

Trump's impeachment is far from certain but neither is his acquittal

Mr Trump has asked the Senate to quickly dismiss charges

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On the eve of his impeachment trial which will begin in the Senate next week, time is clearly not on the president's side, even if the rushed schedule, which suits both Republicans and Democrats, might be.

US President Donald Trump finally secured a Ukrainian criminal investigation announcement, although certainly not the one he was hoping for. He wanted Ukraine to investigate his rivals, but the Kiev government has announced a criminal probe into his allies instead.

Unsettling information continues to accumulate about the activities of the president's close associates, particularly Mr Trump's private attorney Rudy Giuliani and the latter's operatives. Leaked text messages recently revealed, for instance, that this gang may have had the movements of former US ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, under surveillance during 2019.

The people involved claim to have been joking, under the influence of alcohol, or "playing." But these and other astonishing revelations leave little doubt that there is much more about the Ukraine scandal that remains to be discovered.

The obvious need for additional information, and the well-known sources from which it could be obtained, will be at the heart of what is only the third presidential impeachment trial in US history.

Democrats are insisting that there is no such thing as a trial that does not involve testimony by witnesses and the subpoenaing of relevant documents. The impeachment inquiry in the House of Representatives was akin to a grand jury investigation or the preparation for an in-

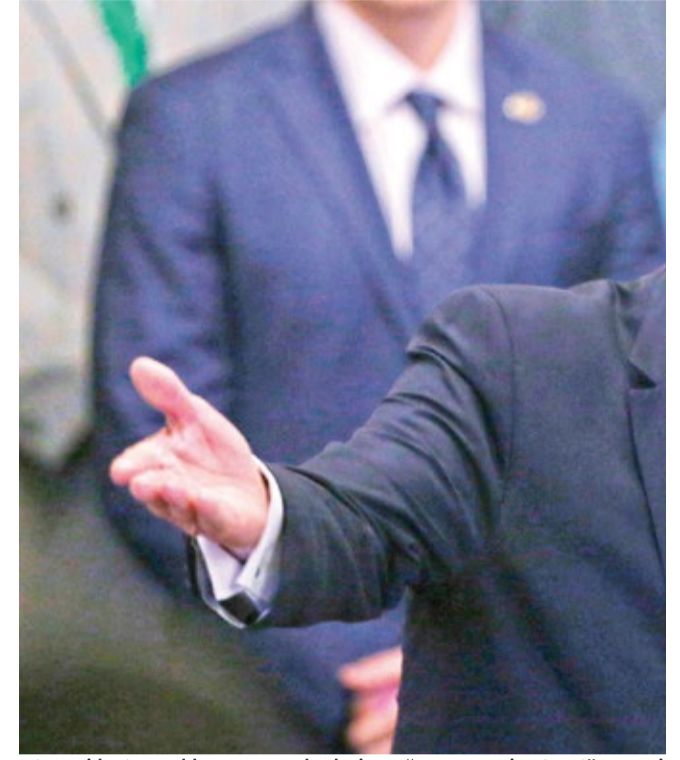
dictment, which the House adopted in the two articles of impeachment adopted on December 18.

Indeed, there has never been an American impeachment trial without witness testimony or new documents, including both previous presidential impeachments. Yet such an unprecedented scenario is exactly what Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and his Republican colleagues are hoping to engineer.

Mr McConnell and most of his GOP colleagues have made it clear that they intend to acquit Mr Trump no matter what, and that they are not interested in any evidence whatsoever. Indeed, he derisively says that House Democrats did a "rushed and incomplete job" and are asking the Senate to "do their homework for them."

This elides the obvious point that the House's motivation for handing the Senate a remarkably incomplete file to support the "high crimes and misdemeanours" (for which presidents may be impeached) is that the White House has flatly refused to share any documents with the impeachment inquiry. Furthermore, it has attempted to block all executive-branch officials from testifying. Some relatively junior or former officials testified anyway, but all the key witnesses who dealt directly with Mr Trump have not been heard from, and a raft of crucial documents remains unexamined.

Mr Trump has asked the Senate to quickly dismiss these charges, and while Mr. McConnell doesn't appear ready to do that, he is clearly determined to prevent any more information coming to light. Given the revelations in the past few weeks, and the obvious fact that Republican senators have no idea what else



US President Donald Trump speaks during a "Keep America Great" campaign event.

may be discovered, their anxiety is understandable.

During the House hearings, a parade of witnesses managed to paint a remarkably intricate picture of a president determined to hijack US military aid to Ukraine to secure the announcement of a baseless criminal investigation into the son of his political rival, Joe Biden. But because the White House successfully blocked all the senior-most potential witnesses, the president's own role was not described in great and direct detail.

Obviously, if Mr Trump and Mr McConnell were confident he had done nothing wrong, they would welcome a closer examination of the facts.

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To tackle climate change, developing countries

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With temperatures and sea levels rising, frequent bushfires and flooding around the world, the urgency to tackle climate change is clear. Which is why the failure of the Madrid COP25 summit last month was even more disappointing. Countries could not agree a more robust, international carbon trading system and funding for carbon reduction in the developing world. Another year that the world could not afford to waste was lost.

One of the problems at the summit was that the interests of Western countries seemed misaligned with those of emerging economies. While much of the climate change narrative today is focused on what Western economies are doing to reduce emissions – such as pledging carbon neutrality by 2050 – Asia and Africa are increasing their emissions and consumption of energy.

A new coal-fired power plant comes up every week in Asia where annual CO2 emissions are double those of the US and triple those of Europe, according to the International Energy Agency. China and India now account for 37 per cent of world CO2 emissions, pushing world emissions up again over the past two years, after several years of decline.

But per capita emissions offer a different picture: Chinese emissions per capita amount to half those of the US, while India's per capita

emissions barely reach a tenth of the US. Some African countries are as low as a hundredth. Therein lies the fundamental challenge in reducing global emissions: how do we solve the global problem, while acknowledging the inequality of emissions as well as income?

From the perspective of the developing world, the West's pleas to eschew an energy intensive path to development smacks of hypocrisy, especially when the US and Europe together account for the majority of past emissions across human history. So does advice to use less energy or fly less, when over a billion people in Asia and Africa still live without electricity and 80 per cent of the world is yet to ride on an airplane.

In a world of trade wars and rising economic nationalism, achievements in curbing emissions can be made only when developing countries are treated as partners rather than targets for Western policy.

In particular, their need for affordable and secure supply of energy must be addressed. Some of the West's policies have actually been counterproductive by creating financial incentives for South America and Asia to accelerate deforestation to grow and sell biofuels for western consumption, enabling the West to meet its own targets but increasing net global emissions.

In this regard a global carbon pricing system, whether through a world carbon bank or otherwise, is a



Emissions rise from a coal-fired power station in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

vital policy option to give developing countries the incentives and support to switch to lower carbon-emitting fuels. Holistic global policies are needed that focus on reduction of emissions, without arbitrarily ruling out any fuels, technologies or policy solutions that may help to reach the targets of the Paris Agreement.

Renewable energy from solar and wind has an important part to play but despite hundreds of billions invested annually, solar and wind supply a mere 2 per cent of the world's energy consumption.

Electric cars are excellent at reducing emissions in the city, but if the electricity that powers them still comes from coal, which it does the majority of the time in China and India and still over a third of the time even in Germany, then they will be worse for climate change than cars that run on petrol.

There are those who would like to put all fossil fuels in the same bucket and condemn them equally. But natural gas generates electricity with less than half the CO2 emissions of coal, and without the

harmful particulate an immediate clear for coal-fired power abler of intermittent energy.

This approach of menting renewables US achieving its low in a generation, and t est in over a century the IEA, natural ga for coal-fired electri five years has reduc emissions by 100 tir all the electric cars

Emerging economies need to be treated as partners for real progress be made in curbing global emissions