

Trump Survives Impeachment Because Votes are More Respected than Facts in the US

By: Dr. Abdullah Robin*

Trump's impeachment divided the US. Some have said that the US constitution is being shredded, and in a symbolic show of defiance, and hours after the Senate acquitted Trump, the speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, made a shocking public gesture on live television. It happened as Trump finished making his annual 'State of The Union' speech to the nation from the House of Representatives. As he stood up to the podium to deliver his speech, he handed a written copy to Nancy Pelosi according to custom, but controversially he did not shake her hand. She then refused to introduce him in the traditional manner, "Members of Congress, I have the high privilege and distinct honor of presenting to you the president of the United States" and instead simply said, "Members of Congress, the president of the United States." Trump was arrogant and praised his great success during the speech, and Pelosi made subtle facial gestures behind him as he spoke and she concluded her defiance by standing up and tearing up his speech as Trump turned to leave the podium.

There were two articles of impeachment against President Trump: abuse of power for pressurizing Ukraine to launch an investigation into his political rival, and obstruction of Congress for refusing to allow White House and State Department officials to testify. On both charges, all the democratic senators pronounced Trump guilty. On the second charge, all Republican senators pronounced their Republican president not guilty, while on the first charge just one Republican senator voted against Trump. As the Republicans were the majority, Trump was found not guilty.

Trump and his most visible Democratic enemy, Nancy Pelosi, have been throwing harsh words at each other. Pelosi said, "He shredded the truth with his speech, he's shredding the Constitution with his conduct and I shredded his state of mind address," in a play on words about Trump's 'State of the Union' speech. Trump said that Democrats are 'evil' and "want to destroy our country."

The two chambers of the US Congress are supposed to account the Executive according to the principle of 'separation of powers.' This is a core principle of ruling in theories of democracy that were incorporated into the US constitution with the aim of preventing abuses of power and tyranny. However, President Trump has not been held to account, as the votes for and against Trump's guilt have been based upon party affiliation. Even before the trial in the Senate started, the Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, stated that, "There is no chance the president is going to be removed from office." What a strange trial when the judge gives his verdict before the case has even begun. The Republicans refused to call a single witness, but the Democrats wanted to call many, and this question was debated and voted upon before the trial began. The former national security adviser, John Bolton, was reported in the media to be about to publish a book confirming that the President did indeed hold up aid to Ukraine in order to pressure the Ukrainians to yield to Trump's

request of making an embarrassing investigation into his political rival, and the Democrats wanted him to testify at the trial. The voting was according to Party and not principle, and so the trial happened without Bolton or any other witnesses! Surely that is the worst trial in the world.

Trial of a president according to popularity instead of fact is not new. Former president Clinton was impeached after the Monica Lewinsky scandal with the vast majority of Democrats against impeachment, and the vast majority of Republicans favouring impeachment. When the case was tried in the Senate, also with two charges, not a single Democrat voted to find their president guilty. As for Republicans, ten out of 55 voted that the Democrat president was not guilty on the first charge, while 5 declared him not guilty on the second charge. So in both of these trials, the result was determined largely by political affiliation. In other words, as long as you are popular with the people, you can do as you like if you are the president of the US, which is what Trump has always said! Six months ago he declared, "Then I have an Article 2, where I have the right to do whatever I want as president."

Nevertheless, the opposition to Trump continues. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said that Trump's acquittal was, "virtually valueless" and was the result of "one of the largest cover-ups in the history of our nation." The Senate Majority leader, Mitch McConnell, who was leading the Republicans said, "We had a vote. No vote was prevented. No debate was prevented. These guys didn't have the votes ... These guys would win more often if they win more elections and they have the opportunity to do that this year." So winning a legal case is about votes, not truth in the US, and the President truly is above the law as long as his party is confident that the voters are happy.

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