Violence is the end of a Trump presidency's full of lies: Thoughts on the *post-January 6th* discourse

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January 6th, 2021, marks a momentous day in the United States' history and the global democratic aspiration. A pro-Trump mob organized via social media stomped the heart of American democracy, the US Capitol [1]. At the moment I am writing this essay, several Cabinet members and the US Capitol Police chief have resigned. People are calling for Mike Pence to invoke Article 25 to remove Mr. Trump from the Oval Office. Trump's Twitter account has been banned permanently, while his Facebook and Instagram accounts are blocked indefinitely [2]. More carnage will surely unfold. In this essay, I reflect on the gravitas of this event by drawing from the post-9/11 discourse [3,4].

First, the gravity of the January 6th Capitol Attack is surely as momentous as, if not more so than, the 9/11 attack. They are both terrorist attacks on American soil, but they differ in very fundamental ways.

Second, how do they differ? The *January 6th Capitol Attack* is organized in social media, and Trump is entirely culpable of inciting this violence with his lies. It is a social movement, reflecting a deep division and polarization of American society. In stark contrast, the *9/11 attack* was organized by a foreign terrorist group, which results in the *post-9/11, i.e. the war on terror*

security discourse and many conspiracy theories. One has to wonder what the *post January 6th Capitol Attack* discourse would entail. The post-9/11 discourse is invoked to justify the securitization of many aspects of daily life [4] and it has legitimized the unprecedented personal data collection programs of the US government. Does the spontaneous, perhaps unpredictable nature of the Capitol Attack legitimize an even more intrusive measure of security?

Third, lies and all forms of political communication breakdowns inevitably lead to violence [5]. Trump started his presidency with lies about the highest number of turnouts among all inaugurations in US history and ended it by inciting violence to stay in power. During the Black Lives Matter riot, he took a photo-op with a bible while violent chaos was on the street.

Fourth, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have all shut down Trump's accounts, permanently in the case of Twitter. Twitter has deleted Trump's tweets from the POTUS account [2]. Symbolically, these actions signify the power of the people on the surface. But their actions do also raise deeper concerns. As a giant tech company can unilaterally cancel an account of a sitting president, one has to ask: Should there be a due process? What does this drastic action mean for freedom of speech? Answering these questions will be at the heart of the *post January 6th discourse*.

Fourth, amid the chaos, there seems to be no agreement on what is right and wrong. Unlike the post 9/11 world, when people did unite behind a common cause: to fight the foreign terrorists. This time, there will only be more division, more polarization. For example, half the US society seems to take Ashli Babbitt as a heroic figure who died in an attempt to stop stealing an election [2]. Simultaneously, the other half thinks of her as an unfortunate member of a mob, dying for a pathologically lying cult leader.

Fifth, Trump and his staunch supporters seem to operate with a different law of psychology. A new set of cultural and psychology theories is needed to explain the ability to incorporate so many contradicting world views. For instance, QAnon, a pro-Trump conspiracy theory group, believes the world is “run by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles who are plotting against Mr. Trump while operating a global child sex-trafficking ring” [9]. That is just the core of this conspiracy. They also incorporated beliefs from other conspiracies: the 9/11 truther movement [6]. The theory of *cultural additivity* and the *mindsponge model* of value addition and rejection are among the potential ones [7, 8, 9].

Finally, one has to raise questions about the need for a new set of norms of democratic participation when we stumble on a seemingly hostage situation, where the conspiracists and white-supremacists are threatening a peaceful transfer of power. But ironically, those professedly staunch believers in the cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophilic elites that run the world, who believe they are saving the US from evil, broke into the US Capitol only to take selfies [10]. There seems to be no basic collective sanity in the US the social media era anymore.

The January 6th Capitol Attack will be an event that shapes the world for years to come. The world is holding its breath watching the fallout in the US.

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