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Reports

Contesting the Russia Collusion and the 25th Amendment: The Psychodynamics of a 'Powerful' Man at the White House

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[AP]

At the beginning of his second year at the White House, U.S. president Donald Trump finds himself amidst old and new controversies. The ongoing three-track investigations by the Justice Department, House, and Senate at the Congress are still probing into the alleged “Russia collusion” between his 2016 presidential campaign and the Kremlin in Moscow. Several observers believe America has seen, so far, only the tip of Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s iceberg. New red flags have risen after a second dossier surfaced February 6 and is now under the scrutiny of the Federal Bureau for Investigation (FBI). In early January, Trump posted an unprovoked [tweet](#) bragging about his nuclear button that is “a much bigger and more powerful one” than that of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, and “his Button works!” This reckless statement has triggered more questions about his psychological fitness for America’s highest office. In the backdrop, the new revelations in Michael Wolf’s book “Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House” have deepened public concern about Trump’s “mental incompetence” in fulfilling his presidential responsibilities. [Wolf](#) revealed how “everybody was painfully aware of the increasing pace of his repetitions”. Former White House Senior Strategist Steve Bannon told Wolf “You’re not going to believe this. But the president is near enough certifiable and has the mental age of a five-year old.” More observers have [cautioned](#) against the risks of a psychologically-damaged man “who has always lived in his own reality and played by his own rules”, and predicted a possible “constitutional crisis in slow motion”. Despite the White House denounced the book as “complete fantasy”, private conversations among politicians have alluded to the possibility of invoking the 25th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which gives the majority of the Cabinet the right to remove the president from office when they [deem](#) he has become physically or mentally “unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office.”

Now, Trump’s political future hangs at limbo depending on whether he can embattle two clouds growing over his head: Russia-collusion investigations and charges of his mental ‘incompetence’ in a decisive year of Congressional elections. Republican candidates and the leadership of the Party of Lincoln will eventually decide, in the next few months, whether Trump is a political asset or an awkward liability. The latter scenario may undermine their chances of being re-elected next November 6, 2018. Bannon believes Trump has just [a 30 percent](#) chance of completing his four-year term. The question now: will Trump be able to survive all the odds of a possible impeachment or forced removal from office?

Trump's 2018 State-of-the-Union address was a show with visual symbolism more than textual significance before a joint session of the House and Senate members on Capitol Hill. Female members of the Congressional Black Caucus were wearing kente cloth sashes, scarves or other symbols of the Pan-African independence movement, which implied throwing a political jab against his notion of "shithole countries". In contrast, he sounded like 'Salesman Trump' more than 'President Trump'. He invested heavily in the grandiosity of his numbers: liberation of "almost 100 percent" of ISIS's strongholds in Iraq and Syria by the Coalition Forces', creating "2.4 million new jobs", the new record of "\$8 trillion in value" in the stock market, and the enactment of "the biggest tax cuts and reforms in American history". This statistical approach was coated by several shiny overstretched adjectives: "clear vision", "righteous mission", and extending "an open hand" to work with Democrats and Republicans, funding "our great military", and trumpeting the fallacy that "there has never been a better time to start living the American Dream."

Trump's foreign policy revealed new lows at the first-year mark of his presidency. Besides his order to continue operating the infamous detention facilities at Guantánamo Bay, his controversial Jerusalem policy has hardened the U.S. diplomatic isolation, nurtured the anti-American sentiment in the Middle East and beyond, after the vote at the Security Council and General Assembly. He decided to manipulate the U.S. aid programs with the hope of twisting the Palestinians' arm to accept his Israel-leaning foreign policy ahead of the so-called 'Deal of the Century'. Some critics like [Hal Brands](#) argue that "the first year of Trump's presidency has been plenty corrosive to U.S. power and influence, because Trump has steadily undermined a number of qualities that made American statecraft effective in the past."

Abroad, there was skeptical reception of his 'America-open-for-business' speech in Davos in late January among the global business community. He still struggles with providing alternatives to the six-nation Nuclear Agreement with Iran, renegotiating the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, and financing the wall along the US-Mexican border. Candidate and President-elect Trump was often overconfident, to say the least, in his battle with what he [dubbed](#) as the "failed corrupt political establishment" in Washington. He vowed to replace it with "a new government controlled by you, the American people", as a tactful extent of his populist paradigm. Unlike his political momentum of 2016, the domestic geopolitics across America in 2018 has shifted away from his extreme ideology. In November 2017, Trump supported three losing senatorial candidates in Virginia, New Jersey, and Alabama. Roy Moore's candidacy for the senatorial seat of current Attorney General and former Senator Jeff Sessions was a revealing indicator in Alabama known as the 'Trump country'. As a commentator captured the [significance](#) of the red state saying, "If Trumpism has any future, any constituency moving forward, it should be thriving in Alabama." Moreover, Trump's alliance with the extreme right ideologue, Bannon, has imploded before the first

anniversary of his presidency. In January, Bannon was subpoenaed to [testify](#) before the Intelligence Committee at the House of Representatives as part of the investigation of the Kremlin's possible manipulation of America's electoral process. In short, Trump's political momentum now seems to be waning now as his popularity has stagnated between 30 and 38 percent, the lowest for any U.S. president, whereas the mental 'incompetence' question is taking a life of its own. As one of his [critics](#) put it, "watching him hold back the chaos and energy and fury and strangeness that has defined his political career, I couldn't help thinking that Donald Trump is the only politician in American history who looks smaller when surrounded by the trappings of the presidency."

Connecting The Dots Among the President's Men

Michael Wolf's detailed account of Trump's White House has solidified an open-ended argument made by politicians in Washington and psychiatrists across America. They have expressed deep concern about his loose maneuvering of his challenges and his [tendency](#) to "distort reality" to fit his "personal myth of greatness". Wolf's book included direct and well-attributed quotes of the White House staff. He diversified his sources by securing more than 200 interviews with the President himself and his senior staff over an 18-month period, while reporting from the White House. Consequently, there has been resonance of a nightmarish episode of a 'post-Trump era' increasingly echoing in the corridors of the White House. The author foresaw the scrutiny and skepticism that would contest his findings. When challenged with the possibility of omitting their positive accounts and anecdotes, Wolf asserted, "If I left out anything, it's probably stuff that was even more damning." The book cites several members of Trump's cabinet commenting on his intelligence in colorful terms, after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's famous "moron" in reference to Trump; "For Steve Mnuchin [Treasury Secretary] and Reince Priebus [former white House chief of staff], he [Trump] was an 'idiot.' For Gary Cohn [chief economic advisor], he was 'dumb as sh-t.' For H.R. McMaster [National Security Advisor] he was a 'dope.' The list went on."

While announcing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December, Trump [showed](#) "clearly some abnormalities of his speech." His dysarthria, a pattern of slurred speech, was apparent and raised new questions among neurosurgeons and other health experts. Cognitive psychologist [Ben Michaels](#) points out that Trump has exhibited a clear reduction in linguistic sophistication over time with simpler word choices and sentence structure. After Trump posted his tweet about having a bigger "nuclear button" than North Korean leader, more than 100 medical professionals signed [a letter](#) expressing their deep concern about the President's "psychological aberrations", and urged "those around him, and our elected representatives in general, take urgent steps to restrain his behavior and head off the potential nuclear catastrophe."

Unlike any previous American president, scholarly journals and mainstream magazines have published numerous studies probing into two key questions: Is something neurologically wrong with Donald Trump? Is he cognitively fit for office?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAKxZeFc8Jk>

The Battle of Medical Narratives

Before Trump commemorated his one-year anniversary at the White House, there was a [bill](#) pending at the Congress, proposed by Democratic Representative Jamie Raskin and had 56 co-sponsors to set up a Congressional body, to evaluate the President's fitness for office. However, Trump maintains his self-assessment as "very stable genius" and "like, really smart." His Press Secretary, Sarah H. Sanders, [implies](#) a sense of deductive reasoning; "If he was unfit, he probably wouldn't be sitting there, wouldn't have defeated the most qualified group of candidates the Republican Party has ever seen." Chris Ruddy, a longtime friend of Trump's and the chief executive of the conservative Newsmax Media maintains Trump "is not psychologically unfit, he has not lost it."

After Trump underwent a medical checkup January 12, White House physician [Dr. Ronny Jackson](#) announced the president got a perfect 30 out of 30 score on the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA), a common screening test for mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease. The 15-minute MoCA test consists of [simple processes](#) of evaluating short-term memory, visuospatial, ability, attention, language, orientation according to a template designed by Dr. Ziad Nasreddine in 1996. A normal score requires the minimum of 26 out of 30 points. Jackson found no reason to think "the president has any issues whatsoever with his thought processes." He also argues "the folks in the mental health [field] would back me up on the fact that if he had some kind of mental, cognitive issue, that this test is sensitive enough, it would have picked up on it." The White House was keen on disseminating the news of Trump's health test highlighting several [positive characteristics](#):

- Trump has excellent cardiac health, according to a stress test and echocardiogram.
- His blood pressure is 122/74, which is in the normal range.
- Trump's PSA is very low, meaning he has no prostate troubles.
- Trump's 20/30 vision is very good for his age, according to Jackson.
- His total cholesterol is 223, and his LDL (or "bad") cholesterol is 143, which is borderline high.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndNXsLAWHVA>

Still, Dr. Jackson's assurances have not apparently eliminated the concern of mental health experts. Dr. Paul J. Moberg, Clinical Director of the neuropsychology service at the University of Pennsylvania's medical school, explains "Just because a person gets a 30 out of 30 doesn't mean you wouldn't pick up even very significant impairments in further

testing. A more comprehensive neurological exam would be required to really tease that out." Trump's test at the white House did not include psychiatric evaluation of the Trump and should not serve as evidence of his psychiatric fitness. Similarly, the [American Alzheimer's Association](#) stated that there is no single test that proves a person has Alzheimer's disease, and any reliable test should be made "through a complete assessment that considers all possible causes."

Bandy Lee professor in forensic psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine has studied Trump's mental disturbances beyond his attraction to powerful weapons and war and his flirting with a nuclear holocaust against North Korea. She noticed that all these signs are "not just signs of dangerousness, but of the most cataclysmic kind of violence that could put an end to human life as we know it." She has cautioned against Trump's [tendency](#) toward "provoking our allies and alienating them, instigating civil conflict, and laying a foundation for a violent culture that could give way to epidemics of violence — not to mention poke a beehive in the Middle East by declaring Jerusalem as Israel's capital. All of these actions are consistent with the pathological pattern he has already shown of resorting to violence the more he feels threatened." Lee briefed a dozen members of Congress — Democrats and one Republican — on the president's mental state. She also [argues](#) that "It would be hard to find a single psychiatrist, no matter of what political affiliation, who could confidently say Trump is not dangerous."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghg4-1rEZzk>

Trump as a Case of Psychodynamics

Unlike any previous presidential era in America's history, the political establishment and the mental health community have developed skeptical views of Trump's reasoning, judgment, combative character, defiance of truth, and insistence on his 'valid' subjectivity. Former director of U.S. National Intelligence James Clapper has openly [questioned](#) Trump's "ability to be — his fitness to be — in this office." Back in August, Republican Senator Jeff Flake delivered a well-argued critique of Trump's character and policies inside the Senate. However, Trump resorted back to his campaign denigrating tactic and accused the Senator of being "weak on borders, weak on crime." Washington Post veteran reporter [Jennifer Ruben](#) said Trump appeared "desperate, out of control, and emotionally needy."

In a provocative op-ed entitled "Who's worse, Trump or Nixon?", political scientist David Rothkopf [argues](#) "Nixon lied; Trump lies pathologically. Fact-checkers have documented more than 2,000 falsehoods in his first year in office. Nixon offered racist slurs in private; Trump has made racism and misogyny a leitmotif in his administration." Forensic psychiatry professor Bandy Lee puts the emphasis on the difference between the need for the assessment of Trump's dangerousness and the making of a diagnosis. She asserts "assessing dangerousness is making a judgment about the situation, not the person. The

same person may not be dangerous in a different situation, for example. And it is his threat to public health, not his personal affairs, that is our concern.”

Back in April 2017, more than thirty psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health experts gathered at a conference at Yale University, and [concluded](#) Trump was “paranoid and delusional”. They warned that his tendency to “distort reality” to fit his “personal myth of greatness” and attack on those who challenge him with facts was likely to increase in a position of power. This alarming call [derived](#) from their “ethical responsibility to warn the public about Donald Trump's dangerous mental illness.” Dr. John Gartner, a practicing psychotherapist and a founding member of Duty to Warn, an advocacy association of mental health professionals who contest Trump’s mental capacity to lead the country, argues there have been several warnings since Trump’s first day in office. As Gartner [explains](#), “worse than just being a liar or a narcissist, in addition he is paranoid, delusional and grandiose thinking and he proved that to the country the first day he was President.”

Throughout his campaign, Trump’s rhetoric and personal attacks against his rivals as well his supporters of his rivals were in simple and repetitive language. Linguistics analysts like Eric [Sentell](#) point to how Trump’s strategy and goals of rapid delivery make sense in a stump speech to a receptive audience, but “they become problematic when the claims demand more support and especially when the rhetoric of polarization reaches the crescendo of demagoguery.” In her new edited [volume](#) “Why Irrational Politics Appeals: Understanding the Allure of Trump”, Mari Fitzduff recalls the odd perceptions of candidate Trump. She quotes a Suffolk University/USA Today poll, which asked 1,000 people in September 2015 to describe Trump in their own terms. The most popular response was “idiot/jerk/stupid/dumb,” followed by “arrogant” and “crazy/nuts,” and then “buffoon/clown/comical/joke.” Similarly, Trump's followers were dismissed in some media accounts as idiots and bigots.

Awaiting the Freudian Couch

Is this a new age of political Freudianism with a psychodynamic approach to the president? Yes, indeed! Trump has reinforced the analysts’ return to the psychodynamic theory of the psyche, which is associated with the works of Austrian-born neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). According to Freud, human behavior and the mental issues can be [traced](#) “beyond our conscious self-control - that our subconscious mind, and the innate impulses that we may not be aware of, are what influence the way in which we behave.” Indeed, Trump’s presidency has reenergized the field of political psychology and the validity of applying his psychodynamics as a point of entry into his inner world and contestation of the truth. Clinical psychologist and professor of Psychology at Purchase College, [Paul Siegel](#), asserts that, “it is puzzling that political commentators are frequently confused by President Trump’s erratic behavior. He provides a window into his mind just about every time he says or does something extreme.”

Contemporary mental health experts rely on the Psychodynamic Approach to figure out the emotional forces that have shaped Trump's personality, reasoning, and judgment, since it [encompasses](#) a more passive and somewhat ethereal method of describing and assessing leadership, focused more on the complexity and interweaving of various aspects of human behavior. It includes the effects of leadership on followers and the continuing effects of childhood influences on adult behavior. Accordingly, the utility of psychodynamics can be promising in deconstructing not only the inner world of Trump, but also in explaining the psyche of his right-wing supporters.



[Reuters]

Bandy Lee remains alarmed by Trump's dangerousness and argues for emergency evaluation be done for the president since "most people who are dangerous do not have a diagnosable mental illness, and most people with mental illness are more likely to be victims than perpetrators." According to her, he [seems](#) to further "lose his grip on reality by denying his own voice on the Access Hollywood tapes. Also, the sheer frequency of his tweets seemed to reflect the frantic state of mind he was entering, and his retweeting some violent anti-Muslim videos showed a concerning attraction to violence."

Lee collaborated with Judith Herman at Harvard University and Robert J. Lifton at Columbia University in publishing an edited volume in October 2017 entitled "[The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump](#)", which includes essays of 27 mental health professionals how have studied Donald Trump. Lee underscores that the contributors to the book are well established psychologists and authors like Phil Zimbardo, Judith Herman, and Robert Jay Lifton, "who are notable for their amazing ethical record. These are living legends who have also stood on the right side of history."

Philip Zimbardo, of the Stanford prison study, points out that Trump has a "specific personality type: an unbridled, or extreme, present hedonist" and "narcissist." Retired Harvard psychiatry professor Lance Dodes writes that Trump's "sociopathic characteristics are undeniable." There is common conviction among many seasoned psychologists that Trump's personality traits are consistent with narcissistic personality disorder, sociopathy, paranoia, hypomania, and other illnesses. Furthermore, John Gartner notices Trump displays signs of "[malignant narcissism](#)", and cautions that "the abnormal is being normalized. That's how dictatorships work. They take over the definition of reality."

Elizabeth Lunbeck, a professor of the history of science at Harvard University and author of the book "[The Americanization of Narcissism](#)" notices strides have been made in 2016 in pushing narcissism out of its narrow—and often wrong—association with Millennials, and Trump's year has illustrated narcissism's negative effects and how those effects differ from narcissism's positive qualities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFWdV8f521E&feature=youtu.be>

Trump represents an arrogant reject-norms-elevate-self version of Me-Generation and its claimed culture of authenticity. He is perceived to be the product of his generation and more of a 'Me generation boomer-in-chief'. The 1970 generation witnessed the rise of consumerism, the novelty of TV, John F. Kennedy's assassination, Vietnam War, Watergate, and became skeptical of the institutions. of social norms. Instead, they became cynical and materialistic and developed [intense focus](#) on the self; "this is the generation that indulged in New Age navel-gazing, declared that "greed is good" and more than doubled the divorce rate." [Jean Twenge](#), a psychologist and author of "Generation Me and The Narcissism Epidemic" points out that "the problem is that when people try to boost self-esteem, they accidentally boost narcissism instead."

Some analysts went back also to Gustave Le Bon's 1895 book, "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind", to figure out the unconscious society that maintains the relationship between Trump and his right-wing base. For instance, Eli Zaretsky historian and author of the 2016 book "Political Freud" [wrote](#) "viewing Trump as an emanation from a collective unconscious also helps explain another intrinsic aspect of the Trump phenomenon: the extraordinary passion and even hysteria of his liberal and progressive critics. Whereas Trump gives voice to the repressed suspicions, sarcasms and resentments of the id, his critics speak for the country's superego."

Trump's Grandiosity Dilemma

Since Trump became a public figure, he has proved to be a paragon of grandiosity. He has portrayed him as a businessman who has grown an empire of wealth and power, but avoids mentioning his bankruptcies and ranking number 544 among the world's billionaires according to [Forbes](#) magazine in January 2017. He has also claimed to have the largest

audience of his inauguration speech as well as his State-of-the-Union address. Still, his recent tweet about having a bigger nuclear button than North Korean leader has deepened the curiosity of mental health experts to study what is behind his grandiosity and impulsivity. In addition to his 'big' fortune, 'bigger' nuclear button, and bold-pen signature that spans across half of the page, Trump has claimed to have the biggest genitals as well. As Michael Wolf wrote in his book "Fire and Fury", [Trump](#) begins each day "by attaching weights to the end of his p**** in order to increase its size.

According to Psychology Today magazine, individuals with this condition often show three key [characteristics](#): a) Grandiosity, a lack of empathy for other people and a need for admiration; b) They believe they are superior or may deserve special treatment, and c) They seek excessive admiration and attention, and struggle with criticism or defeat. Some professional opinions have suggested that he may suffer from the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Dan P. McAdams professor of psychology and author of "The Art and Science of Personality Development" [explains](#) "one possible yield as an energetic, activist president who has a less than cordial relationship with the truth. He could be a daring and ruthlessly aggressive decision maker who desperately desires to create the strongest, tallest, shiniest, and most awesome result—and who never thinks twice about the collateral damage he will leave behind."

Furious Trump between a Rock and a Hard Place

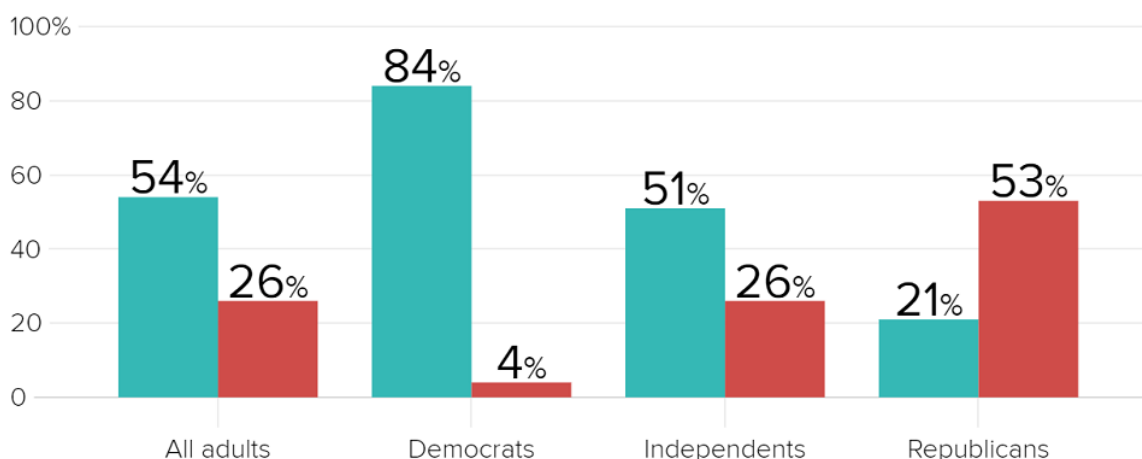
The suspicion of Trump's 'mental incompetence' and 'Russia collusion' remain two political variables which may converge around Trump's future, and reinforce the probability of pushing him out of the White House before the end of his first term. The collusion-impeachment likelihood can be a trajectory of what may amount to a Kremlin curse, even worse than Richard Nixon's Watergate curse that ended his presidency in 1973. This possible scenario adds to the anxiety of the white House lawyers who have been preoccupied with the other narrative of the President's neurological problems. As [Michael Wolf](#) maintains, "the 25th Amendment is a concept that is alive every day in the White House". U.S. legislators in Washington adopted this constitutional amendment after the assassination of John F Kennedy in 1963, as a formal mechanism of transforming the presidency to the Vice-President should the president die, resign, or is removed from office.

[Section VI](#) of the Amendment states that "whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President."

Some legal experts warned the conversation about Trump’s fitness could be dangerous to democracy. Harvard Law School professor [Alan Dershowitz](#) argues that the 25th Amendment would require, for mental incapacity, “a major psychotic break.” He asserts this is hope over reality, and “If we don’t like someone’s politics we rail against him, we campaign against him, we don’t use the psychiatric system against him. That’s just dangerous.” However, the narrative of 71-year-old Trump’s ‘mental incompetence’ in real-world politics may become acute overtime. The future of his presidency will depend on a simple majority of 13 members out of his 24 cabinet members, with the agreement of his VP Mike Pence, to declare him unfit to lead the country. Trump’s alleged ‘incompetence’ and the nuclear option, the 25th Amendment solution, will be lurking around his credibility at least in the next 10 months, while all 435 members of the House and 66 members of the Senate engage in the electoral campaigns across America.

Should Congress investigate Russia / Trump team contacts?

■ Should investigate ■ Should not investigate



NBC NEWS

Data: NBC News/ Wall Street Journal April poll; MOE = +/- 3.3 percent

Poll: Should Congress Russia-Trump Team Contacts [NBC News, April 24 2017]

One can establish that the silhouette of any of these damning scenarios has kept Trump on the defensive since the beginning of the New Year. While delivering a short statement of 195 seconds January 10, Trump repeated the phrase “no collusion” eighteen times. Most analysts agree with an [unsettling scenario](#) at the top of America’s leadership; “the closer Mueller gets to the full truth, the more Trump’s panic will grow. He will feel more and more like a cornered animal; and it is very likely that he will resort to his final, unthinkable options.” White House lawyers have [advised](#) Trump not to submit to an interview with Mueller’s team for fear that he would be caught in a lie. Newt Gingrich former Republican House speaker and one of Trump’s allies [argues](#) that “the idea of putting Trump in a room with five or six hardened, very clever lawyers, all of whom are trying to trick him and trap him, would be a very, very bad idea.”

Still, the pursuit of not subjecting Trump to the scrutiny of Mueller does not close the door against a much more disastrous scenario: Mueller's legal mandate to issue a subpoena for the appearance of Trump before the grand jury. Allan Lichtman presidential historian and author of a new book "The Case for Impeachment" argues Trump's political future remains [haunted](#) by a "Russian sword of Damocles [that] is hanging over this American president by the slenderest of threads. When this sword falls even Republicans, as in the Nixon case, will likely be compelled to begin impeachment proceedings."

The Look Ahead

Trump's hyperactive character and claim of power, coupled with his architecture of perception and showmanship, may turn a 'genius and smart man' into an over-confident president living in his mental silo. He finds himself squeezed inside a tight triangle: a) the stigma of mental incompetence, b) the momentum of the Collusion investigations, and c) the anti-trump movement within the Republican party ahead of the Congressional elections. The corrective move is already in full gear after several leading Republican figures, including Senators Lindsay Graham, John McCain, Jeff Flake, Bob Corker, and Ohio Governor John Kasich, have openly announced their resentment of the Trumpization of their party. Kasich who ran for president against Trump in 2016, recently cautioned Republicans that they were "losing the future" by "turning off millennials."

One other revealing indicator of the growing anti-trump shift among Republicans is how David Frum, a full-fledged conservative-turned-staunch-critic of Trump, depicted how Americans are becoming numb to the [president's depredations](#), "we have gotten used as well to the publicly visible consequences of that reality: the lying, the bullying, the boasting... We have gotten used to the president's party in Congress sabotaging and discrediting the investigation into foreign manipulation of the U.S. presidential election".

The 'mental incompetence' narrative may die out in 2018. However, there is more likelihood that the 'collusion-impeachment' argument will gain more momentum in the next few months. Trump's impulsivity and arrogance vis-à-vis the political establishment and the intelligence community will come around to haunt him and pave the path for a Pence-White House. After all for the Republican base, the 2018 mid-term elections will be more a referendum on the de-Trumpization of the Republican party than seeking a Republican majority in the House and the Senate.

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