

The House impeached President Trump and then the Senate voted to dismiss the charges. The whole process was draining on the nation, and the general public is weary from this intense political conflict and ready for a break. We should be so lucky. Within days of the acquittal, Trump was engaged in very questionable behavior and some democratic representatives in the House were demanding a new impeachment investigation.

As long as Trump is president, many members of the House will be agitating for his impeachment. Undoubtedly, he will do something that makes another impeachment inquiry seem reasonable to many people. Unfortunately, the willingness by the House to quickly jump to impeaching a president is unlikely to end with the Trump presidency. Once the minority party in the House feels the process is being abused, this party will be unlikely to exhibit restraint when it becomes the majority party. As both parties take turns holding a majority status in the House, the party with a temporary majority will make more frequent use of impeachment hearings because these hearings will have become a more acceptable practice and because it wants revenge for a previous impeachment inquiry.

The path of frequent impeachment hearings is a perilous road for our nation. Congress will be able to remove Presidents that it does not like. A duly elected president may be kicked out of office by a hostile Congress.

The people that elected the president will feel that their votes were ignored and that votes no longer provide the legitimacy to the highest position in the land. Instead, it will seem to our citizens that Congress is the institution that determines if a person is fit to be president. By making impeachment, rather than elections, the primary method for getting rid of a president, the citizens of our country will stop feeling that the executive branch is accountable to them. People will feel that they no longer have a voice in determining if a person remains president. These citizens will become frustrated with our system, which is when uprisings occur.

The United States is extraordinarily lucky. We have had the same system of government in place for well over 200 years. Other countries are not so lucky. In fact, no other important country on the international stage, with the exception of Great Britain, has a government that has lasted so long. Stable well-run governments are a blessing and are all too temporary.

History teaches us that our system of government will not last forever. Even the vaunted Roman Republic met its doom eventually. We should be on guard against threats that will lead our own very special system to its demise. Frequent and repeated impeachments are one such threat. Hopefully, in the future, representatives of both parties will only turn to impeachment in the most extreme cases.

If you look hard enough, you will probably find that every president has abused power. Research by Anderson and Tollison suggests that even Abraham Lincoln – of all people – abused his power.

They argue that Lincoln used his influence in a way to manipulate which troops were exposed to heavy combat in order to allocate the casualties in a way that would increase his reelection chances.

Hopefully, future congresses will strike the right balance between being on guard against abuse of power and respecting the need of our government to have legitimacy that derives from the voters, rather than from the congress.