

Trump exploits Iran war crisis to incite violence against political opponents

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15 January 2020

On Monday, Trump retweeted a photoshopped image of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in a hijab and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer in a turban, superimposed on an Iranian flag with the caption “the corrupted Dems trying their best to come to the Ayatollah’s rescue.”

White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham gave a prepared statement in an appearance on Fox News in which she doubled down on the provocation. “I think the president is making clear that the Democrats have been parroting Iranian talking points and almost taking the side of terrorists and those who were out to kill the Americans,” she said. “I think the president was making the point that the Democrats seem to hate him so much that they’re willing to be on the side of countries and leadership of countries who want to kill Americans.”

Given the fact that Trump had just ordered the murder of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, considered the second highest-ranking official in Iran, the tweet and the subsequent statement were nothing less than an incitement of violence against his political opponents.

Trump’s latest provocations come amidst bitter factional conflicts within the state apparatus, with the House of Representatives expected to vote today to formally send articles of impeachment against Trump to the Senate for trial. Alongside the divisions within the ruling class, there are growing class tensions and broad-based hostility to inequality and war. Under these conditions, Trump is engaged in a campaign to criminalize domestic opposition to war and attack the nominal opposition party as “radical left” and “socialist.”

In a fascist speech last Thursday in Toledo, Ohio, Trump mocked the constitutional requirement that the president obtain congressional authorization for

military intervention. He told his supporters that he could not give Congress advance notice of the attack on Suleimani because the Democrats would have leaked the information to the “fake news” media in order to thwart the strike and protect the Iranian leader.

This branding of the Democrats as traitors goes hand in hand with Trump’s illegal invocation of a national emergency to build his border wall with Mexico, his deployment of troops to assist in the incarceration of immigrants in concentration camps, his talk of “civil war” in response to the impeachment inquiry, his repeated “jokes” about remaining in office past the constitutional two-term limit, and his efforts to build a far-right base among police, soldiers and immigration agents.

The character of the Democrats’ opposition, however, only enables Trump. Their response to his increasingly authoritarian and fascist pronouncements is characterized by fecklessness and complicity.

Not a single prominent Democrat, including the self-described “socialist” Bernie Sanders, has denounced the murder of Suleimani as a war crime and breach of US and international law, nor have the Democrats suggested making this crime or his other multiple attacks on democratic rights grounds for impeachment.

The so-called “antiwar” resolution passed by the Democrats in the House is a toothless, nonbinding resolution that places no real restrictions on Trump’s war-making powers. It denounces Iran as a terrorist state and condemns Suleimani as the “lead architect” of Iran’s “destabilizing activities throughout the world.”

The impeachment crisis itself is the product of a bitter conflict within the ruling class over foreign policy, in which the Democrats are aligned with disaffected sections of the military, intelligence and foreign policy establishment, which consider Trump to be

insufficiently aggressive in confronting Russia.

Making clear their orientation, the central demand of Democrats in relation to the upcoming Senate trial is that Republicans allow Trump's fired national security adviser, John Bolton, to testify. Bolton, a notorious warmonger who has long advocated war against Iran and North Korea, opposed Trump's withholding of military aid from Ukraine as a concession to Russia.

The Democrats have centered their own denunciations of Trump on neo-McCarthyite allegations that Trump himself is an agent of Putin, a campaign that has been utilized to suppress free speech, censor the internet and persecute WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning for exposing US war crimes. On Sunday, Pelosi repeated this absurd allegation, declaring that "all roads lead to Putin," and suggesting that Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is an "accomplice." Each of America's major bourgeois parties is accusing the other of "treason."

The working class must take Trump's threats as a warning. As the Political Committee of the Socialist Equality Party (US) stated last October:

American democracy has come to a historic crossroads. As it seeks to maintain power, the Trump presidency will assume an increasingly illegal, authoritarian and violent character. The removal of this administration from power is a political necessity. But by whom and through what methods this objective is achieved is a life-and-death question... So long as the conflict is confined to the divisions within the ruling class, there can be no democratic or progressive outcome. ("No to American fascism! Build a mass movement to force Trump out!")

Both the drive to war against Iran—and beyond Iran, Russia and China—and the moves toward dictatorship arise from the historic crisis and decay of American capitalism. Nearly three decades of continuous war in the Middle East, waged in an attempt to counter American capitalism's economic decline, have produced one disaster after another, intensifying Washington's geopolitical crises.

Ever more staggering levels of social inequality at home, and a parasitic economy totally dependent on unlimited supplies of money-printing by the central bank, are fueling a growth of class struggle and anti-capitalist sentiment. The ruling oligarchy personified by Trump, haunted by the specter of socialist revolution, turns to war and dictatorship to defend its power and property.

It is the growing social and political struggle of the working class, in the US and internationally, that provides the basis for defeating the drive to war and defending democratic rights. The critical question is to provide this rising movement with a conscious revolutionary and internationalist program and strategy to take power and put an end to capitalism, the source of war and dictatorship.



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