

Pelosi dismisses efforts to impeach President Trump

By Patrick Martin
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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected public calls for the impeachment of President Donald Trump, in an interview conducted with the *Washington Post Magazine* last week and published Monday.

“I’m not for impeachment,” she said. “Impeachment is so divisive to the country that unless there’s something so compelling and overwhelming and bipartisan, I don’t think we should go down that path, because it divides the country,” adding, “And he’s just not worth it.”

The statement was deliberately planned and carefully crafted to distance the Democratic congressional leadership from the democratic and constitutional issues raised by Trump’s open embrace of authoritarian methods, and to reduce the question of impeachment to the small change of congressional maneuvering and electoral politics.

Last month, after Trump declared a national emergency and ordered the Pentagon to shift funds appropriated by Congress for military construction to build his border, Pelosi said, quite correctly, that in seeking to bypass the congressional “power of the purse,” Trump was “shredding the Constitution.”

But there is no suggestion, in any of the ongoing discussions by Democrats, for and against impeachment, of citing Trump’s defiance of the congressional power to appropriate funds, laid down in Article I of the Constitution, as one of the possible articles of impeachment. Instead, various financial crimes, from secret payoffs to former lovers to tax and bank fraud to violation of the emoluments clause—because foreign countries have booked rooms in Trump hotels—have been cited as possible charges.

This would be like impeaching Richard Nixon without any reference to the Watergate break-in and its cover-up.

The most revealing comment came from Pelosi on Monday night, when she recalled that some Democrats had wanted her to consider impeaching President George W. Bush in 2007 and 2008 for invading Iraq based on lies about weapons of mass destruction. “I didn’t believe in it then; I don’t believe in it now,” Pelosi said.

The Democrats won control of Congress in the 2006 elections in large measure because of a wave of mass antiwar sentiment. The Democrats were the undeserving beneficiaries of this popular hostility to the Iraq war, which they had largely supported. Within hours of the electoral victory that would make her speaker of the House, Pelosi publicly rejected impeaching Bush for waging a war based on lies. Once in control of the House, in 2007, she made sure that Pentagon operations in Iraq were fully funded, including the major escalation ordered by Bush (the “surge”), that was in direct defiance of the public sentiment revealed in the election.

Pelosi clearly sees the connection between her role in 2006-2007 and her role today: whatever the disputes between the Democrats and Republicans, she is committed to uphold the interests of the military-intelligence apparatus and American imperialism more generally. Her concern over the divisive effect of a push for impeachment is not that it might enrage Trump’s hard-core supporters, but that it would weaken the capitalist state as a whole, under conditions of a growing movement of the American working class.

As for the two-year campaign by the Democrats denouncing Trump as a Russian agent and declaring his 2016 election victory to be the result of “meddling” by Vladimir Putin, Pelosi was silent. She was effectively conceding in advance that the report by Special

Counsel Robert Mueller, widely expected to be submitted soon, will not find evidence to back the claims of “collusion” between Trump and the Russian government.

Pelosi’s disavowal of impeachment makes nonsense of the increasingly hysterical claims that Trump is Moscow’s man in the White House. If that were true, then the Democratic Party, as a representative of American imperialist interests, would have no choice but to wage all-out war against the president. Pelosi’s declaration that “he’s just not worth it” is a tacit admission that there is no substance whatsoever to the anti-Russian campaign.

Passing over Trump’s attacks on democratic rights, such as the Muslim travel ban, the forced separation of immigrant parents and children, the encouragement of fascists and neo-Nazis, congressional Democrats have focused instead on the likely political impact of the passage of an impeachment resolution by the Democratic-controlled House, to be followed by acquittal of Trump in a trial before the Republican-controlled Senate.

Pelosi and others have cited the example of the failed impeachment of Democrat Bill Clinton in 1998, which produced a popular backlash that cost the Republicans seats in the House in the 1998 elections—although, significantly, the Republicans kept control of the House and then, emboldened by the spineless Democratic Party reaction to the attempted political coup against Clinton, stole the 2000 presidential election and installed George W. Bush in the White House.

At a closed-door meeting Monday night with House Democrats, Pelosi reportedly argued that impeachment was a diversion from enacting the party’s legislative agenda, although any bill passed by the House must go to the Republican-controlled Senate and then the White House. Instead of legislation, the Democrats are enacting bills that they hope will have popular appeal in the 2020 elections, such as campaign finance reform, protecting voter rights, placing limits on the purchase of assault weapons and expanding healthcare coverage.

Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries of New York made this point bluntly: “We did not run on impeachment. We did not win on impeachment. We are not governing with a focus on impeachment.”

Other top House Democrats backed Pelosi, including those conducting major investigations into actions by

Trump that have been cited as potentially impeachable offenses.

Oversight and Reform Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings, who conducted an all-day televised hearing for Michael Cohen, Trump’s former lawyer and “fixer,” chimed in with his support. “I think Pelosi realizes this: We can’t spend all of our time concentrating on what we’re fighting against,” he said. “We need to concentrate on what we’re fighting for.”

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, one of the main promoters of the bogus allegations of Russian intervention in the US elections, said Pelosi was “absolutely right” about the need for evidence so compelling that there would be bipartisan support for Trump’s removal.

“In its absence, an impeachment becomes a partisan exercise doomed for failure,” he said. “And I see little to be gained by putting the country through that kind of wrenching experience.”

Some House Democrats voiced their opposition to Pelosi’s dismissal of impeachment, including Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, who said she plans to file an impeachment resolution, and Al Green of Texas, who introduced an impeachment resolution last year that was shelved by the Republican majority, and attracted barely 60 votes from Democrats.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said that she continued to support impeachment but would “defer to party leadership” on the decision not to move forward now. “Legally I don’t think it’s something that can ever be 100 percent off the table, but if that’s how she feels right now I respect that,” she told the press.

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