

Impeachment drive against Trump deepens US political crisis

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26 September 2019

With the announcement Tuesday by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that the Democratic majority has begun a formal impeachment inquiry directed against President Donald Trump, the political crisis in the United States has entered a new and explosive stage.

The immediate issue that sparked the conflict is the July 25 phone call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, initially reported by the media earlier this month by an unnamed intelligence agent. On Wednesday morning, under pressure from sections of the state and the media, Trump released a summary of the phone call.

The content of the discussion confirms the gangster-like character of the US “commander in chief.” Trump urged his Ukrainian counterpart to open an investigation into the activities of Hunter Biden, the son of a possible Democratic challenger in the 2020 presidential election, former Vice President Joe Biden.

More than one media or political commentator has compared Trump’s language—even in the sanitized form provided by the White House—to the bullying of a Mafia boss. After Zelensky pleads for more arms aid, which Trump has ordered frozen, Trump says, “I would like you to do us a favor.” He then proceeds to raise the issue of investigating Biden’s son and Biden himself.

The character of the administration was further underscored by Trump’s speech before the United Nations on Tuesday, where he employed the language of the fascistic right, denouncing “globalists” who want to “replace” national identity, while escalating his tirade against “socialism and communism.”

Up to this point, the Democratic Party leadership in the House has been reluctant to pursue impeachment against Trump, fearing that an open rift in Washington would have unpredictable consequences, including the intervention of forces from below. By Wednesday afternoon, however, more than a majority of the House of

Representatives, some 217 Democrats and one independent, were on record in support of impeachment proceedings.

As always, the Democrats’ decision to move more aggressively is driven by the considerations of powerful factions of the military and intelligence apparatus.

In an article published Wednesday night, the *New York Times* detailed the longstanding connections between Pelosi and the intelligence agencies, and the decisive role this played in the decision for impeachment—a connection acknowledged by Pelosi herself:

For Ms. Pelosi, the intelligence and national security implications of the latest allegations against Mr. Trump helped turn the tide. Long before she was speaker, Ms. Pelosi served as the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, overseeing the secretive workings of America’s national security apparatus and helping to draft the law that governs how intelligence officials file whistle-blower complaints, and how that information is shared with Congress.

She saw the latest allegations against Mr. Trump—that he pressured the Ukrainian president to investigate a leading political rival, then worked to bury an intelligence whistle-blower’s complaint detailing the effort—as an egregious perversion of the process.

Trump’s Democratic opponents do not object to bullying a weaker country. They only object because Trump is bullying Ukraine for his own political purposes, rather than for the broader interests of the US ruling elite and American imperialism. That is the content of the Democrats’ denunciations of Trump for endangering

“national security,” with some media commentators going so far as to declare Trump guilty of treason—a capital offense.

There are broader considerations involved that go beyond the phone call with the Ukrainian president. For significant sections of the ruling elite, Trump has lost whatever has remained of his credibility and usability.

His foreign policy is seen as increasingly erratic and dangerous: going to the brink of war with Iran, then backing off; negotiating with the Taliban in Afghanistan, then calling off the deal at the last minute; provoking trade war with China, and in the process threatening the vast corporate interests bound up with trade and finance in that country; threatening North Korea with nuclear annihilation, then declaring his admiration for Kim Jong-un; and, above all, turning away from the provocative anti-Russian stance of the Obama administration.

In domestic policy, the corporate tax cuts of 2017 are a distant memory, as the US economy heads into recession. Trump has also launched a public campaign against the Federal Reserve Board, the US central bank, because its policies, aimed at defending the interests of the financial aristocracy as a whole, cut across his immediate electoral concerns. Notably, the stock market’s response to the launching of an impeachment inquiry into Trump was to post its best day in two weeks.

The announcement of an impeachment inquiry has come as a surprise to the Trump camp, revealed in the confused and panic-stricken reaction by the White House. It has had to drop the posture of 100 percent stonewalling and supply documents demanded by Congress, beginning with the summary of Trump-Zelensky phone call, and continuing with the whistle-blower complaint filed against Trump by the unnamed intelligence officer, which has now been delivered to the intelligence committees of both the House and Senate.

According to several press reports, the congressional Democratic leadership favors limiting the impeachment inquiry to the Ukraine issue, excluding anything that relates to Trump’s attacks on immigrants, his flouting of the Constitution, and other attacks on democratic rights.

At a meeting Wednesday, Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Judiciary Committee Chair Jerry Nadler all reportedly voiced support for a “narrow” impeachment process focused on the charge that Trump is guilty of promoting his own political interests at the expense of US “national security.”

The Democratic Party does not represent a genuine alternative to Trump’s attacks on democratic rights and

promotion of fascist forces. It represents a different road to authoritarian rule, based on elevating the military-intelligence apparatus as the supreme arbiter of American politics. Even if they were to succeed in removing Trump, Vice President Pence is a no less reactionary figure, long identified with the Christian fundamentalist right.

Trump is only a symptom of a much deeper disease. There is no genuine support for democratic rights and constitutional principles in the entire American ruling elite, which is obsessed by the danger of a movement from below that would threaten its profits, wealth and privilege. The initiation of impeachment sets the stage for a much greater intensification of the political crisis, in which there will be no lack of shocks and surprises.

The decisive question in this crisis is the independent action of the working class, directed against both capitalist factions.

In its June 2017 statement, “Palace Coup or Class Struggle,” which analyzed the conflict within the ruling class at an earlier stage of its development, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained that an “altogether different conflict is developing—between the ruling class and the working class, the broad mass of the population, which is suffering various forms of social distress and is completely excluded from political life.”

Over the past two years, this conflict has taken open form, demonstrated by the ongoing General Motors strike, as well as the wave of teachers’ strikes that is likely to resume this fall. The danger is that the trade unions, the principal instruments for the ruling class to control and suppress workers’ struggles, are once again seeking to subordinate the working class to the Democratic Party.

The working class cannot defend its jobs, living standards and democratic rights, or fight the mounting threat of imperialist war, by relying on either of the two parties of corporate America. It must reject both the Democratic and Republican parties and build a mass independent political movement of working people, based on a socialist and internationalist program.



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