

Repeating a lie doesn't make it the truth

Today, the Congress of the United States voted to impeach the President. This was only the third time in our nation's history that Congress has taken this monumental step and the first time that the impeachment was based on charges that didn't rise to the threshold of 'high crimes and misdemeanors'. What should be disturbing to all is the fact that this impeachment was based on purely circumstantial evidence.

This drastic action was totally partisan and totally political. From the day President Trump was elected the Democrats have been looking for ways to remove him. Why? For five basic reasons:

1. They see him as an illegitimate President,
2. They believe that he stole the election from their candidate, Hillary Clinton,
3. They despise him and the way he talks and acts,
4. They see him rolling back all the so-called 'gains' made by the Obama Administration and
5. They fear he will be re-elected.

Most of us who are thinking, reasoning people can understand the Democrats' fear, but those of us who believe that impeachment is the best way to resolve those fears are few, at least on the Conservative side. The Democrats' solution to impeach the President is just as absurd as a family disowning their son or daughter or sending them away from home for a minor infraction at school. It's knee-jerk banishment, something we don't resort to in modern America. 'Shunning' may be practiced by Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Scientology and some Amish groups, but we haven't adopted it as a normal political practice...until now, that is.

Thanks to House Democrats, we've gone back in time - to a place when superstition and ignorance ruled and where fairness and open-mindedness were meaningless, empty words. The Democrats have now shown us all that when power and vengeance are combined and then targeted at one individual, the collateral damage to the rest of us can be catastrophic. God help future presidents who run afoul of the good graces of the opposition party, for they, too, may become subject to removal on equally specious grounds.

Yesterday's proceedings were actually a Democrat campaign rally disguised as an impeachment vote. Indeed, the whole sordid mess has been one big play by Democrat Congressional Representatives for the hearts and minds of their hometown constituents. What better venue than an impeachment hearing for them to stand up and address their base on the evils of Donald Trump and by extension the Republican Party? No, it was perfect. One to four minutes of public pontification and prevarication. A chance to remind their voters that they won't back down from excising the 'boil' of the bully-in-chief. An attack without the possibility of counterattack. Now the Democrats occupy the political moral high ground, but the question is: "For how long?"

Voters aren't stupid. They have eyes and ears and have seen and heard all the rhetoric from puffed-up trolls like Adam Schiff and Jerry Nadler. Neither have they been blind to the comments of San Fran Nancy Pelosi who admitted that her party has been on the impeachment crusade for two years or more. If the voters have been paying attention to the hearings of the past two months they have seen that the Democrats have been reaching for that low and outside pitch and have struck out on presenting anything that resembles facts in the Trump Impeachment case.

It is doubtful that Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, will take Senator Charles Schumer's bait and schedule a series of witness hearings. The idea for the Republicans is to euthanize this unholy creature before it grows and gains the strength to multiply. An euthanize it Senator McConnell will even though the President will be pressing for his day in court. Mr. Trump may be an excellent negotiator, but he is still a journeyman politician and must accede to wiser more experienced hands like McConnell.

After all, any seasoned attorney will tell you that you should check your worst emotions at the door, never tempt fate and never ever ask a question of a witness that you don't know the answer to.

Impeachment – the new Red Badge of Courage?

In 1894, Stephen Crane wrote the “Red Badge of Courage.” The book was about a Civil War private in the Union Army who flees from the field of battle and longs for the one thing that would show his courage (despite his desertion)...a wound in battle. He eventually overcomes his fear and goes on to fight, courageously. Like the main character in the book, the Democrats looked for a way to get their Red Badge of Courage without risking anything. They chose impeachment, and being the majority party in the House decided to stack the deck against the enemy by deserting prior accepted practice and made the rules of engagement to suit their narrow purpose.

They wanted to win the war without incurring any casualties and wanted but one prisoner, and that prisoner was Donald Trump. Pelosi, Schiff and Nadler teamed up to set the trap for the President many months earlier, and the President obliged them in July with a now infamous phone call to a country most Americans hadn't even heard of at the time, Ukraine.

To bolster their case, the prosecution brought in 'hearsay experts' from the ranks of the Foreign Service and the State Department and then topped it off with three Constitutional law professors that had no first-hand knowledge of the actual actions of the President, but were only too happy to lend their two cents' worth of impeachment knowledge to the aspiring recipients of the 'Red Badge of (political) Courage.' Never have so few hoodwinked so many with so little actual evidence.

This was a case of presumption and assumption and not one of provable intent. Detectives and prosecutors will tell you that they look for suspects who have motive, means and opportunity. The Democrats found one that had two out of three, but failed to prove motive or intent. If you or I were charged with a crime, we'd demand that all three be part of the jury's consideration and deliberations. The President had no such opportunity.

I don't mind admitting to you that I am ashamed of the performance of the Democrats yesterday. I am especially ashamed of what it says about our values and sensibilities as well as our maturity as a nation. We have proven to the world that we are unworthy of this great Republic and are ignorant of the sacrifices that our founders made to give it to us. We have ignored our responsibility to provide all men, from Presidents to peasants, with the presumption of innocence until such time as incontrovertible evidence is introduced to prove guilt. We are bound to guarantee every accused person a swift and fair adjudication of those facts. This impeachment trial offered neither.

As of today, Donald J. Trump may now proudly wear the 'Red Badge of Courage' and the Democrats can now bear the yellow color of cowardice. God help us in the months and years going forward. We are all sailing on angry and unpredictable seas.

Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of three books on American politics and has written over 1,000 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He can be reached at: stephan@stephanhelgesen.com