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WOULD A COUP BY ANY OTHER NAME SMELL SO WRONG?

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BY DAN NEXON / ON JANUARY 9, 2021 / AT 11:08 PM / IN 2020 ELECTION , TRUMP 1041 VIEWS

Paul Musgrave argues that the effort to prevent Congress from declaring Biden the next president was, in fact, a coup.

> *As I write this a few hours later, rioters incited by President Donald Trump have stormed the Capitol building. Both the House and the Senate have suspended their counting because of security threats. Reportedly, shots have been fired. A photograph of a rioter occupying the House speaker's chair shows that the Capitol is, essentially, being occupied. C-SPAN is reporting that senior members of leadership of the legislative branch are being held in an "undisclosed location." Reporters are refusing to divulge their locations on the grounds—entirely reasonable—that doing so could endanger their safety. The National Guard has been deployed.*
>
> *It's undeniable at this point. The United States is witnessing a coup attempt—*

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> *a forceful effort to seize power against the legal framework. The president has caused the interruption of the process that would certify his removal from office. The mechanics of constitutional government have been suspended. Americans are in danger of losing constitutional government to a degree unmatched even during the Civil War, a period when secession itself did not postpone either the holding of elections or the transition of power between presidents.*

For Musgrave, the unwillingness of many to call it a coup reflects a worrying tendency to downplay threats to U.S. democracy – a tendency that's contributed to U.S. democratic erosion. On the academic side, this blindness stems from methodological exceptionalism.

> *Mostly, though, the optimists' reluctance to see what's in front of their faces has had less to do with scholarly integrity and more to do with wish-casting—making predictions because you want them to be true, not because the evidence supports it. For U.S. political scientists, coups and paramilitary political forces are axiomatically things that happen out there.*
>
> *Their study fits in the mainstream of comparative politics, which studies foreigners, not U.S. politics (except for the small tribe of specialists in U.S. political development, who are well aware of the history of violence in the country's political history). Until Wednesday, Americanists modeled what election outcomes would be, not whether their results would matter—those questions mattered for others.*

Musgrave's argument has generated significant pushback on various platforms. Naunihal Singh, in both an interview at *Foreign Policy* and a piece at *The Monkey Cage*, argues that what happened on January 6th was definitely not a coup.

In the interview, Singh argues that:

> *I think it's extremely telling that the violence we're seeing is coming from street protesters whom Trump has incited. This is the president of the United States. He is the most powerful man in the world, in quotes. And yet he's not using any of his official authorities.* He's using his bully pulpit to stir up what is a poorly organized ragtag bunch of protesters who are being treated with kid gloves in a way that peaceful protesters in Portland, in D.C., and all over the nation were not treated last summer. *In fact, if the D.C. police or the National Guard had treated this bunch of protesters the way they treated any of the Black Lives Matters protesters, they would never have been allowed to breach the first perimeter, let alone get into the Senate building. There are two reasons they're being treated with kid gloves. One is that they are affiliated with the president, so they have some political protection. The other is that the protesters have, for a long time, styled themselves as Blue Lives Matter supporters, so law enforcement may have been hesitant to use force against them.*
>
> In neither case is this actually a threat to the Republic. But, look, whether or

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> not force was used, the president engaged in an illegitimate, immoral, and probably illegal attempt to grab power *[emphasis added]*.

While there are ways in which the insurrectionists did get easy treatment, some of these claims show their age. Much of this argument derives from snippets of video that appeared on social media during the day. Longer videos, as well as efforts by reporters to piece together events, make clear that the Capital Police were simply overwhelmed. Moreover, as numerous posts at *LGM* have highlighted, it looks pretty clear that some of the insurrectionists sought to capture – and even execute – high-ranking U.S. government officials.

In his article, Singh writes that:

> *Although scholars differ in how they define coup attempts, most definitions have a common core of agreed-upon conditions. In my book, "Seizing Power," I define a coup attempt as an explicit action, involving some portion of the state military, police or security forces, undertaken with intent to overthrow the government.*
>
> *What occurred on Wednesday meets some — but not all — of the conditions to be a coup attempt. Efforts to block the transfer of power to the legitimate victor of an election meet the intent portion of the definition, even if the person who is overthrowing the government is also the incumbent. But the raid on the nation's capital in this instance was committed by a mob, not the country's own armed forces. It is the involvement of state security forces that critically separates a coup attempt from an assassination, an invasion, an insurrection or a civil war.*
>
> *What occurred is better described as an insurrection, since it was a violent uprising by citizens against the government. Those bearing arms were civilians, members of the public. This is different from a coup, where a branch of the government uses state forces to attempt to seize power — and this distinction matters.*

Singh draws an analogy:

> *A coup is like being robbed at gunpoint. But Trump's attempt to convince Brad Raffensperger, the Georgia secretary of state, to "find" enough votes to overturn his defeat was more like a swindle, with Trump attempting to talk Raffensperger into handing over his wallet. The attack on the U.S. Capitol was more forceful, yet still different from a coup, more like somebody grabbing your wallet. All three are forms of theft, but the forms are very different, and the responses differ accordingly.*

I agree that each crime involves a different modus operandi, but I don't get the analogy. If we follow Singh's definition, what differentiates a military coup from a civilian insurrection has nothing do with with the level of force involved; which category applies depends entirely on

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the actors. Provincial rebellions may easily bring more force to the table than a handful of colonels.

Perhaps Singh intends for the analogy to only illustrate how the same outcome can be generated by three distinctive processes. So why does it matter, then?

> *Calling something a coup attempt turns our attention toward the state. But what is striking about Trump's behavior is that he is acting as if he is a private citizen rather than president of the United States. He is stirring up protesters, but not using state security forces; he is attempting to wheedle Raffensperger into committing electoral fraud but not — other than vaguely threatening Raffensperger with criminal consequences — using state authority to coerce Raffensperger into doing so.*
>
> *Trump is able to engage in these anti-democratic actions because of the people who are voluntarily supporting him — not because he is the commander in chief.*

But the president is *not* a private citizen; his call for his supporters to march on the Capitol and help keep him in power is obviously inflected by his *authority* and his *prerogatives*.

This is really no different than if Trump ordered the military to occupy the Capitol and arrest members of the legislative branch. Military officers don't have a chip in their head that makes them compelled to obey his orders; they have every right to resist an illegal order. This is why ten former Secretaries of Defense signed an open letter urging the military not to intervene in a disputed election: to warn the military not to participate in any attempt by the president to mount a coup.

Indeed, Rob noted yesterday that "if the military disobeyed a lawful order from the President to launch nuclear weapons (and there's almost no question, under existing US law, that such an order would be lawful) then it would in effect constitute a military coup." What would make such an assurance to Pelosi a coup is precisely the fact that nether *Speaker* Pelosi nor *General* Milley have the legal authority to interdict such an order. We don't call Muammar Gaddafi's seizure of power in Libya a "coup" because overthrowing the government was *within* his authority.

Okay, but what substantive difference does it make?

> *Those who want to prevent insurrection could respond in a number of ways. One path, taken by Twitter and Facebook, was to suspend Trump's account, thus taking away his megaphone at a time when his remarks might whip up violence.*

If Trump were calling on the military to seize the Capitol then taking away his megaphone would also be a good idea. He still needs to communicate with supporters, whether they're in uniform or in civilian clothes.

> *Another approach is to make it clear to the other politicians who are helping him undermine democracy that there is no return to respectability or business as usual afterward. Would they choose opportunistic behavior in the moment if they knew they would pay the cost of being associated with a rejection of*

> *democracy for the rest of their lives? Would they undercut democracy if it shut the door to lucrative employment as a lobbyist? Would they be willing to be shunned socially for decades?*

Change "other politicians" to "military personnel" or "internal security services" or whatever and this paragraph still makes sense.

> *The point is not the specifics of the response, but rather that the diagnosis suggests an analysis and an appropriate reaction. Compared to a coup, an insurrection involves a different set of people, communication is used differently, the role of the police is different, and the remedies are different. The terminology matters because it illuminates the dynamics of this event and how they are different from other kinds of events.*

Singh presumably would consider all the following examples of attempted coups if they happened in the USSR in the 1987:

- The NVD, in whole or in part and either at the behest of the General Secretary of the Communist Party or against him, tries to seize control of Moscow
- The KGB – in whole or in part and either at the behest of the General Secretary of the Communist Party or against him – tries to seize control of Moscow; and
- The Red Army – in whole or in part and either at the behest of the General Secretary of the Communist Party or against him – tries to seize control of Moscow.

Each of these would entail different sets of people, uses of communication, roles for the police, and remedies. The disposition of the overall KGB would matter not only in each of these scenarios, but also if civilians acted as the primary 'troops' of an attempted seizure of power.

Singh maintains that the events of January 6th amounted to an insurrection rather than a coup. I'm not entirely sure about the basis of the distinction. In U.S. law, "rebellion and insurrection refer specifically to acts of violence against the state or its officers."

Since all of Singh's coups involve the threat of violence, they would all seem to also constitute insurrections. That is, Singh's "coup" is a *specific* type of insurrection, one involving at least one of the state's security services.

This isn't a problem per se for Singh, but it does suggest some analytic issues. Singh's substantive objection to referring to January 6th as a coup attempt is, in essence, that insurrections involving a state's own security services are not comparable to insurrections that don't involve a state's security services. While I'm not persuaded by the *specific* examples Singh provides, I do think that his argument makes some degree of sense.

However, are the events of January 6th *more* comparable to non-coup insurrections? Ceteris paribus, I don't see how we learn more about January 6th by placing it in the same pot as the FMLN insurgency in El Salvador, the Greek Civil War, and the Indian Rebellion of 1857 than by placing it in the same pot as Operation Rubicon.

Why, then, is the relevant distinction between "coup" and "insurrection"? We can solve Singh's concerns just as easily by distinguishing between *kinds* of coups. Maybe coups that involve the security services constitute one cluster of coups, while those that don't constitute another. Some of examples of both kinds would take the form of self-coups, others would not.

Should we adopt Singh's nomenclature or something like I've just suggested? I'm not sure. But we can't choose between the two options based on the criteria Singh has offered. Both preserve a distinction between, on the one hand, what happened on January 6th and, on the

other hand, attempts to overthrow governments that involve some slice of their security services.

If this weren't already getting too long, I'd turn to a discussion of the various dynamics that drive stability and change in social-scientific concepts. In its absence, I'll just make a few claims about their implications:

- The way that social scientists define a concept – or even that a social-scientific field defines a term – is not inherently better than alternatives.
- The considerations that lead us to settle on specific definitions may not be decisive, or even relevant, in different contexts.
- There's often less consensus about the precise meaning of concepts than we like to imply.
- Disputes about the meaning of concepts can reflect substantive disagreements about how to *do* social science, and these often – for good reasons – reman implicit when we argue about definitions in public-facing contexts.

So what do I think? To the extent that it matters, my own view is closer to Musgrave's and overlaps with Zeynep Tufekci's:

> *In Turkish, we* do *have many different words for different types of coups, because our experience similarly demands it. For example, coups that are attempted through threatening letters from the military are called memorandum coups. A 2007 attempt is commonly referred to as the "e-coup" because the threatening letter from the military was first posted on the internet. (The one before that, in 1997, is often referred to as a "postmodern" or "soft" coup.) We know the difference between military coups that start from the top and follow the military chain of command and those that do not. The term* autogolpe *comes from the Spanish partly because there have been so many such attempts in Latin America.*
>
> *The U.S. president is trying to steal the election, and, crucially, his party either tacitly approves or is pretending not to see it. This is a particularly dangerous combination, and makes it much more than just typical Trumpian bluster or norm shattering.*
>
> *Maybe in other languages, from places with more experience with this particular type of power grab, we'd be better able to discuss the subtleties of this effort, to distinguish the postelection intervention from the Election Day injustices, to separate the legal but frivolous from the outright lawless, and to understand why his party's reaction—lack of reaction—is not just about wanting to conclude an embarrassing presidency with minimal fanfare. But in English, only one widely understood word captures what Donald Trump is trying to do, even though his acts do not meet its technical definition. Trump is attempting to stage* some *kind of coup, one that is embedded in a broader and ongoing power grab.*
>
> *And if that's hard to recognize, this might be your first.*

IMHO:

> ***Coups are (ex ante) extralegal appropriations of authority by an actor within, or by part of, a government from another.***

Notice that, for me, the defining characteristic of coups is neither the employment of violence nor *which* part of the government is implicated in the usurpation of authority: if the Speaker of the House appropriates presidential authority with respect to the military, that's a coup; if Al Haig really had tried to jump the line of succession, then he attempted a coup; if the president incites a mob to force Congress to declare him the victor of an election, then that's a coup; and if the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff deploys the military to declare himself Supreme Executive, then we're looking at a coup.

What makes coups 'special' is their *internal* character; they involve struggles *among* incumbents – sometimes specific actors, sometimes bureaucratic divisions, sometimes branches – over the distribution of authority *within* a government.

We can handle the rest by attaching adjectives.

But realize that I come from a social-scientific tradition that thinks what's in the arrows is more important than what's in the boxes. For me, Charles Tilly's observation about social-scientific explanation and revolutions applies:

> *I am arguing that regularities in political life are very broad, indeed transhistorical, but do not operate in the form of recurrent structures and processes at a large scale. They consist of recurrent causes which in different circumstances and sequences compound into highly variable but nonetheless explicable effects. Students of revolution have imagined they were dealing with phenomena like ocean tides, whose regularities they could deduce from sufficient knowledge of celestial motion, when they were actually confronting phenomena like great floods, equally coherent occurrences from a causal perspective, but enormously variable in structure, sequence, and consequences as a function of terrain, previous precipitation, built environment, and human response.*
>
> *For hydrologists, a flood is a wave of water that passes through a basin; a severe flood is one in which a considerable share of the water overflows the basin's perimeter. For our purposes, the equations hydrologists use to compute water flow in floods have three revealing characteristics: they reduce floods to special cases of water flow within basins rather than making them sui generis, their results depend heavily on the hydrologist's delineation of the basin, while estimation of the flood's parameters requires extensive empirical knowledge of that basin. Yet the equations embody very general principles, the physics of incompressible fluids in open channels (Bras 1990, pp. 478-82).*
>
> *Note several implications of the analogy. First, every instance of the phenomenon – flood or revolution – differs from every other one; the test of a good theory is therefore not so much to identify similarities among instances as to account systematically and parsimoniously for their variation. Second, in different combinations, circumstances, and sequences, the same causes that produce floods or revolutions also produce a number of adjacent phenomena: smoothly flowing rivers and stagnant swamps on the one side, coups d'etat and guerrilla warfare on the other. Third, time, place, and sequence strongly*

> *influence how the relevant processes unfold; in that sense, they have an inescapably historical character. Finally, the events in question are far from self motivating experiences of self-contained structures; they are local manifestations of fluxes extending far beyond their own perimeters. Floods and revolutions have no natural boundaries; observers draw lines around them for their own analytic convenience. In these regards, they resemble a number of other complex but lawful phenomena: traffic jams, earthquakes, segmented labor markets, forest fires, and many more. I suppose, indeed, that most interesting social phenomena have exactly these characteristics*

Thus, it doesn't trouble me if the category "coup" expands beyond the participation of the security services; I'm happy to make the participation of security services a source of variation rather than a defining feature of coups. But it's also *totally understandable* why other scholars would prefer narrower, more precise definitions that mandate a greater number of shared attributes.

So should we call January 6th an attempted coup – or, more properly, one part of an unfolding effort by Trump to mount a successful coup? I don't think the question of causation is all that important. Most of the debate over whether to call it a coup isn't about coup-proofing. It's basically normative and political in character: what label for Trump's actions – and those of his mob – best captures their degree of illegitimacy?

To be honest, I don't see a lot of difference between "coup" and "insurrection" here.

The major disadvantage of "insurrection," I suppose, is that it makes Trump's role one of "inciter" or "fomenter." This places him one step away from the action itself. It also locates his conduct in the murky domain of where freedom of speech ends and criminal incitement begins. Saying that he attempted a coup, however, removes any such complications.

The advantages of "incitement of insurrection" are that it's a defined legal offense and that it'll be the grounds for impeachment.

In conclusion:

coups, incitement, insurrection, January 6, trump

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Dan Nexon is a Professor of Government and Foreign Service at Georgetown University. You can read all about the gory details of his academic work at his personal site: http://www.dhnexon.net/

By Dan Nexon

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Eric Scharf • 3 days ago

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CrunchyFrog → Eric Scharf • 3 days ago
I see Lucius Malfoy has found another dark lord to follow.
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Khruschev?
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Darkrose → Eric Scharf • 2 days ago
I love that man so much. I really need to watch this movie at some point.
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joelmonkey → Darkrose • 2 days ago
Do. It's really good.
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doug r → joelmonkey • 2 days ago
Letting most of the actors speak in their accents also helped with the story seeing as Khrushchev was from Ukraine, Stalin was from Georgia, etc.
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Tehanu → Eric Scharf • 2 days ago
Upvoted for Jason Isaacs, who is so wonderful in that movie!
2 Reply • Share ›

CrunchyFrog • 3 days ago • edited
This whole argument smells of "fiddling while Rome burns".

If this were any other country the same people would not hesitate to call it a coup.

The President, willfully and intentionally, incited a mob to invade the US capitol with intent to harm, kidnap, or murder Democratic, and some Republican leaders, and prevent Trump from being removed from office.

It's not at all clear they acted on their own. In his incitement speech he invited the secret service and military to join in. All of the emphasis on the COS players in costume distracts from the fact that many of this crowd were armed paramilitary types with military training and many of them flashed police and military badges when they entered the building. We know for a fact that the white house was in touch with insurgents in the Capitol because they said as much. There is a lot of evidence that on-duty capitol police assisted the insurgents and that the insurgents knew exactly where to go to chase after their targets - that is, they had inside info. Once they got inside they flooded the building so fast that all of the many underground escape routes were cut off.

And then there is the question of why the Capitol police were so unprepared, despite

see more

54 Reply • Share ›

namekarB → CrunchyFrog • 3 days ago
> This whole argument smells of "fiddling while Rome burns".

That is it in a nutshell. No need to elaborate
14 Reply • Share ›

DamnYankeesLGM → CrunchyFrog • 3 days ago

These debates are getting silly because no one is doing anything. No one is responding with any urgency, which is allowing people to just deny all this and brush it off. People are desperate to not face the moment.

23 • Reply • Share ›

Croaker → DamnYankeesLGM • 2 days ago

This, in spades. The desperation for normalcy is palpable and potentially disastrous. Even if we survive this round, the lack of consequences for the coup plotters and instigators guarantees that they'll try again next time.

14 • Reply • Share ›

CrunchyFrog → Croaker • 2 days ago

The push for normalcy is exclusively from the right wing.

One positive thing we've witnessed the past few months - and couple years in terms of a limited number of media people - is a realization that Trumpism is really really bad, and to stop, for example, treating a Democrat saying Trump is a jerk the same as Trump putting children in cages.

I don't see any of the MSM buying into the GOP Kumbaya-hey-what-the-fuck. *I mean, who among us hasn't participated in a violent coup to over throw the government, right? No harm, no foul.* Nope, this time, they aren't buying.

Too bad they were buying with all of their life savings in 2016, or otherwise we wouldn't be here now.

7 • Reply • Share ›

Kalil Chernov → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

> The push for normalcy is exclusively from the right wing.

It wasn't the right wing that, a few hours after being forced to hide under their chairs, dismissed the House for the next two weeks.
The rules under which the Senate was dismissed prevent the Senate from being recalled early without unanimous consent - which was only possible because those rules were passed /with/ unanimous consent.
I'm willing to forgive that to some degree - an understandable reaction to an immediate trauma. But I'm not willing to forgive it entirely. That we had a coup and congress just /went home/? That was deeply wrong, and an indictment of every member of congress from Mitch McConnell to Brian Schatz (my personal favorite senator, if it is unclear why I'm picking him).

4 • Reply • Share ›

twbb → Kalil Chernov • 2 days ago

1. Pelosi can call the House back.
2. The Senate is controlled by right wingers.
3. Are you arguing that the Democrats are culpable for agreeing to a rule regarding Senate recesses because they should have foreseen the future situation where the Senate is overrun by Trumpist fascists and planned accordingly?

1 • Reply • Share ›

Kalil Chernov → twbb • 2 days ago

My understanding is, they agreed to the rule after the senate was overrun. I could be wrong, though?
And I still don't understand why the House was dismissed in the first place. Even assuming that they didn't expect impeachment to be a thing... It'd be really, really, really good to get some answers about the total failure of security in the nations capitol before another major event occurs. Like, say, an inauguration?

2 • Reply • Share ›

Croaker → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

Right now, yeah, kinda. But this will all wear off, and if we make it to 1/20, everyone will breathe a big sigh, and we'll all go back to "politics as normal" and the press especially will return to form and

start nattering on about bipartisanship and the deficit, and they'll go back to their Cletus Safaris.

The Republicans learned during Bush II that they can just ride things out, wait them out, and the short attention span and natural inclinations of the press and their voters means they can come back from anything.

3 • Reply • Share ›

aardvarkcheeselog ➔ CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

WaPo has a front page item right now about how Trump is silent, and none about what Ds are saying.

• Reply • Share ›

BiloSagdiyev ➔ Croaker • 2 days ago

"This is fine", said the dog in a burning room.

1 • Reply • Share ›

fledermaus ➔ DamnYankeesLGM • 2 days ago

I subscribe to the wish-casting theory of why it is being downplayed, especially in the media. They have been so marinated in the idea of American exceptionalism and the nobility of the "Real Americans" that they can't process what happened. So I expect them to forget about it ever happening

12 • Reply • Share ›

DamnYankeesLGM ➔ fledermaus • 2 days ago

The people who constitute American elite - in both government, business and media - have spend years if not decades convincing themselves that they won’t need to do anything, and that just waiting stuff out will make everything better. Because America.

12 • Reply • Share ›

NSAlito ➔ DamnYankeesLGM • 2 days ago

Personally, when the SHTF, I wouldn't know what to do. If I were there in person I might do something (not from heroism, but from rage management issues), like manically beat someone with my cane, but I don't know what else to do but wait it out.

I'm hoping that my background monetary support to several organizations might make them better equipped to deal with it, but I suspect any direct action on my part could easily backfire. My first rules for any personal response to a crisis or disaster are (1) don't panic, and (2) don't get in the way of the people who seem to know what they're doing (and maybe keep other people from screwing up, too).

5 • Reply • Share ›

Gloucon X ➔ fledermaus • 2 days ago • edited

Also important to remember that ever since JFK, high-end journalism forbids us to think that Americans can plot and conspire. Everything is "lone gunman" (please erase the Lincoln assassination conspiracy here).

1 • Reply • Share ›

MichaelH ➔ Gloucon X • 2 days ago

How hard would it have been for an Oswald type, or foreign intel type, to have imbeded in the maga crowd and pulled off an assassination? In fact, what is the likelihood that there was one there, and only the luck of the Capital Police getting people removed prevented them ever getting a clean shot?

3 • Reply • Share ›

Sentient AI From The Future ➔ fledermaus • 2 days ago • edited

"that cant be right, because if it were i want to believe id do something about it."

4 • Reply • Share ›

Helmut Monotreme ➔ DamnYankeesLGM • 2 days ago

We are in the first second of a Mexican Standoff* Both sides are astonished the other has a gun. The impasse will not last. We are lucky they were not more audacious or competent. They are lucky we** are slow to recognize a threat. There is still plenty of time for a tragic ending.
* I don't know a better term, though I suspect this one is racist as hell. Impasse and deadlock, don't have the same urgency, nor the near certainty of a tragic outcome.
**Democratic leadership anyway. The rest of us Cassandras down here in the pit have been yelling our heads off for years.

6 • Reply • Share ›

CrunchyFrog → Helmut Monotreme • 2 days ago

This doesn't seem right. I know you didn't mean "both sides" in that way, but it reads that way.

The Dems were astonished that the security forces were coup collaborators to the degree they were. I don't think any dems left thought that a coup wasn't possible.

The GOP had zero astonishment. Some were disappointed that the coup failed.

1 • Reply • Share ›

UnusualSuspects → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

45% of the GOP believes that the coup attempt was entirely justified

5 • Reply • Share ›

Gloucon X → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

If there's no serious investigation and no real punishment for Trump we will see this again, and in many state capitals too.

17 • Reply • Share ›

Deborah Bender → Gloucon X • 2 days ago

Indeed, the state capitals are the weak link right now, although further attacks on them might conceivably rouse the American people more than what goes on in DC.

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Gloucon X → Deborah Bender • 2 days ago • edited

Yes. In his phone call with the GA Sec of St. Trump accused the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the FBI of being part of a plot to deny him because they found no fraud.

2 • Reply • Share ›

CrunchyFrog → Gloucon X • 2 days ago

Exactly. The hammer has to fall down hard.

1 • Reply • Share ›

Phil Perspective → Gloucon X • 2 days ago

Don't forget that we saw exactly that in a few state capitols on Wednesday. Oregon, Kansas and I think two others.

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Platypus Prime → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

100% agreed. I stopped reading Singh's word salad after this gem:
"I define a coup attempt as an explicit action, involving some portion of the state military, police or security forces, undertaken with intent to overthrow the government."

Either he didn't know that there were off-duty cops in that mob, flashing their badges to get through (in which case he shouldn't be given that kind of platform), or he knew that but disregarded it because it didn't fit his neat little argument. (In which case he shouldn't be given this kind of platform.)

7 • Reply • Share ›

UnusualSuspects → Platypus Prime • 2 days ago • edited

Singh's fallacy is that he presumes a coup can only involve those who are out of power using force to seize power from those who currently hold it. Trump's attempted coup involves those who are currently in power using force to prospectively seize power from his constitutionally elected

force to prospectively seize power from his constitutionally-elected successor.

In fact, Trump *is* "involving some portion of state military, police or security forces." As CinC, Trump in effect used his power over state forces to *not* deploy them to oppose a mob that he incited.

9 • Reply • Share ›

wengler → Platypus Prime • 2 days ago

Putin's military attacks of recent years have all been run by former spooks he worked with paying a bunch of veterans to be mercs and then peppering in actual Russian military stripped of military insignia.

We're right there.

1 • Reply • Share ›

Leeward Mountain → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

Wait, can you give a source for the tunnels being cut off and the Congressmembers trapped? Because I've read in article after article (including The Drive's "Capitol Siege Shines Light On Vast Underground Tunnel Network" for this comment) that the tunnels were indeed used to evacuate some number of Congresspeople.

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CrunchyFrog → Leeward Mountain • 2 days ago

I can't find it now amidst the mountain of links I've saved. There were reports of that some of the invaders knew exactly where to go - most were lost and asking directions. Also that most congress people could not leave by tunnels and were stuck in rooms near the main chambers. This link covers that quite a bit:

https://www.washingtonpost....

I'm also seeing reports and video that many capitol police cleverly diverted the invaders away from where people where hiding - which is something to take into account when we read that capitol police were directing people.

So, the one real conclusion is that by the time most of the Congresscritters were evacuated from the chambers there was no safe path to the tunnels.

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Leeward Mountain → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago • edited

Part of the story is fog of war being maintained for the general public, i.e. we don't know the exact destinations of all the individuals present at the Capitol at the time of the siege. And for good reason. E.g. from the Drive link:

> During the events at the Capitol on Jan. 6, Vice President Pence and at least some members of Congress were rushed out of the building via unspecified tunnels. “We were down in the basement and navigated the tunnels, and there was confusion as to where they wanted us,” Representative Pete Aguilar, a California Democrat, said afterward. “A handful of us went to the cafeteria, which was locked down, and they let us in.”

But everyone was clearly gone from the main chambers by the time they were breached, right? Seems plausible that some of the tunnels lead not to outbuildings but underground safe rooms, which would serve as legitimate and successful evacuation points in principle even when there are insurgents not too far away.

Ultimately these qualifications are, while interesting to pin down, splitting hairs, because your main point of the security failure remains. The Congress as a body nearly *was* wholly overrun from an operational perspective. (I appreciate your note about the potential that security service members where actively leading the insurgents down a garden path.)

2 • Reply • Share ›

CrunchyFrog → Leeward Mountain • 2 days ago • edited

So I'd originally heard Pence was rushed out via the tunnel. Then we later heard he was in the Capitol building the whole time.

Realistically both can be true. No, I don't mean he was in two places at the same time, but reports of both may have existed to distract the terrorists.

You bring up the term *Fog of War* ... I remember it from my undergraduate studies all of those ~~centuries~~ decades ago - no doubt it was McNamara's book as required reading, but maybe not? But very appropriate here.

2 • Reply • Share ›

jhoosier → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

Fog of War was a big part of Warcraft II

2 • Reply • Share ›

wengler → CrunchyFrog • 2 days ago

Your last paragraph is what I have been thinking about since a Representative confirmed that there around 100 members still in the House when the terrorist got shot...right outside the egress of the House.

• Reply • Share ›

Eric Scharf • 3 days ago

There are thousands of documents to go through before we can appreciate the extent of premeditation and complicity. I'll wait a year for a complete report.

16 • Reply • Share ›

J— → Eric Scharf • 2 days ago

The report will come by US mail.

2 • Reply • Share ›

Mal2ksc → J— • 2 days ago

"When asked why the report had a noxious, oily contaminant on its surface that was somehow squeaking out a familiar tune, our contact replied 'Oh, that's just Eau DeJoy.'"

4 • Reply • Share ›

SomeoneIsWrongOnTheInternet • 3 days ago

Police or security forces were involved, both as covert insurrectionists as well as active participants in allowing the attack to occur, and preventing other forces from responding to the attack.

It was both a coup and an insurrection.

15 • Reply • Share ›

ken_lov • 3 days ago

The real coup is yet to happen.

> Let me be clear: Trump will be president for another four years. Biden will not be president. Yes, I know those are shocking words in these crazy days.

https://nyegop.org/2021/01/...

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SomeoneIsWrongOnTheInternet → ken_lov • 3 days ago

They should be arrested for incitement to insurrection.

18 • Reply • Share ›

Lee Rudolph → ken_lov • 3 days ago

Kee-fucking-rist.

2 • Reply • Share ›

SatanicPanic → ken_lov • 3 days ago

That’s idiotic. I hope Nigerian scammers take them for all they’re worth.

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