

The Democrats, the Impeachment, and the Fable of the Scorpion and the Frog

It has been a virtual certainty from day one that the Republican-led Senate would not vote to remove President Trump. And many political pundits would agree that the House's vote to impeach Trump, led by the Democrats, will only make him stronger. Why, then, proceed with such a suicidal political mission?

I'm sure there are some principled politicians in the House who genuinely believe that Trump is a danger to America and that he has committed crimes worthy of impeachment. In that case, they would be conscience-bound to vote for impeachment, even if they knew that Trump would not be removed and even if they knew their vote would only empower him all the more.

But I seriously doubt that many other Congressmen operate with such pure, non-partisan motives. For most of them, every vote is calculated. Will this help my reelection chances? Will this empower our party? Will this serve our larger goals?

Lest anyone be so idealistic as to doubt the highly partisan nature of our political system, just look at the latest polling data on the FiveThirtyEight website.

As of Jan. 20, 86.3% of Democrats support impeaching the president in contrast with just 12.6% of Republicans. Hardly an even split.

And while Trump's current approval rating is 44%, according to Gallup, "Forty-six percent of Americans say they would like their senators to vote to convict Trump and remove him from office, while 51% want their senators to vote against conviction so Trump will remain as president."

So, efforts to remove the president from office are less popular than the president himself.

Why is it, then, that the Democrats have been so hell-bent on impeaching Trump, even before his inauguration? Why did they jump at the opportunity of exploiting the Ukraine call based on partial, secondhand evidence (at best)?

On Dec. 4, 2019, the "Opinion" section of the *Los Angeles Times* announced: "Letters to the Editor: Democrats wanted Trump impeached from the start because he deserved it."

In contrast, on Dec. 18, 2019, the "Opinion" section of Fox News carried an article by Matt Wolking titled, "Impeachment is based on Democrats' hatred of Trump and anger at his election."

Is it that simple? Has the Democrats' intense hatred of the president impaired their judgment?

On Feb. 11, 1999, one day before President Clinton was acquitted, Senator Charles Schumer outlined his reasons for opposing the impeachment process, focusing on the painful toll it had taken on the nation.

As the *New York Post* reported, Schumer's words from 20 years ago are coming back to bite him today.

He wrote, "If you had asked me one year ago if people like this with such obvious political motives could use our courts, play the media and tantalize the legislative branch to achieve their ends of bringing down the president, I would have said 'not a chance – that doesn't happen in America.'"

He also said this: "It seems we have lost the ability to forcefully advocate for our position without trying to criminalize or at least dishonor our adversaries—often over matters having nothing to do with the public trust. And it is hurting the country; it is marginalizing and polarizing the

Congress.”

And while Schumer closed his passionate letter with a call for unity between the parties, he also wrote this: “It has shaken me that we stand at the brink of removing a president—not because of a popular groundswell to remove him and not because of the magnitude of the wrongs he’s committed—but because conditions in late 20th century America has made it possible for a small group of people who hate Bill Clinton and hate his policies to very cleverly and very doggedly exploit the institutions of freedom that we hold dear and almost succeed in undoing him.”

Note that operative word: hate.

That seems to be the operative word today.

President Trump’s political opponents hate him with such passion that, even if their impeachment efforts are suicidal from a political perspective, they can do no other. At the least, as Rep. Nancy Pelosi said on the *Bill Maher* show, addressing Trump, “You are impeached forever.”

Again, I’m sure there are elected officials who truly feel they are acting rightly and that Trump is a disgrace to the White House and a danger to America. And, as always, I’m neither minimizing nor whitewashing the president’s failures and faults.

But when it comes to the “why” behind the impeachment process, it reminds me of the fable of the scorpion and the frog.

As the story goes, “A scorpion, which cannot swim, asks a frog to carry it across a river on the frog’s back. The frog hesitates, afraid of being stung by the scorpion, but the scorpion argues that if it did that, they would both drown. The frog considers this argument sensible and agrees to transport the scorpion, but midway across the river the scorpion stings the frog anyway, dooming them both. The dying

frog asks the scorpion why it stung the frog despite knowing the consequence, to which the scorpion replies: 'I couldn't help it. It's in my nature.'"

Enough said.