

## Will History Care?

October 24, 2019

[Note: this is when Republicans stormed unannounced into closed-door Congressional impeachment deliberations]

Let's say that Republicans continue to stonewall the impeachment investigation while detailed articles of impeachment are drawn up under Adam Schiff with oversight by Nancy Pelosi – and that they are overwhelmingly approved by Democrats and by a majority in the House. Let's say that Republicans continue to bluster about unfairness and to raise any issue they can to distract and redirect attention from the severity and deep unconstitutionality of Trump's actions as President. Let's say that Republicans get yet more aggressive and that the articles of impeachment are decisively defeated in the Senate early next year. Let's say that Trump then declares victory over the Democratic "witch hunt" to further stoke his re-election campaign, which is already flush with money an order of magnitude greater than any Democratic presidential candidate. Let's say that the news media continues to polarize, fueled by alt-Right money, and that Republican and swing voters are successfully targeted for online, social media, and TV information and, more importantly, misleading or false information of a sort that exceeds anything that we've even seen yet. Finally, let's assume that Trump is indeed re-elected president in 2020 - regardless who Democrats nominate to run against.

Will history care? The answer to this question is both important, and not. On the one hand, if autocratic populism is enshrined as the enduring new direction of the U.S., including after Trump's presidency is over, then many historians and others looking back may well by then themselves be its supporters. They may themselves subscribe to the impeachment witch hunt theory, the notion that democracy includes the will of the people electing a president who is then above what we now call the law. With each major shift in world history, history itself is re-written. On the other hand, if a democratic of humanitarian and liberal backswing holds sway, either in the next election or in longer time, and if objectivist liberal historians continue to be dominant, then history *will* care; Trumpism will be considered a painful and stainful aberration against the principles of lawful democracy.

We don't presently know which of these scenarios will play out in the longer term, including if Trump is re-elected President. So why should *we* care, and why should we care now?

Because the principle of written law and its factual application are important – and have been important to civilization since at least the Code of Hammurabi in 1750 B.C. We may overturn these principles either now or in the longer future of America. But for those of us now living who care about such things, their value is vital to support and work for – even in a worst-case scenario in which these principles die in fact

with our own passing. It is this significance, this importance, this commitment to and faith in that thing called lawful democracy that sustains us, that gives meaning and value to our own politics. This includes if we fail and the forces of lawless autocracy win out, as they eventually did in Roman imperialism. Deeper principles are ultimately more important than transient political wins – or losses. They should guide us no matter what. That is our enduring contribution. Even if not to history.