

The Truth About Impeachment

Donald Trump should not have been on the phone with a foreign head of state encouraging another country to investigate his political opponent Joe Biden. Some Republicans are trying, but there's no way to spin this as a good idea. Like a lot of things Trump does, it was pretty over-the-top. Our leaders' official actions should not be about politics. Those two things need to remain separate. Once those in control of our government use it to advance their political goals, we become just another of the world's many corrupt countries. America is better than that. That's also why it's good that there are finally investigations looking into the extent to which the Obama FBI may have used our government -- and even foreign governments -- to try to crush Trump in the last election.

The key question with Trump's Ukraine call, though, is whether the president's actions, advisable or not, rise to the level of an impeachable offense. It's hard to argue they do. The president did not, as was first reported, offer a quid pro quo to the Ukrainians. He did not condition any U.S. support on a Biden investigation. The Justice Department has already looked at the totality of the call and determined that Trump did not break the law.

Impeaching a president is the most extreme and anti-democratic remedy we have in our system of government. A fundamental cornerstone of our entire system is to respect the will of the voters. The American people elected Trump president of the United States, though a huge part of our political class has never been able to stomach it. They think Trump is unfit to be our president. They definitely don't want to address seriously the issues that drove voters to the radical step of voting in Trump as our president -- issues such as income inequality, economic stagnation and our broken immigration system. It's easier to pretend that this was all the result of a few Russian Facebook ads or because the same American people who had just elected Barrack Obama somehow transformed overnight into a bunch of racists.

So, now, as we are on the eve of another election season, our political class wants to take the most recent election away from the voters. Millions of Americans voted for Trump to try to shock our political system into finally listening to their concerns. How do you suppose they'll feel about a system that instead removes Trump from our democracy? You don't have to be an especially deep thinker to realize this is a recipe for social upheaval.

Nancy Pelosi has been right all these months when she's repeatedly said that to be legitimate, impeachment must be bipartisan. Anything less would tear apart our country, she said. In this area, Pelosi is echoing the sentiment a senator expressed during the Clinton impeachment process:

"While the founders included impeachment powers in the Constitution, they were concerned by the potential partisan abuse. We should be no less aware of the dangers of partisanship. As we have seen, the process functions best when there is a broad bipartisan consensus behind moving ahead. The country is not well served when either policy disagreements or personal animosities drive the process."

Those words ring true today. They were set forth in 1998 by then-Sen. Joe Biden.

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The truth is there's a large part of the left -- and some never-Trumpers on the right -- who never accepted Trump's election and have wanted him impeached from the start. The Washington Post ran a piece headlined "The campaign to impeach President Trump has begun" on Jan. 20, 2017 -- Inauguration day. Talk about no honeymoon -- and no respect for America's voters.

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Concerns about the political nature of what we're seeing were exacerbated when we learned the so-called whistleblower who reported Trump's Ukraine call was in touch with Rep. Adam Schiff -- the Democrats' lead on impeachment -- even before he came forward to the public with his charges. Privately colluding with the staff of some of Trump's biggest political opponents? That seems a little partisan for a good government whistleblower. It also seems pretty clear that Schiff was dishonest when he went on TV and directly denied prior contact with the whistleblower. None of this means Schiff should be removed from office, but by the standards he's setting, he certainly could be.

A lot of people in Washington -- in both parties -- aren't Trump fans. They complain that Trump doesn't act the way most presidents act, that his attacks against his opponents are not presidential, that he lacks the requisite political experience and has hired some truly horrible staffers. There may be truth to some of that. Trump has certainly shaken up Washington. His supporters would argue that's exactly what they wanted him to do. This is a legitimate debate worth having. Fortunately, America's founders set up a pretty good system to have just this sort of debate every four years: It's called an election. The next one's already started. The facts are out there for the American people to weigh as they make their decision. How about we let them sort all this out? There's no need to come up with thin excuses for a purely partisan impeachment process when we have an election right around the corner.