

The Democrats pass Pelosi's phony antiwar resolution

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The resolution adopted by the US House of Representatives Thursday evening “directing” President Trump not to go to war with Iran without congressional approval is a political fraud. It has two political purposes: to allow the Democratic Party to pretend it is opposed to war without actually imposing the slightest restriction on the military actions of the Trump administration; and to cement the ties between the Democrats and large sections of the military-intelligence apparatus who were clearly blindsided by Trump's decision to assassinate Iranian General Qassem Suleimani.

The impotent character of the House vote is demonstrated by the decision of the Democratic leadership to introduce it as a “concurrent resolution,” a designation generally reserved for empty formalities, statements of opinion by Congress that do not go to the president for his signature and therefore do not have the force of law.

While House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, echoed by pro-Democratic media pundits, claimed that the Democrats would compel Trump to obtain congressional authorization before going to war, the resolution does no such thing. After passing the House by a near-party-line vote of 224-194, it goes to the Senate, where the Republicans have a 53-47 majority. If the Senate should approve it, the resolution would simply be published as a declaration of the wishes of Congress. For good reason, House Republicans sneered at the action as a vote on a “press release.”

At her press conference Thursday before the vote, Pelosi claimed, “Today, to honor our duty to keep the American people safe, the House will move forward with a War Powers Resolution to limit the president's military actions regarding Iran.” She tried to make a virtue out of the nonbinding character of the resolution,

saying: “This is a statement by the Congress of the United States. And I will not have that statement be diminished by whether the president will veto it or not.”

The remarks by Democratic representatives in the course of a nearly three-hour debate combined denunciations of General Suleimani, killed by the January 3 missile strike ordered by Trump, with demands that Congress be allowed to participate as a full partner in such homicidal decisions in the future. Michigan Democrat Dan Kildee summed up this view, declaring: “It's not even a question as to whether or not there was justification to take out Mr. Suleimani, because clearly there was. But who gives the justification, who authorizes military action in this country?”

They had no answer to the taunts of Republican speakers who noted that the Democrats had raised no such objections to the unilateral military actions of Democratic presidents, as when Barack Obama launched the war against Libya that ended in the murder of that country's leader, Muammar Gaddafi, or interventions into Syria and Yemen, or the countless drone-missile killings during the eight years of his administration.

While the House vote has been accompanied by much rhetorical posturing by Democratic representatives seeking to appeal to mass antiwar sentiment, the resolution's text is a straightforward defense of the “national interests” of American imperialism, including “preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapons capability”—a goal that could be achieved only by destroying the country's industrial and technical base.

The resolution begins with a diatribe against Iran, declaring, “The Government of Iran is a leading state sponsor of terrorism and engages in a range of

destabilizing activities across the Middle East. Iranian General Qassem Soleimani was the lead architect of much of Iran's destabilizing activities throughout the world."

It is, in fact, the American ruling class that is the principal architect of destabilization and violence, responsible for the deaths of over one million people in Iraq alone since the 2003 invasion.

Aside from the bogus appeal to antiwar sentiment, there was another political reason for the resolution. It was a gesture of support by the Democrats for sections of the national security apparatus who opposed the decision to assassinate Suleimani, not out of any moral qualms, but because the US military was not prepared for an immediate escalation of hostilities in the Persian Gulf region to the level of a full-scale war with Iran.

This political alliance between the Democrats and the military-intelligence apparatus has been the basis of the drive to impeach Trump—not for his many crimes against democratic rights, immigrants and the working class as a whole, but for his temporary freeze on US military aid to Ukraine, which placed a question mark over a longstanding operation by Washington to transform Ukraine into a launching pad for military provocations against Russia.

In the Iran debate, this alliance was signaled by Pelosi's selection of freshman Representative Elissa Slotkin of Michigan to introduce the war powers resolution. Slotkin is a former CIA operative who served three tours of duty in Baghdad, then headed the Iraq desk at the National Security Council in the Obama White House before moving on to the Pentagon, where her portfolio included facilitating drone warfare—the very method used to incinerate General Suleimani and the other victims of the January 3 attack.

Another first-term national-security veteran, Andy Kim, who was an adviser to the US military in Afghanistan, then worked at the Obama National Security Council on Iraq policy, appeared at a House leadership press conference Wednesday. He seemed proud of the fact that the war powers resolution would have no practical effect. Referring to the use of military force, he said, "There are lots of different avenues in which the president can proceed with different types of kinetic action." He concluded, "There are no firm limits that are going to be able to completely restrain

what he is willing to do."

There is one additional political element in the passage of the war powers resolution on Iran: the role of the Democratic Party "lefts," particularly the two congresswomen affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib. They both voted for the fraudulent resolution, which condemns Iran and declares that the US military has "an inherent right to self-defense against imminent armed attacks"—the pretext advanced by Trump. Ocasio-Cortez did not even speak in the debate, while Tlaib made a brief statement in support of the "rule of law," but making no reference either to the assassination of Suleimani or to Iran and the Iranian people.

This only underscores the reality that there is no way to fight the mounting danger of imperialist war through any section of the Democratic Party. This struggle must be waged by the working class, through the mobilization of workers and young people in an independent, mass antiwar movement based on socialist principles.



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