to escape culpability for their own transgressions over their tenure in the White House. Invoking the Insurrection Act, declaring martial law, appointing bogus special counsel (especially Sidney Powell, who was too unstable even for Rudy Giuliani), all to overturn an election is textbook abuse of power. These illegal, wholly unsupportable actions threaten our democracy. Although the U.S. military will adhere to longstanding, uncontroverted Constitutional principles, Trump is not without weapons to employ against the country.

Disinformation campaigns can be as dangerous as anything. We have already seen significant, lasting damage as so many of Trump's base cling to his every word and engage in unlawful activities on his behalf. Can we feel safe that the extremist groups (terrorist groups) that have been overtly empowered and openly embraced by the Trump team will simply end their campaigns of violence against American citizens and political leaders, even after Trump leaves office? It is highly likely they will continue to do his bidding – and their own...

In his final weeks in office, Trump continues to embolden Putin and Russia to increase their aggression, essentially acts of war, against us. From Helsinki to Syria to Putin's bounty on the heads of U.S. military members and now to this latest Russian attack – the largest, most extensive hacking into our national security infrastructure in history. Against all the evidence and the conclusions of his own leadership team, Trump tries to deny it was Russia and tries to claim it was no big deal. Russia infiltrated multiple federal agencies, including Homeland

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, January 2021, p. 4.

Security, Treasury, and Energy (which has control over our nuclear weapons) and likely gained access to a treasure trove of sensitive information. And Trump was all too happy to let them do it.

Trump prefers Putin and Russian authoritarianism to our own country and our democratic institutions. Similarly, he prefers China's Xi, North Korea's Kim, Turkey's Erdogan, Saudi Arabia's royal family, and multiple regimes around the world who commit atrocities to maintain power. He displays a genuine affection for these reprehensible leaders and contempt for long-time crucial friends and allies who have stood with us since WWII. During his 4 years in office he has acted against our national security and national interests and sought to weaken our democratic institutions.

In true authoritarian fashion Trump will stop at nothing to steal the election from Biden. There is NO EVIDENCE of election fraud that could in any way impact the results. Nevertheless, he persists because he is psychologically incapable of accepting defeat. Extracting money from his cult-like supporters will help finance his post-presidential career and pay for his defense lawyers

This leaves the country in a perilous state. Very few Republican leaders have spoken in defense of democracy, elections, and the Constitution. Perhaps they see Trump as a rehearsal for more serious authoritarian efforts to steal or maintain power contrary to the will of the people. Is our democracy holding? We will see. Even though our democratic institutions have held this time, there is no guarantee they will the next time, especially if the next wannabee dictator isn't an ignorant buffoon.