**The trial of Donald J Trump**

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On January 13, Mr Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives for having incited the January 6 violent insurrection resulting in a mob breaking into the US Capitol Building and committing acts of murder and mayhem. They did so in an effort to stop the certification of Joseph Biden as the winner of the 2020 presidential election. It is now up to the Senate to determine whether the former president is guilty of the charges against him.

The first day of the proceedings was dedicated to a motion made by Mr Trump’s attorneys arguing that the trial itself was unconstitutional since Trump was no longer in office. After the Senate voted 56-44 that it was constitutional, the trial continued.

During the second and third days, the Democratic House Members presented their impeachment case against Mr Trump. It featured graphic footage of the violent break-in of the Capitol and excerpts from Trump’s speeches and Twitter comments, which the Democrats argued incited the protesters to march to the Capitol and “stop the steal” of the election. The videos were harrowing reminders of the extreme violence of that day. And the excerpts from Trump’s speeches were reminders of the former president’s incitement.

[Libya marks tenth anniversary of 2011 revolution](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/libya-marks-tenth-anniversary-of-2011-revolution)

The Democrats closed their case with the summary argument that Trump had, during his time in office, courted and cultivated far-right extremist militia elements. Both before and after the 2020 election, he used his speeches and tweets to mobilise these elements. In the days leading up to January 6, he incited his followers to come to DC for a “Stop the Steal” rally and did nothing when social media chatter around the event hinted at possible violence. And finally on the 6th, even after it became clear that the Capitol had been breached, Mr Trump acted late, and hesitantly, to call on his supporters to leave the building, while telling them he loved them and praised their patriotism.

On the fourth day (which is today as I am writing this column), Mr Trump’s attorneys began their defence. It consists of four key elements: that the impeachment is based on nothing more than the Democrats’ long-standing hatred of Donald Trump; that the Democratic case presented misleading evidence in which Trump’s speeches were edited to produce a false impression of his intent; that the Democrats are using a double-standard because members of their party have used language as incendiary as Trump’s; and that the use of Mr Trump’s words are a violation of his right to free speech.

[US to pay more than $200m to WHO by end of month](https://nation.com.pk/18-Feb-2021/us-to-pay-more-than-dollar-200m-to-who-by-end-of-month)

It was important that Mr Trump was called to account for his behavior and his words. Accountability is essential for democracy. If Congress were to simply have let pass what happened on January 6th or the words Mr Trump said leading up to and during the insurrection, then such violence very well might happen again. Of course, the best guarantee that it will not be repeated would be for the Senate to convict Mr Trump. But even if they do not, a marker has been laid and a message sent.

It was also important that the words and actions before and during January 6th are now recorded and preserved for posterity. There will be no forgetting or rewriting of history. The violence, the hateful chants, the death threats, and Mr Trump’s incendiary rhetoric will not be forgotten or refashioned into something other than what they were.

And finally, while the trial was ongoing, my daughter and I discussed how much a relief it was to be able to listen to the proceedings without the fear of waking up each morning to a barrage of angry or hateful tweets from Mr Trump. The absence of his Twitter rants, since he was banned from that social media platform, has been refreshing. We only remembered just how unsettling they were when the House team played parts of the ex-president’s rally speeches or showed some of his tweets during their presentation.

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This doesn’t mean that 17 Republicans would vote to convict Mr Trump. No matter how compelling the case against him and the fact that his voice is now muted on social media—many Republican Senators are still afraid of what they call the “Trump’s base.” With more than two-thirds of Republicans believing that Mr Trump won the November election, Republican elected officials are loath to cross them. Even those Senators who ran against Trump in 2016 (Lindsay Graham, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio) and called him a liar, a charlatan, and a threat to the Republican Party, have since cowered in the face the fear of retribution from Trump supporters. They know he is a problem but are still afraid of him.

That said, this week was historic and will be remembered as playing an important role in preserving democracy.

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