Now that the House Intelligence Committee portion of the impeachment inquiry has been completed, the issues are coming into clearer focus. As a rhetorical scholar who for over 40 years has studied political communication, allow me to make a few observations followed by some serious concerns.
(1) The House has performed its required and important oversight function as prescribed by the framers of the Constitution.

(2) The highly credible and professional witnesses who testified presented a compelling and nonpartisan case that there was indeed a quid pro quo—and that Trump’s behavior was not only unorthodox but violated his oath of office, and threatened national security.

(3) The House, therefore, very shortly will impeach President Trump.

(4) It is likely that no House Republican will support this—that they will remain in lockstep as they have from the very beginning—and some vulnerable Democrats could vote against impeachment.

(5) Given polling data released in the last 48 hours showing support for impeachment has either declined or has not changed, especially in key contested states, as well as retiring Texas Republican Rep. Will Hurd’s emphatic claim that the facts don’t support impeachment, it is unlikely that any Republican Senator will vote to convict the President.

(6) President Trump will enter the 2020 campaign embracing the erroneous and illogical House Republican narrative that has been repeated every day during the hearings. Trump will boast that once again he was acquitted and that this is one more example of the Democrats being unwilling to accept the results of the 2016 election.

While the impeachment inquiry was necessary and in accord with Constitutional expectations and the duty prescribed by our country’s framers, I continue to worry about where our country is headed.
To be clear: I do not believe impeachment should have been avoided in order to prevent a Democratic defeat in 2020. Nevertheless, my concern now is what will happen to the rule of law and our democracy if Trump succeeds in leveraging Republican impeachment rhetoric and his acquittal to win reelection.

What this will mean is that Trump will be unchecked, essentially knowing that he has been given the license and authority to do whatever he desires—even if it is illegal. Worse yet, our system of checks and balances, the separation of the branches of government and our nation’s institutions will be undermined—perhaps permanently.

Moreover, the Constitutional mechanism of impeachment itself will no longer be possible. After all, if what Trump has done does not provide a viable and persuasive case for impeachment and conviction, then what act could ever rise to that level?

Although my own political bias is obvious and while I plan to vote against Trump, my hope is that all Americans will become engaged and understand the unique importance and potential consequences of the 2020 election.

Regardless of whether one supports impeachment, we must search our conscience, asking whether the country can afford four more years of a President who jeopardizes our national security, violates the rule of law and does things primarily for personal gain.

My fondest wish is that people will fulfill their democratic duty and vote, especially if they never have done so—and that they will bracket
their partisanship, seriously contemplating what kind of a nation they want for their children. If that happens, my fears will be alleviated.

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