Second verse, same as the first. A clear rhetorical narrative is being repeated — one bound to frustrate many and one that at least in the short term may not lead to the truth.

President Donald Trump on Sept. 24 authorized release of the transcript of his conversation with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky. Despite the fact that the transcript revealed no explicit quid pro quo, it did show that Trump asked Ukraine’s leader to investigate Joe Biden, a Democratic candidate in 2020. As inappropriate and dangerous as that may be, this probably will not lead to Republican outrage or serious consequences for Trump.

The pattern is clear and recurring: We now will get buried in a tedious, technical and partisan debate about whether there is anything illegal or that jeopardizes national security in what Trump said in the conversation, especially since there may be no explicit quid pro quo. Each side will play the same role they have in past accusations of presidential wrongdoing.

We've seen this rhetorical narrative before. When accused of wrongdoing, President Trump first denies what transpired. Then he declares there is nothing
wrong with what he said. Finally, he reduces the accusation to being an additional example of how the Democrats who resent his being elected and want to re-litigate 2016 are undertaking another witch hunt. The president’s words then become verbatim talking points for Republican leaders.

Regardless of what political pundits and strategists speculate, does anyone really believe we have reached a tipping point? I am not convinced, but hope I am wrong. We have a president who has spent his lifetime successfully finding an escape hatch.

In addition and as expected, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, in the wake of Donald Trump’s conversation with the Ukraine president, announced on Tuesday the start of an impeachment inquiry, claiming Trump has broken the law and violated his oath of office.

President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky shake hands during a meeting in New York on Wednesday on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. (Photo: SAUL LOEB/AFP, TNS)

It is hardly surprising that a key Republican member of the House Intelligence Committee, Chris Stewart, immediately responded by asking how Pelosi can conduct a fair investigation when she already has concluded that Trump is guilty. Then House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy declared that Pelosi’s impeachment
decision is but another example of how Democrats from day one and before any evidence was unearthed were out to remove Trump from office.

Following release of the transcript of Trump’s Ukraine conversation on Sept. 25, Sen. Lindsey Graham followed suit: To impeach a president over a phone call like this, said Graham, "would be insane".

And so the predictable rhetorical pattern again is being repeated, making me worry that all of this will not produce consequences for Trump and will not result in him being held accountable. It will be a political food fight.

The problem is that most people now view Congress as incapable of bipartisan, impartial proceedings. The questioning of acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire on Sept. 26 lends additional credence to this problem.

My fear is that this means we may not be able to get to the truth of the matter. At the end of the day, therefore, the ballot box may be the ultimate and only check and balance — and the best mechanism for preserving the rule of law and the effective functioning of our sacred constitutional system of government..

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