[Tahir Ali Khan](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/tahir-ali-khan)

February 1, 2021

**Test of the Republicans**

If the impeachment trial of former US president Trump in the Senate depends on the support of Senate Republicans, it is gradually becoming highly unlikely.

The majority of the Senate Republicans have repeatedly shown that the pleasure of their colleague Trump is more important to them than the constitution, democracy and traditions of the United States of America.

The formal impeachment trial of Trump over inciting the American people to insurrection will begin on February 9 wherein arguments and evidence from both sides will be presented. But Trump's chances of impeachment by the Senate received a serious jolt on January 26, when 45 Republican senators tried to dismiss the impeachment trial before it could even begin.

Democrats have 50 members in the Senate. They need the support of 17 Republicans to be able to convict Trump. But 45 of the 50 Republicans there have voted to discontinue the impeachment proceedings against Trump.

Although the attempt failed with the support of 50 Democrats and five Republicans and the trial will continue, it nevertheless proved that it would not be easy for Democrats to manage a two-thirds majority of 67 members in the Senate for punishing Trump.

It also made it clear that, despite the fact that Trump tried to stop officials from counting and verifying popular votes in the states, to appoint electoral college members of his choice, postpone electoral college meetings and then to win there, to provoke a revolt, to deny the US Senate its constitutional obligation to verify electoral college votes, and to provoke his supporters to storm the Congress building on January 6 when election results were to be confirmed and despite the fact that all this amounted to open rebellion and blatant violation of the US system and the constitution on which Trump has so far expressed no remorse nor has apologized thereon, the Republicans are determined to save Trump from impeachment in Senate once again.

It also shows that even though Trump has left the White House, he still has complete sway over the party and its members and very few Republicans seem willing to annoy him and thus risk their political careers.

Although some Republican senators who voted to stop the impeachment trial later said they would make a final decision on whether to support or oppose Trump's impeachment based on arguments and testimonies from both sides, observers say so far no US president has been impeached in the Senate and there is little chance of Trump's impeachment as well.

Speaking to CNN, President Joe Biden also said that Trump would be prosecuted for sure but he doubted the possibility of his conviction.

Most Republicans in Congress have long supported Trump. In February last year, all Republican senators except Mitt Romney voted against Trump's impeachment despite strong evidence.

Most Republicans also accepted and spread his baseless allegations of electoral fraud and very few acknowledged the results and Joe Biden's victory.

Then two-thirds of House Republicans refused to accept the Pennsylvania electorates. Then 147 House Republicans refused to confirm Biden's victory. Then 205 of them voted against the resolution which called on former VP Mike Pence to remove Trump from office under Article 25 of the constitution. Then 197 House Republicans voted against the impeachment motion in the House of Representatives and now all but five Senate Republicans have been instrumental in plotting to end the impeachment proceedings against Trump.

Republicans are also threatening to impeach former Democrat presidents if the impeachment of former president Trump continues.

Though all Senators take oath that they will continue impeachment proceedings with impartiality and justice in accordance with the constitution and the law, Republicans are still saying that since Trump is no longer the president and only an incumbent president can be impeached under the constitution, therefore the impeachment case against Trump, being unconstitutional, should be dropped.

But if we assume and accept that the Senate cannot prosecute a former president, it would be tantamount to giving every future president a green signal for every wrongdoing in the last days of his term.

Trump, of course, is now a former president but his impeachment is based on the words and deeds he has done as president of the United States, and thus his impeachment is very much within the spirit of the constitution.

If this case is dropped because he is a former president, then every future malicious president will commit all kinds of unconstitutional acts in his last days because he will not be in danger of any interrogation and impeachment after he leaves office.

In 1876, then US secretary of war William Belknap resigned shortly before he was being impeached for corruption in the House of Representatives, but the House still impeached him although he was later acquitted in the Senate.

Trump is the first US president to have been impeached twice in the House of Representatives and the only one to be impeached after leaving office.

Trump hinted a few days ago that he would form a third party if he is not backed by the Republican Party, but then withdrew the announcement after receiving enough support.

Trump has contacted all Republican senators himself and his envoys, asking them to support him. In such a situation, his impeachment in the Senate seems highly unlikely.

The writer is an academic and freelance columnist who specializes in US politics.

Email: tahirkatlang039@gmail.com