



By: The Editorial Board

The Mother of all Indictments - will the US be able to admit it had a president who led a coup?



One of the sad realities brought about by the most recent indictment against Donald Trump is that the US has now had a president who did not comprehend what the nation he led was made of. Or even worse, that he was aware of it but despised it.

According to the indictment by Special Counsel Jack Smith of the Department of Justice, Donald Trump was born, raised, became wealthy, and then elected president in the wrong state.

Millions of Americans, like him, are known to find the democracy they live in to be confusing, difficult, or at odds with their sense of community. However, they did not hold the positions of president, army commander, or head of the government.

The indictment, confirmed by a grand jury, which Trump will contest on August 3, is alarming.

It describes a historical period when the US was on the verge of collapse, along with its social values, translated into a 45-page legal and economic order. Perhaps for the first time ever.

However, it is historically significant because it brings the protagonist of the events that led to the general collapse to justice, providing strong evidence that the US has pulled back from the brink since it has the ability to successfully resolve this case and prevent it from happening again.

Attack on two US pillars

Donald Trump and a group of his associates (participants in the conspiracy, as they are referred to in the indictment) targeted the legal functioning of the federal government (conspiracy to defraud the United States) while simultaneously forming a conspiracy to violate civil rights.

Trump jeopardized two national pillars that he swore to protect: the functioning of the federal state and the enjoyment of civil rights

("the right to vote and to have one's vote counted") in an effort to hold onto the presidency despite the defeat in the elections.

The disclosed indictment proves that Trump led a typical coup attempt while serving as president no matter how difficult it is for anyone in the US to use this word. His plan had all the characteristics of a coup attempt.

High-ranking members of the administration participated in the conspiracy. Trump's claims that the elections were rigged beforehand were part of a strategy put into action months before the elections in November 2020. There was also public support for their plan through a vast media network and supporters of their actions.

Along with the suspension of the Constitution (by ordering Vice President Mike Pence to act outside of his authority, contest the election results, and prevent the transfer of power, which he refused), there was also the desire to occupy important state institutions (Congress).

And finally, based on the Insurrection Act, which one of the conspirators suggested to Trump as a means of defending the coup against potential protests by the defenders of the Constitution, there was also the intention to use the military against US citizens, which is a particularly terrifying aspect of the indictment.

Usurpation of power

Trump's plot failed because a coup can only be successful if all of its components—not just some—are implemented successfully.

Why not draw comparisons with the ongoing coup in Niger? Given that the US was allegedly in a similar situation two and a half years ago, the US shouldn't try to avoid making this connection.

The coup plotters in Niger come from the military, not the president's office like in Washington, but both want to assume more

powers than the laws allow.

However, the coup in Niger has no chance of success, much like Trump's, because neither has sufficient support in the system they govern — the military officers in Niger, Trump and the conspirators in their administration — for their move.

“The Defendant lost the 2020 presidential election. Despite having lost, the Defendant was determined to stay in power,” is the key sentence from the introduction to the indictment against Donald Trump.

Trump will once again underestimate the rule of law

The charges brought against the former US president are a legal embodiment of the philosophy of liberal democracy on which the US was established.

Trump's policy for the entire four years he served as president was in direct opposition to the principles from the very foundation of the Republic, and now also in a legal dispute with them.

Trump will plead not guilty and consider the indictment political, not legal. The worst part for him is that he will use political means rather than legal ones to defend himself in court and thus, once again, underestimate the power of the rule of law in the country of which he was the president.

He will challenge it at rallies and ask his fellow Republicans to nominate him as the presidential candidate again, and the courtroom will be in second place.

He will be the same as dozens of similar autocrats who took the indictments personally as an attack on themselves and their own historical missions because his ego prevents him from treating the indictment any differently.

The only difference is that Trump, unlike other

usurpers of power throughout the world, will function within a framework where the rule of law is real and not merely a facade.

How will voters understand the indictment?

For the upcoming court proceedings to have a beneficial effect on US democracy, voters must fully comprehend how destructive their president's intentions were.

If Trump loses the race for the Republican nomination or the race for another presidential term because he paid hush money to a former porn actress and not because he conspired in the White House not to cede power after losing elections, democracy in the US will have a hard time recovering.

That is why the indictment, and the subsequent trial, should be explained using the 2023 vocabulary, which the voters will easily understand – a coup d'état, not a witch hunt, the immutability of power as in Russia or North Korea, conspirators, not state officials, and an attempt to introduce a dictatorship by placing one man above the law.

“If we don't speak up—to one another, as well as to the media and to our elected officials—and Trump defeats us all by regaining power and making a mockery of American democracy, then we'll all have lost a lot more than a few friendships. We face in Trump a dedicated enemy of our Constitution, and if he returns to office, his next “administration” will be a gang of felons, goons, and resentful mediocrities, all of whom will gladly serve Trump's sociopathic needs while greedily dividing the spoils of power,” wrote Tom Nichols in *The Atlantic*.