

# POLITICAL RED HERRING: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE MOVE TO IMPEACH JOE BIDEN

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The recent announcement by the U.S. House of Representatives Speaker, Republican Kevin McCarthy, that the lower chamber of Congress would move to impeach President Joe Biden is likely to be along expected lines as far as Democrats are concerned. With the next presidential election in a little more than 13 months, the Republicans have much to gain by muddying the waters and distracting voters from the fact that the U.S. economy has rebounded from the pandemic-years slowdown. Amidst a dearth of obvious political targets within the Democratic machinery, Mr. McCarthy has chosen to go after the President's son, businessman Hunter Biden, training his guns on his business dealings that allegedly resulted in benefits accruing to the senior Mr. Biden during his term as Vice President in the Obama administration. The House majority case against the Biden clan appears to be tenuous. With regard to the August memorandum of the House Oversight Committee, which alleged that Mr. Biden and his associates were paid more than \$20m by "foreign sources", the Chair of the very same Committee, Republican James Comer, conceded recently that a scrutiny of bank records did not yield evidence. Similarly, allegations that the Biden "brand" was used to peddle influence in business matters to the favour of Mr. Biden do not appear to be standing up to scrutiny, according to a report from the Congressional Integrity Project, a Democrat-aligned watchdog group. Finally, claims based on an "unverified FBI tip", that Mr. Biden paid off prosecutors to end an inquiry into Burisma, a Ukrainian energy firm on whose Board Hunter Biden had a seat, have also failed to unearth a smoking gun; so too allegations, based on the testimony of two whistle-blowers that the Justice Department "intentionally interfered in a multi-year investigation into Hunter's tax return".

Even if Mr. McCarthy manages to drag Mr. Biden through a full impeachment, the 46th President will be acquitted in the Senate. The elephant in the House is the double impeachment of former U.S. President Donald Trump. Perhaps in a bid to seek a false equivalence to that dubious record and in the hope of dampening voter support for Democrats next year, Mr. McCarthy is attempting to simultaneously win favour with Mr. Trump and shore up his own wobbly support base in the House. Whatever his motivations, Mr. McCarthy's proposed public spectacle risks a serious voter blowback in next year's election, as Democrats may rally to Mr. Biden's cause in greater numbers, and the all-important independent voters may associate this manoeuvre with unproductive partisanship and Mr. Trump's long shadow over the Republican Party.

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