

The impeachment crisis and its political consequences

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On Tuesday, congressional Democrats published two articles of impeachment against US President Donald Trump, centering on claims that the president “compromised the national security of the United States.”

The fascist in the White House is being impeached not for ripping thousands of immigrant children from the hands of their parents, persecuting political dissidents Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, or presiding over a global apparatus of extrajudicial murder. Rather, the impeachment is over Trump’s failure to pursue with sufficient vigor the conflict with Russia.

The document argues that the American president “betrayed the Nation” by delaying “the release of \$391 million of United States taxpayer funds that Congress had appropriated... for the purpose of providing vital military security assistance to Ukraine to oppose Russian aggression.”

This is the first impeachment of a sitting president on the claim that he is a “threat to national security.” The types of extraconstitutional arguments used by the US intelligence agencies to justify mass warrantless wiretapping, torture, “rendition,” and the assassination of an American citizen, within the framework of the “war on terror,” are now being used in an effort to remove a president.

The impeachment drive and the anti-Russia campaign that predated it have involved an enormous intervention by the CIA and FBI in domestic politics. The impeachment inquiry was itself triggered by a CIA agent working at the White House, while a recently-released report shows that the FBI justified a wiretap of a former Trump aide by citing a Ukraine policy change in the Republican Party’s platform.

This process is the first time—with the possible exception of the dark and murky events surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy—that the CIA and associated intelligence agencies have sought to remove a sitting president.

Anyone who supports the Democrats’ impeachment operation, in the hope that removing Trump on these grounds can have some sort of progressive consequence, is simply ignoring everything the Democrats and their CIA allies have done and said.

The most extraordinary element of the impeachment proceedings was its almost complete domination by US policy in Ukraine. It is of the greatest political significance, not to mention strangely ironic, that the United States’ instigation of

the 2014 fascist-led coup in Kiev has had far reaching consequences for political life in the US. In order to carry through the implementation of the confrontation with Russia, which was the rationale behind the coup, the intelligence agencies that determine the policy of the Democratic Party have been compelled to seek the impeachment of Trump.

In 1986, the Iran-Contra scandal was triggered by the revelation that the Reagan administration had concocted a scheme to sell arms to Iran, in order to buy weapons to finance an illegal war against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. That investigation revealed that the Reagan administration flagrantly violated the Boland Amendment, passed by Congress to prohibit US government assistance to the Contras.

But in this case, the main charge is that Trump held up the disbursing of money that was allocated by Congress to promote a war that is being planned entirely behind the backs of the American people.

The antidemocratic impulses behind the impeachment drive were summed up by the comments of the arch-warmonger Thomas Friedman, who wrote in the *New York Times* yesterday, “Generally speaking, I believe presidents should be elected and removed by the voters at the polls. But when I hear Trump defenders scream, ‘Impeachment subverts the will of the people,’ I say: ‘Really?’”

To say that “generally speaking” the leadership of the country should be selected by voters, is to say that this should only be the case when it suits the CIA, FBI, and the military.

Friedman’s real complaint is not that Trump was subverting “the will of the people,” but that he was subverting what dominant factions of the intelligence agencies consider the geostrategic imperatives of the American ruling class.

For all the Democrats’ talk of “corruption,” “obstruction of justice,” “bribery,” and an “organized crime shakedown,” the real reasons for the impeachment stand starkly revealed as differences over how best to conduct the predatory policies of American imperialism.

Both the Trump presidency and the impeachment campaign of the Democrats are different manifestations of the deep and intractable crisis of American democracy. Trump has threatened to turn the impeachment struggle into a “civil war,” implying that he could appeal to his armed, far-right supporters to defend him against what he has called a “deep-state coup.”

The Democrats' campaign against "foreign meddling" that framed the impeachment drive has provided the framework for imposing domestic censorship measures, with the intelligence agencies and representatives of both parties recruiting Google, Facebook and Twitter to demote and delete left-wing, anti-war and socialist publications, pages, and groups.

But even as Trump and his Democratic opponents frantically denounce one another as traitors and demand each other's prosecution, there has, at the same time, emerged a remarkable bipartisan unity on fundamental issues facing US imperialism.

This was made perfectly clear this week with the rapid-fire announcement, by congressional Democrats, of agreements on two landmark pieces of legislation: The USMCA anti-China trade deal and the passage of the biggest military budget in US history.

The military budget, passed overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives yesterday, establishes a new branch of the US armed forces, the Space Force, while levelling sanctions against Russia, China, Turkey and North Korea.

"Wow! All of our priorities have made it into the final NDAA," Trump gloated, noting in particular the removal of language preventing Pentagon funds being used for his immigration crackdown. Amid soaring social inequality, all factions of the American ruling elite are dedicated to war abroad and attacks on democratic rights at home.

The political crisis in Washington is framed by the global upsurge of the class struggle and the deepening crisis of US imperialism.

The past six months have seen an unprecedented expansion of the class struggle all over the world. Mass protests against inequality have broken out from Chile, to Puerto Rico, to Lebanon and Iraq. Autoworkers have gone on strike in Mexico and the United States, while much of the Paris Metro remains shut down, amid a strike wave throughout France. A recent issue of *Time* magazine, entitled "How America's Elites Lost Their Grip," notes with concern the growing audience for socialism throughout the country.

Just as important is the series of setbacks for US imperialism's efforts, in the wake of the dissolution of the USSR, to preserve its global hegemony through military violence.

In 2003, when the US invaded Iraq, the *World Socialist Web Site* noted, "Whatever the outcome of the initial stages of the conflict that has begun, American imperialism has a rendezvous with disaster. It cannot conquer the world. It cannot reimpose colonial shackles upon the masses of the Middle East. It will not find through the medium of war a viable solution to its internal maladies. Rather, the unforeseen difficulties and mounting resistance engendered by war will intensify all of the internal contradictions of American society."

More than fifteen years later, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are universally seen as debacles. The US-backed regime change operations in Syria and Libya have produced

nothing but bloodbaths. And the 2014 US-backed coup on Ukraine, which started as an effort to bring Ukraine into NATO, has not succeeded in its fundamental aims.

Within this context, *Foreign Affairs* noted that it was "not surprising" that "Ukraine is at the center of this storm."

"Over the past quarter century," all efforts by the United States to impose its hegemony on the "Eurasian continent have foundered on the shoals of Ukraine. For it is in Ukraine that the disconnect between triumphalist end-of-history delusions and the ongoing realities of great-power competition can be seen in its starkest form."

But faced with this enormous series of setbacks and debacles, US imperialism is doubling down, replacing the "war on terror" with preparations for "great-power conflict."

The intractable crisis of American imperialism has generated deep conflicts within the ruling class.

But the relative disinterest in the proceedings among the broad mass of the population underscores the fundamentally undemocratic and reactionary character of the operation. Regardless of its outcome, the results will be a further shift to the right. Its success will intensify the confrontation with Russia, with incalculably dangerous consequences. Its failure could actually strengthen Trump.

The fight against the Trump administration is inseparable from the struggle against the capitalist system and the war plots of both parties. It must be conducted completely independent of and in opposition to the Democratic Party.

The objective social basis for the fight against the Trump administration is the global upsurge of the class struggle. The growing wave of strikes and protests by the working class, if united internationally and armed with a socialist perspective, is the means of opposing not only the Trump administration, but the capitalist system, of which it is the corrupt excrescence.

Andre Damon

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