



By: *The Editorial Board*

Trump's defence is toxic to US democracy



The fact that Donald Trump is the first (former) US president to be indicted and put on trial does not mean that he is the first in history to lie and or break the law.

Richard Nixon resigned to prevent impeachment and a subsequent trial. Bill Clinton lied under oath in the Lewinsky case.

Andrew Johnson, the 17th president, faced impeachment in the House of Representatives for violating the Tenure of Office Act, because he attempted to remove Secretary of War Edwin Stanton without the Senate's approval.

His successor Ulysses Grant was even arrested for speeding in his horse-drawn carriage on M Street in Washington D.C.

However, none of them threatened the order in which they performed the highest duty and swore to protect it. Until Donald Trump.

Trump wants to change the model of democracy

In addition to being the first US leader to be indicted, Trump has also been the first to turn his case against the state system and the model on which the US was built.

When you put yourself ahead of our "democracy as president of the United States, it's over", former Republican New Jersey Governor Chris Christie said earlier, referring to Trump's refusal to accept defeat in the 2020 elections and his subsequent attempt to prevent a peaceful transfer of power.

The indictment of Manhattan D.A. Alvin Bragg against Donald Trump was revealed on Tuesday as a unique historical situation,

which, in a negative sequence of events, could even lead to a change in the model of American democracy.

Trump wants it. He is passionately working on it and has broad support for this endeavour.

For the US, this has been a completely new experience, which has not been the case for many countries in Latin America, for example, or in Europe, where dictators or populist leaders equate their own crimes with state interests.

They still establish equality between themselves and the fate of the people when faced with indictments, police, or more often, thousands of angry protestors.

Trump's concept of "defence" against the indictment for falsifying business documents is toxic on at least two levels - domestic and foreign.

Destruction of internal order

Almost the entire top of the Republican Party followed Trump's lead, according to the "rules" that he set, which boil down to just a few phrases - witch hunt, and abuse of the legal system for political purposes.

All of Trump's opponents in the race for the Republican nomination took his side, some with less, some with more enthusiasm.

For Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, the indictment is "un-American" and represents "the weaponisation of the legal system to advance a political agenda and turn the rule of law on its head'.

For Nikki Haley, the indictment is "more about revenge, than it is about justice", and for former US Vice President Mike Pence, it represents "an unprecedented indictment of a former president".

All the most influential Republican members of Congress sound the same. They decided that they would take the road that carries the least risk.

They will support their former boss, loudly, and using his vocabulary. Later, if necessary, primarily through their candidacies, they will change the rhetoric.

Trump's mission is to use his criminal case to try to change the ethical matrix on which American society is built.

At the centre of that matrix is justice for all, transposed through law (obligatory for all) and independent courts.

Trump probably does not have the capacity to make such deep strategies, and what he has been doing is only a short-term political game, in which he wants to make a political profit and achieve a new presidential mandate.

But the consequences of his actions, whether he realises it or not, are far more devastating. With his attitude towards the rule of law, Trump has "infected" half of the American political scene, the Republican one, including the highest representatives.

Whoever the next candidate in the 2024 elections will be, he has already decided on Trump's case by strongly supporting him.

Even if someone redefines the position before the elections, people would remember that they spoke of the legal procedure before the

court as a "witch hunt" or "political agenda behind the indictment".

Support for dictatorship models to reshape the world order

From the foreign policy point of view, Trump's and the Republican Party's resistance to the legal system, in general, might cause irreparable damage to the American model of democracy, as a model accepted by many nations in the world.

This model faces a major internal review, thanks to Trump, but it comes at a time when alternative models for the organisation of society are looking for their place at the global level. They are certainly not democratic.

China under Xi Jinping has been aggressively offering to redefine the current global economic and political model, as US-centric, into a model that would suit it more.

Until just a year or two ago, it appeared that China wanted only modifications to the existing global economic system and the order of powers, not a complete change. As Xi enters his third leadership term, he shows that he wants more.

He demonstrated what that represents by mediating the reconciliation between the Middle Eastern superpowers Saudi Arabia and Iran, and recently by visiting Vladimir Putin, just a few days after he was accused of war crimes before the International Criminal Court.

China and Russia will "boost the constructive force for building a multi-polar world and improving the global governance system", reads one of the items in the joint statement of

Xi and Putin from the recent talks in Moscow.

Trump's challenge to the foundations of the American rule of law system also represents an alliance with the ideas of illiberal, autocratic leaders to reshape the global model of governance and democracy.

It is also Trump's confirmation that they are right, not the US Constitution, on which he once swore an oath.