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Stopping Trump an impossible task

3 MONTHS AGO

[Phar Kim Beng](#)

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Without widespread support from both houses of Congress, removing a sitting president is hard. It is, after all, a numbers game.



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In American politics, power is ultimately arithmetic. No matter how intense public dissatisfaction may be, the constitutional architecture of the United States ensures that removing a sitting president is extraordinarily difficult – by design.

Thus, notwithstanding the two-week conditional ceasefire between US and Iran, without including Israel into the equation yet, which is another issue altogether, any attempt to push President Donald Trump out is difficult.

Americans have to root for Democrats time and again over 35 gubernatorial elections between now and mid November 2026. Come November, the Democratic Party has to regain control of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Again, a tall order since the Republican Party under Trump is no pushover too.

As things are, with Republicans in control of both chambers of Congress, any effort to impeach or remove Trump faces a near-insurmountable barrier.

Impeachment in the House of Representatives requires only a simple majority.

But conviction in the Senate – the decisive step that actually leads to the removal of a president – requires what is effectively a super or two-third majority.

This threshold is not merely high; it is prohibitive in a deeply polarised political system. [U.S. party updates](#)

Even if every opposition senator were to vote for conviction, a significant number of Republican senators would still have to break ranks.

In today's political climate, where party loyalty often outweighs institutional considerations, such defections are exceedingly rare. Thus, impeachment becomes less a legal process and more a political impossibility.

This is why calls to remove Trump – even amid declining approval ratings and mounting economic pressures – remain largely rhetorical.

Polls may show dissatisfaction, including surveys suggesting negative approval ratings. Rising fuel prices, especially amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia, further strain public patience.

Yet none of these factors automatically translate into the congressional numbers required for removal.

The same logic applies to members of the executive branch, including senior officials such as the Secretary of War Peter Hegseth.

While they too can be impeached and removed, the same constitutional thresholds apply. Without bipartisan consensus on a massive scale, removal is effectively off the table.

In this context, some commentators turn to an alternative mechanism: the 25th Amendment. However, this too is often misunderstood and, in practice, even less likely to be invoked.

What is the 25th Amendment?

The 25th Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified in 1967, was designed to address presidential succession and incapacity – not political disagreement.

It has four sections, but the most discussed is Section 4, which allows for the temporary removal of a president who is deemed unable to discharge the powers and duties of the office.

This is judiciously short of transforming the US into what Stephen Walt at the Kennedy School of Harvard called “rogue superpower”. The world cannot afford more wars to drive up the prospect of global stagflation.

This is how it works:

The vice-president, together with a majority of the Cabinet (or another body designated by Congress), can declare that the president is unable to perform his duties.

This declaration is sent to Congress, and the vice-president immediately becomes acting president.

The president can contest this declaration. If he does, Congress must decide the issue.

To uphold the removal, Congress must again reach a super two-third majority in both the House and Senate.

In other words, the 25th Amendment is not a shortcut around impeachment. It is a mechanism designed for extreme situations – such as severe medical incapacity – not political dissatisfaction or unpopular policies.

Why is it almost never used politically?

There are three key reasons why invoking the 25th Amendment against a sitting president is extraordinarily unlikely.

First, it requires the cooperation of the president's own inner circle – especially the vice-president and Cabinet members, who are typically political allies.

Expecting them to initiate removal is akin to expecting a  government to dismantle itself.

Second, the threshold for sustaining removal remains extremely high. Just like impeachment, it ultimately depends on congressional supermajorities.

Third, it risks triggering a constitutional crisis. If used improperly or is perceived as politically motivated, it could undermine the legitimacy of the entire executive branch.

A system built to resist sudden removal

The American constitutional system was deliberately designed to prevent rapid or impulsive removal of elected leaders.

The framers feared instability as much as tyranny. As a result, they constructed a system where removal requires overwhelming consensus across institutions.

This means that even in moments of economic stress, geopolitical tension, or declining public approval, the presidency remains structurally insulated from abrupt political shocks.

The paradox is clear: a president can be unpopular, controversial, and even polarising – yet remain firmly in power as long as the numbers in Congress do not align against him.

Conclusion: Politics is arithmetic, not emotion

In the end, the difficulty of removing a US president reflects a deeper truth about American governance: it is not driven by outrage, but by institutional thresholds.

Calls for impeachment or the invocation of the 25th Amendment may resonate in media and public discourse. So far they have failed.

But without the necessary numbers – without that elusive

For observers in Asean and beyond, this serves as a reminder: the stability of the American system lies not in its flexibility, but in its rigidity. It is a system that absorbs pressure rather than yield to it.

And in that rigidity, for better or worse, lies the endurance of presidential power.

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