

The past three days in US politics have been very difficult – and ugly.

President Donald Trump chose to exploit divisions inside the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives – generational and ideological – by [attacking four new women members](#) of Congress, denying their status as Americans and their legitimacy to serve in Congress. They are women of colour and, yes, they are from the far left of the Democratic Party. They have pushed hard against their leaders.

But Trump's vicious, racist attacks on them have in fact solved the unity problem among the Democrats: they are today (re)united against Trump.

Read more: [***Two dozen candidates, one big target: in a crowded Democratic field, who can beat Trump?***](#)

You can draw a straight line from [Trump's birther attacks](#) on Obama, to his "[Mexican rapists](#)" attack when he announced his run for the presidency, to his [Muslim immigration ban](#), to [equivocating over](#) Nazis marching in Charlottesville, to [sending troops](#) to the US-Mexico border, to [shutting down the government](#), to [declaring a national emergency](#), to what he is doing today.

And his attacks on these lawmakers is based on a lie: three of the congresswomen were born in America. One is an immigrant, now a citizen, and as American as any citizen – just like Trump's

wife.

I worked in the House of Representatives for ten years. I learned early that you do not impugn – you have no right to impugn – the legitimacy of an elected member of Congress. Only the voters can do that.

Other presidents have been racist. Lyndon Johnson worked with the southern segregationists. Nixon [railed in private](#) against Jews. But none have spoken so openly, so publicly, without shame or remorse for these sentiments. So this is new territory.

And this is unlike Charlottesville, where there was vocal and visible pushback from Republicans on Trump giving an amber light to the Nazis in the streets. This is how much the political culture and norms have corroded over the past two years.

The Democrats chose to fight back by bringing a resolution condemning Trump for his remarks to the House of Representatives floor. Historians are still scurrying, but it appears this is unprecedented – the house has never in its history, which dates to the 1790s, voted to condemn a president's remarks. (The Senate censured President Andrew Jackson over banking issues in 1834.)

The house [passed the measure](#) almost along party lines, with only four Republicans out of 197 – just 2% – voting for the resolution.

The concluding words in [the resolution](#) are these:

Whereas President Donald Trump's racist comments have legitimised fear and hatred of new Americans and people of color: Now, therefore, be it resolved, That the House of Representatives [...] condemns President Donald Trump's racist comments that have legitimised and increased fear and hatred of new Americans and people of colour by saying that our fellow Americans who are immigrants, and those who may look to the President like immigrants, should "go back" to other countries, by referring to immigrants and asylum seekers

as “invaders”, and by saying that Members of Congress who are immigrants (or those of our colleagues who are wrongly assumed to be immigrants) do not belong in Congress or in the United States of America.

So Trump is secure within his party – and he believes he has nothing to fear from the testimony of the special counsel, Robert Mueller, next week before the House Judiciary and Intelligence Committees.

Much attention will be paid to the examination of obstruction-of-justice issues when Mueller testifies. But the more meaningful discussion will occur in the assessment by the intelligence committee examining Russian interference in the 2016 election, and the persistence of a Russian threat in 2020.

Mueller ended his [Garbo-like appearance](#) before the media in May with these words:

The central allegation of our indictments [is] that there were multiple, systematic efforts to interfere in our election. That allegation deserves the attention of every American.

The US presidential election remains vulnerable and it is not clear that sufficient safeguards are being put in place to protect the country’s democracy.

But it is the unresolved drama over impeachment that will colour Mueller’s [appearance on Wednesday](#)

Read more: [**Explainer: what is a special counsel and what will he investigate in the Trump administration?**](#)

Mueller concluded he could not indict a sitting president. However, he forensically [detailed ten instances](#) of possible obstruction of justice. Mueller said that if he believed Trump had not committed a crime he would have said so and that, as a result, he could not “exonerate” Trump.

The key question that will be asked of Mueller is: “If the record you developed on obstruction of justice was applied to any individual who was not president of the United States, would you have sought an indictment?”

And on the answer to that question turns the issue of whether there will be critical mass among House of Representatives Democrats, and perhaps supported by the American people, to vote for a bill of impeachment against Donald J. Trump.

Bruce Wolpe is affiliated with the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney and is a contributor on American politics to Sky News Australia.

Authors: Bruce Wolpe, Non-resident senior fellow, United States Study Centre, University of Sydney

Read more <http://theconversation.com/us-house-of-representatives-condemns-racist-tweets-in-another-heady-week-under-president-donald-trump-120425>