Disinformation, disease, and Donald Trump

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Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic has been an event which has adversely affected people throughout the world. It has been asserted that in the United States, the extent of the devastation and disruption of life has been exacerbated by the response of the federal government, which was personified by former President Donald J. Trump. He was a leader whose unprecedented number of distortions, misleading statements, and frank lies resulted in a great erosion of trust in a time of great peril. Significantly, this propaganda was apparently believed by almost half of the electorate, as evidenced by the results of the 2020 election, where he lost to Joe Biden in a close race. As a result, there has been an intensification of a traumatically induced regression in the United States, characterized by increased divisiveness, dysfunction, and violence. This paper will psychoanalytically explore the author’s contention that there has been a dual pandemic which has damaged the body and the mind—a highly contagious virus and a disinformation campaign gone viral.

Keywords
autocrat, disinformation, pandemic, Trump, vaccine

"The American carnage stops right here...". Donald Trump's negation. Inaugural Address, January 20, 2017.

"I really don't care. Do you?" Melanie Trump's infamous jacket, on her visit to detained children at the U.S.–Mexico border, June 21, 2018.
Did Nero actually fiddle while Rome burned? We do not know for sure. What we do know, however, is that the collective memory of the destruction of the capital of the world’s greatest empire almost 2,000 years ago became encapsulated by this cliche. That such a catastrophe would have been memorialized and reduced to this expression could not have been predicted by those who had lived through this inferno; the history was not written yet. It does, however, speak to the basic principle that the qualities of the leader are of vital importance, especially during a large societal crisis. There is a historical account of Nero’s reaction written by Tacitus (Champlin, 2005), and such behavior would have been in character for him.

The reign of Emperor Nero was short lived, but fateful. Described as callous, corrupt, and somewhat depraved, he is forever depicted as having played his stringed musical instrument from a safe distance while watching the conflagration destroy two-thirds of the fabled city. While this story may be apocryphal, it has come to characterize a certain attitude that autocratic leaders can have towards their people, oscillating between indifference and frank destructive vengefulness. The most damning theory of the fire, which would explain Nero’s attitude, was that he secretly ordered his loyal soldiers to start the blaze in order to destroy buildings and shift the populace away from where he wished to expand his royal palace and imperial grounds.

As cynical as this theory may sound, such orders are known to have been decreed by megalomaniac autocrats. One need only to spend a few hours in the Romanian capital of Bucharest and see contemporary evidence of such mendacity in the gargantuan, unfinished palace built by the infamous dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu. He was the leader of the Communist Party, ruling from 1967 to 1989. Known for his unbridled grandiosity and cruelty, he ordered the destruction of countless beautiful houses and buildings in the neighborhoods that helped give rise to the city’s reputation as the "Paris" of Eastern Europe. The purpose of this “urban planning” was to clear the area for the construction of the Palace of the Parliament. It is so massive that the balcony overlooks a square that was to hold a million admiring and cheering citizens. Ceausescu "enlisted" the services of thousands of workers to construct what is thought to be the largest and heaviest civilian government building in the world. This eerie, cavernous dead space is a monument to pathological narcissism, par excellence.

Untold numbers of slave laborers were killed during its construction, as visitors are told of those who fell into the massive concrete walls under the ceaseless pressure to complete the construction before Ceausescu was ultimately deposed and executed by firing squad. So, it just might be that if a 20th-century leader had perpetrated such crimes against his people, then Nero, too, may have sacrificed his own city and its inhabitants for his unquenchable, grandiose plans. Donald Trump has been compared with past and present dictators (Nance, 2019; Snyder, 2017) as his testing and pushing the limits of his power brought the country to the brink of civil war and untold destruction. Nero, however, has been a particularly popular choice. In the annual satirical parade which mocks world leaders, the German Carnival 2020, there was a float in which President Trump was dressed in Roman garb, replete with toga and stringed instrument. It was driven through the streets of Mainz, Düsseldorf, and Cologne, along the Rhine river (republicworld.com, February 25, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic was first recognized in Winter 2020. It has been said that a nation’s handling of such outbreaks of contagion are like an x-ray study of the overall health of that society. If this is so, then the disastrous mishandling of this virus by the United States has laid bare to the world just how impaired our country is. Under the Trump regime, this short but fateful term has intensified the polarization and splits that existed since before the Civil War. It is a nation whose wealth and great success were built upon the backs of African slaves, for which a “truth and reconciliation” has never quite occurred. There is the openly expressed wish to return and hold onto to the values of the antebellum South where “the white man” was in power and “the black man” only had what was
given to him. There is increasing desperation among white supremacists, as it is anticipated that by mid-century “the white man” will not be the majority race in the United States anymore.

Policies characterized by xenophobia, isolationism, gross voter suppression, and the further consolidation of wealth by the ultra-rich had been presided over by the leader of the Republican Party, Donald J. Trump. His mishandling of the pandemic contributed greatly to his failure to be re-elected to a second term. Minorities were disproportionately affected, leading some to wonder if this was an opportunity, through passivity, to practice eugenics. Trump privately confessed to his awareness of the deadly seriousness of the virus, but he publicly minimized, distorted, and at times, mocked those who were worried. He took delight in naming it “The China Virus,” accusing the Chinese of deliberately spreading it and lying about it, thereby stoking more xenophobia. He withdrew from the World Health Organization; he lied about the US statistics; he corrupted the Center for Disease Control; he threatened to deny helping states with Democrat governors who did not vote for him; and he thoroughly confused the American public by touting unproven and potentially fatal miracle cures. Deaths were actually reported in some of his believers who tried to listen to him.

By promulgating the notion that an economy takes precedence by keeping businesses open despite the growing morbidity and mortality rates, Trump manipulated state governors into setting unpopular limits on closures and wearing masks. They did not abdicate their responsibilities and exercised their judgment regarding business and school closures. In doing so, Trump portrayed himself as the “good guy” who championed the rights of the individual and called for his followers to confront the tyranny of Democrat governors. They responded. In a very disturbing case that foreshadowed more to come, the FBI foiled a plot of a pro-Trump armed group of men who had planned to kidnap and execute the woman governor of Michigan. The subjugation of women was a thinly veiled subtext here, also.

Unable to adhere to the traditional presidential philosophy, as exemplified by Harry Truman’s motto, “The buck stops here!”, Donald Trump was famous for avoiding responsibility and never admitted having made any mistakes. As a child, he was violent and unruly, with a sense of entitlement and a huge inheritance; he reportedly dodged the draft by having one of his father’s tenants, a podiatrist, falsify a medical report with a diagnosis of bone spurs; he reportedly cheated on tests in college and threatened his schools to keep them from releasing his records; he prided himself on not paying taxes, and has reportedly made much of his income from money laundering. A theme of sadism and cruelty towards others less able to defend themselves has been pervasive (Cohen, 2020; Trump, 2020). He routinely employed a psychological maneuver generally seen in abusers, known by the acronym, DARVO (Freyd, 1997): Denial, Attack, Reversal of Victim with Offender. He seemed to have a perverse gift for inventing derogatory nicknames for his opponents, ones that resonated with his audiences’ regressive instincts. Trump especially relished in inciting sadistic aggression in his followers by leading repetitive chants of one syllable, three word phrases, such “Lock her up! Lock her up! Lock her up!” (referring to Hillary Clinton) and “Stop the steal! Stop the steal! Stop the steal!” (to overturn the election).

The Donald, as he was known to his friends prior to his meteoric ascent to the highest political office in the United States, and arguably the most powerful position in the world, was spectacularly ill prepared for this job. In fact, he turned that liability into a clever marketing strategy, advertising himself and his “brand” as one who is tough negotiator who never backs down and always ends up as a winner. In short, he insisted that only he could restore the United States to its former glory, claiming that the country was in serious decline after years of former president Barack Obama’s weak foreign policy and failing economic policies. (It should be also be noted here that Trump was the primary instigator of the “birther movement,” a vicious campaign of lies that contended that Obama had a forged birth certificate and was not actually an American citizen, and therefore not eligible to be President).

Trump’s campaign slogan was “Make America Great Again.” He turned this slogan into a very lucrative business, selling hats and other merchandise with the acronym, MAGA. With a finely honed instinct to find ways to monetize virtually all situations, he seemed to prize making a profit over everything else, except perhaps for his insatiable need for mirroring and idealization from his loyal followers. Donald Trump was real estate salesman and reality TV producer with a well-known dark side. He led a highly publicized, exhibitionistic and glamorous lifestyle
full of sex scandals and juicy tabloid stories. Numerous credible charges of sexual assault and rape of women were
given even more credence by his Access Hollywood interview where he confessed with glee about his irresistible
impulse to grab them by the “pussy” (Ryan, 2020).

He had a history of shady business dealings with suspected organized crime groups and foreign governments,
and managed to stay just ahead of the law. Bailed out from his enormous bankruptcy in the 1990's by heretofore
unknown creditors, it came to light that during his term in office, he had remained personally indebted for over 400
million dollars to these mysterious money lenders (Wilson, 2018).

Russia and the spectre of election interference in the 2016 election leading to his narrow, upset victory had
cast a shadow over Trump's presidency (Nance, 2019). It fueled his detractors’ claim that he was not legitimately
elected, thus providing an ironic turnabout for his years of trying to undermine his predecessor’s legitimacy. The
“Not My President” movement was further energized by Trump’s unusual allegiance and disturbing subservience
to Vladimir Putin, which was available for all to see. Putin’s hypnotic gaze, laser locked onto the fawning U.S.
President’s eyes during their televised meetings conveyed a queasy sense to many that they were viewing a puppet
and a puppet master. There were even speculations that the President of the United States was an unwitting
Russian asset whose mission was to create so much chaos, dysfunction, and divisiveness that it would further
weaken the country, thus rendering it impotent on the world stage. Such a neutralization of the United States
would allow its old Cold War enemy to prevail on the geopolitical chessboard.

Toward the end of his presidency, even after it was confirmed by his very loyal Secretary of State, Mike
Pompeo, that Russia was behind the unprecedented breach of highly sensitive government computers, Trump
denied it. In so doing, he further reinforced in the minds of his ever growing number of critics that he truly had an
unholy alliance with Russia, be it due to financial indebtedness, blackmail over alleged tapes of perverse sexual acts
filmed in Russian hotels, or because of a very special, secret arrangement with Vladimir Putin, himself. The idea that
the leader of the free world had a greater allegiance to Russia than his own citizenry was the most heinous and
inconceivable idea imaginable to Americans. Yet, the synergistic effect of his indifference, incompetence, greed, and
relentless pursuit of punishing his ever growing list of enemies resulted in such a failed presidency that it
substantially weakened the country to a point of great vulnerability.

By the end of Trump's term in office, the United States had the greatest debt in history, the economy was in a
serious recession, racial tensions were exacerbated, and there was destructive politicization over issues of national
importance, such as the simple wearing of masks to reduce contagion. His attempted coup, trying to overthrow the
results of the election and prevent the orderly transition of power, was of much greater importance to him than the
ever growing number of deaths (>350,000 at the time) due to COVID-19 and the millions of doses of vaccine sitting
on the shelves not being distributed. An unconvincing rationalization was given as the reason for the hold up at the
federal level, but by that time, he had long since lost his credibility with the medical profession when it came to
the health and welfare of American citizens. It seemed as though Operation Warp Speed, the underwriting of the
successful effort to develop the vaccines in record time, became yet another publicity stunt, as the American people
were seemingly being punished for voting Trump out of office. The fact that the term “Warp Speed” derives from a
science fiction television show is, in and of itself, further circumstantial evidence of the blurring of fantasy and
reality in the man's mind.

In the midst of the "darkest months" of the pandemic, not only were millions of doses withheld, but the
desperately needed COVID Relief Funding Bill was spitefully blocked until the 11th hour by a president who
celebrated Christmas lavishly at his Florida White House, Mar-a-Lago, while millions of Americans were about to be
left hungry, unemployed and unable to pay their rent.
For his part, Trump, as noted above, was a thin skinned narcissist with major superego problems, who was addicted to the adulation of his admirers and to the pursuit of revenge against his critics. This constellation of maladaptive and malevolent personality traits (Akhtar, 1992) fits the profile of a man, according to experts (Volkan, 2020) who could be manipulated by powerful outside influence, and thus be a possible threat to national security if he were in a high governmental position. Over the years, he had carefully crafted a persona of a man who was always a winner and always got what he wanted, even if he had to take it by force. Armed with a bevy of vicious lawyers in the tradition of his father’s notorious attorney, Roy Cohn, he exuded the rugged charm of once good looking bully who was born into wealth and privilege, for whom the law of the common man did not quite apply. The scathing accounts written by his niece (Trump, 2020) and his former personal lawyer and “fixer” who once declared he would take a bullet for the man (Cohen, 2020), depict Donald J. Trump as truly incapable of empathy, and one who was ruthless, relentless, humorless, and behaved like a mob boss.

Significantly, such observations were made long before his ascent to the almost unlimited power of the U.S. presidency. With it came the power to shape public opinion based on his latest version of reality, with just a few words on his Twitter feed. He was thus able to impose his perversive attitude toward reality (Grossman, 1993) throughout the land with the capriciousness of a Roman emperor and with the immediacy of the latest social media. It enabled him to wield extraordinary power unavailable to other tyrants in earlier times. Truth and the shared reality meant nothing to him. It was only the reality he believed in at any given moment that had any meaning to him. A new lexicon for propaganda quickly arose, with Orwellian phrases like “alternative facts,” and anything that contradicted that manufactured reality was “fake news.”

Possessing a roguish charisma, an entertaining stage presence, the “gift of gab,” and a knowledge of how to exploit social media, he achieved something truly remarkable. He got elected as 45th President of the United States in 2016 in an upset victory over Hillary Clinton. During his controversial, media fueled campaign, he brazenly asked for the Russians to help him get elected (the famous line “Russia are you listening...?”) by hacking into Ms. Clinton’s email. He sold enough American people on the idea that this most important job could be best handled by a man with no experience! While this obvious liability prevents even highly motivated people from getting basic, entry level jobs, Trump convinced the electorate that in his special case, it was an asset. He insisted that with his vast wealth and business connections throughout the world, he was immune to bribes or coercive pressure from lobbyists or special interest groups. Moreover, because of his self-professed honesty and integrity, he would “drain the swamp” of the corruption running rampant among career politicians and would surround himself with the “best people” to provide expert guidance on all matters. However, his carefully crafted image of the successful billionaire businessman collided with his refusal to make his tax reports available, immediately arousing suspicions that he was hiding something that might cast a shadow upon his grandiose claims. Perhaps he was cheating on his taxes; perhaps he was not as rich as he insisted; perhaps he was in great debt and was beholden to a foreign power. Controversy and doubts about his fitness for the job surrounded him, as he cultivated an extremely loyal base of conservatives, right wing extremists, white supremacists, evangelicals, conspiracy theorists, anti-vaxxers, and disenfranchised blue collar workers.

Donald Trump defied long standing traditions honored by virtually all previous presidential candidates, making it abundantly clear that he believed himself to be an exception. His enthusiastic and at times violent followers were quick to endorse his reality. He even boasted that he could shoot someone in broad daylight in downtown New York and get away with it! And so, “The Trump Era” began with a bang, literally. Hate crimes increased and gun violence escalated, with more mass shootings in schools, mosques, and synagogues. A flashpoint was the deadly rally in Charlottesville, VA, when, then, President Trump advocated for the armed white supremacists and Jew haters who invaded and terrorized this idyllic Southern college town, declaring to the horror of most of the country that “there are fine people on both sides.” Hillary Clinton’s exasperated and highly criticized remark that such Trump supporters were a “basket of deplorables” became prophetic. Trump did not want to alienate any of his ever
emboldened constituents; his critics became progressively aware of what his intimates had already known about his callousness, his vengeance seeking rage, and his Machiavellian mind.

The former reality TV star had great stage presence and comfort during his rambling performances. He demonstrated a remarkable capacity for promulgating disinformation and frank lying to the public, unprecedented for a US President. Because fascism, autocracy, and dictatorial leadership are better known throughout the world (Albright, 2018; Snyder, 2017; Volkan, 2020), such tendencies in Trump were probably recognized outside this country first. Greedily exploiting the ever growing power given to the Executive Branch, he tried to rule by decree, that is, executive order, insisting that the Constitution gave him unlimited power and total immunity. He insisted he could pardon himself, trying to convince himself and his world that he was omnipotent (Kogan, 2020).

Trump’s unusual bond with Vladimir Putin and other “strong men” corroborated the view that he had an infatuation and an idealizing identification with dictators. His biographers were eager to point out how his indulgent but brutal father and the absence of a secure attachment to a reliable mother due to her almost dying in childbirth with his younger sibling when he was a toddler, was the pathogenic environment of his childhood (Trump, 2020; Wilson, 2018). It reportedly resulted in affect intolerance, poor impulse control, and the development of a severely narcissistically impaired character with sexual perversions and sociopathic tendencies. This very dangerous character type became supercharged after becoming intoxicated with power.

Viewing the world through a TV screen, he reportedly spent 4–5 h a day addictively watching cable news, and reading his favorite newspapers. He was guided by ratings of his popularity reported by his chosen media outlets, as his colossal need for mirroring seemed essential for his psychic survival. He apparently listened to the advice of his favorite radio commentator, Rush Limbaugh, and Tucker Carlson of Fox TV News. Trump’s chaotic term in office was characterized by the shattering of norms, as the violent, delinquent “rich kid” turned President, tested the limits of our democratic institutions with his autocratic ambitions. To have simply written off his behavior as infantile or childish did an injustice to the severity of his maniacal tendencies. As his fiery rhetoric fueled the passions in those fearing the loss of the white man’s hegemony, he intensified the splits in American society to the point of violence and destructiveness.

4 | THE DUAL PLAGUES

And then, the pandemic swept through America. Despite the “13 things Trump did get right” (Frum, 2020), there has been catastrophic, excessive loss of life from COVID-19. By the end of the year, 2020, the roughly 350,000 dead and daily death rate of over 3000 would likely be forever associated with his reign. The daily death rate was roughly equivalent to the total September 11 death rate each and every day! There is an historic precedent that bears mentioning here as there are several curious parallels with the current situation. It is The Justinianic Plague or Plague of Justinian. Emperor Justinian, who ruled from 527 to 565 AD during “his” pandemic, also pledged to restore the world’s greatest empire to its former glory, in other words, to “Make Rome Great Again.” This plague quite likely originated in the Far East also, traveling not by aircraft, but rather by ships filled with grain partially eaten by flea infested black rats carrying the bacteria, Yersinia pestis. This first wave of the highly lethal Bubonic Plague killed millions in the Roman Empire and altered world history. Our Pandemic is also altering the course of history. And finally, like Donald Trump, Emperor Justinian was also infected and survived. So, will history repeat itself and name this pandemic for the leader of the world’s greatest empire, for example Donald’s Disease? We will find out in due course.

We now know that as early as January 2020, the then President Trump was aware of the great and imminent danger to the United States. He agreed to tape recorded interviews with Bob Woodward, whose award winning investigative reporting of the Richard Nixon Watergate Affair made him a fascinating choice for this president to speak so openly to. In these damning conversations, Trump revealed that he knew the coming plague was much
more deadly than the flu, that it was extremely contagious, and that it was airborne. However, he asserted that he
downplayed the seriousness of it because he did not want the people to panic (Woodward, 2020). This rationale
seemed quite disingenuous, as he endangered his constituents even more with his frank disinformation, his giving
medically unsound and dangerous advice, and his shaming of those who wore masks.

His most outrageous remarks occurred during his Thursday evening White House coronavirus briefing on April
24, 2020. Having already boasted that he understood the virus better than the experts and that he had a knack for
such things, he recommended injecting disinfectant into ill patients to cleanse their bodies of the virus! Squirming
most uncomfortably in her seat when he turned to her for affirmation, one of his top medical experts dared not
refute him and remained obediently mute. Immediately, however, there was public outrage over such ignorant and
absurdly dangerous advice. In essence, he was suggesting lethal injections to hopeless ill people.

To further inflict harm upon his people, the Trump re-election campaign rallies were documented “super
spreader events.” Not only was there powerful peer pressure to show loyalty by not wearing masks, but to further
test their willingness to sacrifice, attendees needed to sign waivers absolving Trump of any liability if they got
COVID! It was almost as though concerted efforts were made, in an unacknowledged way, to spread the virus as
widely as possible. In fact, those attendees might have unwittingly participated in a very dangerous medical
experiment. According to secret memos subsequently brought to light, Paul Alexander, assistant to the director of
the Department of Health and Human Services, had privately recommended that as many people get infected as
soon as possible in order to achieve herd immunity (Congressional Memorandum, 2020)! This position was
subsequently espoused by the last medical advisor to the President, a thoroughly unqualified radiologist and ardent
Trump supporter by the name of Scott Atlas, MD. An embarrassed Stanford University, the esteemed institution
where he is affiliated, publicly disagreed with him and tried to gain as much distance as possible from him. Such
ill-advised and dangerous advice has been thoroughly debunked by the failed experience in Sweden, where the king
himself, apologized to the Swedish people for the excessive morbidity and mortality due to this strategy.

When former President Trump finally contracted the virus, it came as no surprise, given his hyper masculine
posturing and bravado, which thrilled his admirers. He was rushed to the Walter Reed Hospital, where he was
given the best care in the world. His critics had then hoped, in vain, that this potentially life threatening crisis
would have humbled him; maybe he would have had an epiphany. Unfortunately, such a “corrective emotional
experience” would have been more likely in the movie version of such events rather than in real life. So, instead of
acquiring empathy for the victims and their families, he became even more grandiose. He reported having a
“miracle” recovery after receiving the then experimental monoclonal antibody treatment. Then, in the throes of a
probable steroid induced mania, he signed out of the hospital, endangered many Secret Service men who drove
him around the grounds for a victory lap and then staged a dramatic return to the White House. It was even
rumored that he was talked out of wearing a Superman costume under his shirt which he would dramatically reveal
during his address to the public. Nevertheless, it was a Mussolini-like moment, when from the balcony of the White
House, he tried to hide his exhaustion and shortness of breath during this photo op. Appearing bloated and
uncharacteristically pale, he boasted of his swift recovery and warned all the beleaguered and bereaved Americans
not to let COVID dominate their lives. He was not convincing nor compassionate. This performance was poorly
received by the public, again, as many were horrified by his arrogance, his utter preoccupation with himself, and his
total insensitivity to the great suffering that was about to get even worse as the cold months ahead were
approaching.

Operation Warp Speed was to create the super weapon needed to defeat the invisible enemy that had
destroyed Donald Trump’s chance for re-election. The wish to develop a secret, super weapon to defeat the enemy
is a known fantasy of destructive, grandiose leaders (Brenner, 2016). This enemy was most elusive. It was immune
to his mockery, his bullying, and his false promises. It kept replicating in peoples’ bodies, spreading the disease with
unheard of speed, seemingly unstoppable and by changing its form through mutations, became even more deadly.
The international race was on to be the first to develop a vaccine as soon as possible to stop this deadly menace.
The federal government’s multibillion investment in private sector development undoubtedly contributed to the
truly remarkable scientific achievement of a safe, effective new type of vaccine, and one that was developed in record time. He, therefore, felt certain about victory. The Nobel Peace Prize had already eluded Donald Trump, as well as Time Magazine’s Man of the Year but he felt certain that this latest achievement would surely cement his being immortalized into the side of Mount Rushmore, joining the greatest presidents who preceded him.

Unfortunately, there were some huge problems and a disastrous bungling of what has been the largest loss of life in this country since the Civil War, in the 1860’s. The drug company that first achieved success was Pfizer, which, ironically, was not part of Operation Warp Speed. This vaccine was approved in the United Kingdom and other countries before the United States. Nevertheless, there were negotiations with the United States for enough doses for a significant portion of the population, but the Trump administration reportedly refused this large deal. Instead, the initial amount purchased could protect only about 10 million citizens if fully administered. However, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex Azar announced that 20 million Americans would have been inoculated by the end of 2020, a statement of desperately needed hope that would have required 40 million doses (this preparation required two doses). By the end of the year, about 3 million were reportedly, actually given their first injections, a mere one per cent of the population...

5 | CONCLUSION

Donald Trump’s desperate efforts to subvert the rule of law in order to stay in power for the sake of staying in power took precedence over his actually using that power to mitigate the American carnage he swore to end. Record numbers of Americans died every day as hospitals were overwhelmed with dead and dying patients. Out of necessity, many began making “selections” over who to treat and who not to treat. Vaccine deployment fell woefully short due to many years ofshrinking resources for public health and a failure of the federal government to provide a national strategy and appropriate support. Those states who did not vote for Trump seemed to be particularly punished by his verbal condemnation and even less support. Yet, his own loyal base, more prone to believe his deceptions, defections, and denials were more likely to ignore safety guidelines, doubt the value of vaccines, attend super spreader events, and get infected also. In short, all Americans suffered excessively from a leader not suitable for the job, one whose character and perverse relationship with reality fostered a climate of chaos, confusion, mistrust, and fear. At a time of historic deadly crisis when people look to their leaders for protection and help, the populace became split over those who believed the propaganda and possibly suffered versus those who saw through the disinformation and possibly suffered for other reasons. It culminated in the Trump orchestrated political violence on January 6, 2020, when the curiously, poorly protected Capitol building was stormed and desecrated by a mob of his armed supporters wielding Confederate flags. This invasion occurred exactly when Congress was in the midst of confirming the election of Joe Biden; it was a terroristic attempt to stop the proceedings, but could have resulted in destruction of the Capitol, the members of Congress, and the Constitution. The nature of this attempted coup highlighted the extreme polarization in Congress, in law enforcement, and in the electorate as a whole (Snyder, 2021).

During Trump’s tenure in office, the overall atmosphere for many people in the country has been one of worry, uncertainty, insecurity, stress, and exhaustion. It has been generally seen as an unprecedented situation in U.S. history. This blight upon the land is curiously reminiscent of the legendary plague that was inflicted upon the ancient kingdom of Thebes. That land and its inhabitants were doomed to famine, illness and death until the criminal at large, a murderer, could be found, and finally brought to justice (Sophocles, 2000). The criminal turned out to be the current ruler of the kingdom, King Oedipus. In great contrast, however, once he realized that it was actually he who was the culprit, he accepted responsibility for his crime. Oedipus’ personal tragedy unfolded and the curse of the plague was lifted. In our current situation, Donald Trump’s persistence in his refusal to accept the reality of his lost election, and his perpetration of the most egregious attempted coup in U.S. history, has resulted in the vastly increased suffering of American citizens.
Fighting a pandemic while fighting the reality of admitting defeat in office is like waging war on two fronts. It dangerously stretches resources, and history has shown it is a gamble that is prone to fail miserably. And indeed, that has been the case. Mr. Trump’s failure took on monumental proportions in the closing days of his term, as he was recorded trying to bully the Secretary of State in Georgia to falsify the vote in order to give him the election. The news of this shameless and incriminating attempt to commit election fraud overshadowed the daily death count which continued to trend upward. One could not help but feel that his inability to accept his defeat had absorbed all of his attention. It was as though the words scrawled on the First Lady’s jacket when she visited the detained children at the U.S. border said it all: “I really don’t care. Do you?”

The comparisons between Donald Trump and Adolf Hitler, until recently, have been criticized as being extreme and melodramatic (Brenner, 2017). I have agreed. Hitler was a decorated war veteran and began his political career in jail for starting an insurrection. Trump was a draft dodger and may be ending his political career in jail for starting an insurrection. Evidently, there are many roads to perdition that a destructive leader can take, and a detailed comparison of the two is well beyond the scope of this essay. What can be said here is that Hitler was psychologically unable to admit defeat, despite losing his war. His delusional path to victory was to kill more Jews more quickly (Brenner, 2020). He refused to believe his generals. Instead, Hitler implored them to force their soldiers to fight to the death. This command ensured an even greater loss of life to both military forces and civilians, whose cities were mercilessly bombed into submission by the Allies. Young boys, totally unfit for combat, were sent to the front to defend the Fatherland. Women, children, and the elderly waited in vain for the Fuhrer to declare victory, not knowing that many of them were also doomed to be slaughtered.

Historians have speculated that Hitler felt so much murderous rage at the German people for betraying him, that he turned on them in one last gasp of revenge. The madness did not end until Hitler’s mass murder-suicide in his private underground bunker, which was enacted on a national scale as well (Brenner, 2016). Hitler’s unbridled grandiosity, poor judgment and refusal to surrender quite likely inflicted hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths upon his own loyal citizens.

How history remembers Donald Trump and his disease has not been written yet, but the dual pandemics during his regime will most certainly be noted. These scourges led to his downfall which led to the rape, looting, and defilement of the most sacred building in the United States. It was perpetrated by his loyal followers in MAGA hats with Confederate flags, wearing clothing with obscene slogans glorifying the Holocaust. They were looking to assassinate government leaders in order to keep Donald Trump in power. At the time of this writing, the national law enforcement agencies, including the F.B.I, are working to uncover the evidence that this treasonous insurrection was inspired, produced and directed by a president with the mind of a sadistic rapist whose unfettered power enabled him to actualize his prurient revenge fantasies on a grand scale. He viewed it on TV in real time and reportedly was quite gleeful.

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