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**After the acquittal**

The US Senate has acquitted former President Donald Trump in the impeachment trial of the former president over charge of incitement for insurrection.

Two-thirds of the senators, or 67 votes, were needed to hold Trump guilty but the House Impeachment Managers could arrange 57 senators (50 Democrats and seven Republicans) in favour of the resolution while 43 Republican senators acquitted him of the charge.

Although this was the fourth impeachment trial in American history overall –before Trump, only two presidents, Andrew Johnson in 1688 and Bill Clinton in 1998, were indicted but both were eventually acquitted – this was the first impeachment trial in which all members of the government and several from the opposition party voted against the president. And Trump is the only president to have twice survived an impeachment in the Senate. He was also acquitted last February in his first impeachment trial.

Trump has been acquitted so his subsequent disqualification for contesting or holding office of the president couldn't materialise. Thus, he is now eligible to run for the 2024 presidential election. Public opinion surveys show that he remains by far the most popular national figure in the Republican Party, the most dominant force in right-wing politics and one who continues to command unmatched admiration from conservative voters.

During the impeachment proceedings, the House Managers used screenshots of the president's social media posts before and after the January 6 attack, hundreds of documents and several hours of video and audio evidence to prove the former president guilty of misconduct. But 43 Republicans preferred their party affiliation, political interests and Trump's appeasement over their allegiance to the US constitution and democracy, and again sided with Trump.

Trump's acquittal was pretty much a given when it turned out that his punishment in the impeachment case was dependent on the support of Senate Republicans.

The main premise of the Democrats and the nine impeachment managers was that Trump lied to his supporters for months about the alleged ‘fraud’ in the elections, and that it was necessary to stop confirmation of this ‘fake victory’ by state and federal legislatures; and urged his supporters to fight like hell. To the impeachment managers, the January 6 incident was the culmination of Trump's baseless accusations and conspiracies that he indulged in to change the election results. He incited people to riot and insurrection. He stopped Congress from performing its duties. He endangered the lives of former VP Mike Pence, all senators and security employees. He did nothing to control the protesters and protect the senators. And with no signs that he was remorseful, they argued, he could ignite a repeat if allowed to seek office again. So, Trump should be punished and disqualified and banned from participating in politics.

However, after most Republican senators displayed a lack of interest in the House managers' arguments against Trump and an acquittal looked certain, the latter rather addressed Americans in general and intended to record correct history.

Trump's lawyers claimed that the Democrats were bent upon disqualifying their political opponent and that Trump is a former president so his trial is unconstitutional. His lawyers also said that while of course there was a revolt, the rebels came themselves and Trump did not provoke them.

It should be noted that most Republicans acquitted Trump on technical grounds (that he is a former president while only a current president can be impeached). Republican Senator Mitch McConnell, who voted for Trump's acquittal, said he believed Trump was undeniably guilty of a “disgraceful dereliction of duty” on January 6, when he incited and then failed to do anything to halt a deadly assault on the Capitol." But he said the Senate has no power to convict and disqualify a former officeholder who is now a private citizen.

That was a ridiculous argument on two grounds. One, Mitch McConnell himself had blocked Trump's impeachment before January 20 while the latter was still the president. Trump, of course, was a former president then but he was being impeached for what he said and did during his tenure as US president. So it was very much a valid constitutional trial.

Trump has escaped conviction in the impeachment trial once again but thanks to his two impeachment trials and his actions before and after January 6, he will go down in history as a president who conspired against and threatened his nation, its constitution, its system of government and even his own vice president.

Trump has not yet expressed any remorse or regret for any of his actions and the high-handedness of his followers. He welcomed his acquittal, saying: "the acquittal is a historic and beautiful moment to make America great again, it has just begun."

Americans should ponder over what that practically means – if Trump's past actions based on self-interest, lies, deception and conspiracy and the devastating effect it had on American society, systems, institutions and society are kept in mind.

Unfortunately, Trump has not been punished for putting pressure on government officials, conspiring to change the outcome of the presidential election, telling lies, inciting his supporters to open violence, and attacking Capitol Hill.

If President Trump had been convicted, no other president would have dared to do the same in the future. His acquittal has very dangerous implications for the US and its democracy. Now Trump and others like him may be emboldened to pursue such agendas with impunity.

Though he is free of the impeachment case now, Trump may still face challenges in courts. There are criminal investigations in Washington about his role in the Hill riots and in Georgia about his efforts to pressure state election officials to overturn the results of the state’s vote. He may also be sued by victims of the Capitol rampage. And there are continuing investigations of his finances in New York. There is also an investigation against him over sexual assault. So, these investigations and his hard times will continue to pester him in future.

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