

House forwards impeachment articles, triggering Senate trial of President Trump

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On Wednesday, the House of Representatives in a party-line vote passed a resolution to approve seven House impeachment managers and send two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump to the Senate, triggering a Senate trial that will either acquit the president or convict and remove him from office.

The action marked only the third time in US history that a sitting president was impeached, the first being Andrew Johnson in 1868 and the second, Bill Clinton in 1998. Both were acquitted in the subsequent Senate trials, where conviction requires a two-third vote. Richard Nixon resigned his office in August of 1974 in the face of a virtually certain vote by the House to impeach him.

The Senate is set to formally accept the articles of impeachment on Thursday, one for abuse of power and the second for contempt of Congress, initiating preliminary formalities. The trial is expected to begin in earnest with opening arguments next Tuesday, following the recess for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

The onset of the Senate trial, which will be presided over by the chief justice of the Supreme Court, John Roberts, and in which the senators will essentially serve as jurors, takes place in the context of an explosive political and social crisis and internal warfare within the American state without parallel since the Civil War.

The trial will unfold in the aftermath of the illegal assassination of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, which has raised the specter of war with Iran and ratcheted up tensions between Washington and both foes, such as Russia and China, and nominal allies in Europe. It also coincides with the run-up to the first primaries in the 2020 elections.

The explosive character of the crisis that has produced the impeachment drive was expressed Monday in Trump's retweeting of an image of Democratic congressional leaders Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer dressed in Islamic garb and standing in front of an Iranian flag, accompanied by charges from Trump that the Democrats are allied with Iranian terrorists who are killing Americans.

This incitement of violence against Trump's political

opponents, whom he brands as "far left" and "socialist," is part of Trump's efforts to create a fascist constituency and establish a dictatorial regime.

The Democrats, for their part, have based their impeachment drive on the claim that Trump is a threat to US national security because he temporarily withheld military aid to Ukraine, depicted as engaged in a "hot war" with Russia. The effort to either remove Trump from office or force him to adopt a more aggressive anti-Russian posture is an extension of the McCarthyite-style campaign against Moscow that has been at the center of the Democrats' opposition to Trump since the 2016 presidential campaign.

The impeachment and Senate trial are part of a bitter conflict within the ruling class over foreign policy issues. The Democrats are aligned with disaffected factions of the intelligence and foreign policy establishment that consider the removal of Russia as an impediment to US hegemony over the Eurasian landmass a precondition for confronting and defeating the greater threat to US imperialism, China. Trump speaks for factions that consider the confrontation against China as the first priority and believe that it may be possible to enlist Russia in this drive.

The events of Wednesday illustrated that there is no democratic or progressive content to the Democrats' impeachment drive and that both sides in the political warfare in Washington are right-wing and pro-war.

On Wednesday, House Speaker Pelosi announced seven impeachment managers, who will act as prosecutors of Trump in the Senate proceedings. The team will be led by Jerrold Nadler of New York, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Adam Schiff of California, who chairs of House Intelligence Committee. These two and their respective committees presided over the impeachment process in the House, which culminated in a party-line vote to impeach Trump on December 18.

The other managers are Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the chairman of the Democratic caucus in the House; Zoe Lofgren of California, who was a House staff member during the Nixon hearings and a member of the Judiciary

Committee for the Clinton impeachment; Val Demings of Florida, the former police chief of Orlando; and two freshmen representatives: Sylvia Garcia of Texas and Jason Crow of Colorado. The latter is a former Army Ranger who served three tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. Crow is one of a group of influential freshmen House Democrats with intelligence, military or national security backgrounds identified by the *World Socialist Web Site* as "CIA Democrats."

The resolution approving the House managers and authorizing the forwarding of the articles of impeachment to the Senate was passed Wednesday on a party-line vote of 228 to 193.

In their remarks on the floor of the House prior to the vote to authorize the House managers, the Democratic leadership made clear the right-wing basis of its impeachment drive.

Nadler denounced Trump as a traitor, stating: "He betrayed our country when he used the powers of his office, including withholding vital US military assistance, to pressure that government [Ukraine] to help him win reelection. He invited foreign interference into our elections, again. He jeopardized our national security."

Citing documents submitted to the House on Tuesday by Lev Parnas, a one-time associate of Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York and Trump's personal lawyer, Nadler said the information "further proves Mr. Trump's scheme to pressure Ukraine to go after his personal political opponents [former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter]."

He then repeated the Democratic demand that the Republican leadership of the Senate commit itself to allowing new witness testimony and additional documents in the Senate trial, something that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is resisting. In making this demand, Nadler sounded what has become a major theme of the Democrats—the need to call Trump's former national security adviser John Bolton as a witness. The Democrats' promotion of Bolton, an advocate of war against Iran, North Korea and Venezuela who broke with Trump over Ukraine, underscores the reactionary, pro-war basis of the Democrats' impeachment drive.

Schiff, in summing up the case for conviction of Trump, said, "He withheld hundreds of millions of US dollars in vital military aid to Ukraine, a close ally at war with Russia."

In her remarks, Pelosi tacitly acknowledged that the Democrats were not impeaching Trump for his real attacks on democratic rights--illegally shifting Pentagon funds to build the border wall with Mexico, deploying troops to the border to assist in the pogrom against immigrants, effectively abolishing the right to asylum, inciting violence

against political opponents, pardoning US soldiers convicted of committing war crimes—but only for his threat to undermine the longstanding US effort to transform Ukraine into a staging ground for war against Russia.

She said: "For a long time I resisted the calls from across the country for impeachment of the president for obvious violations of the Constitution that he had committed, but recognizing the divisiveness of impeachment I held back... But when he acted the way he did in relationship to withholding funds from Ukraine in return for a benefit for him that was personal and political, he crossed a threshold. He gave us no choice."

She then reiterated the absurd claim that Russia had engineered Trump's election victory in 2016 and was preparing to do the same in 2020: "You see the Russians now hacking in Ukraine... Just reminds me that most Americans think that voters in the United States should decide who our president is, not Vladimir Putin... I am concerned that all roads lead to Russia. All roads lead to Putin."

The impeachment and Senate trial are expressions of a crisis, not just of a government, but of bourgeois class rule. They arise from the confluence of geo-political crises, economic instability and historic levels of social inequality that are generating an upsurge of class struggle and a growth of socialist sentiment among working people. Whatever the outcome of the Senate trial, this crisis will only intensify.

The Democrats' opposition to Trump has nothing in common with the hatred for the administration felt by millions of workers and young people. On the contrary, the Democrats are petrified of encouraging a movement from below that could challenge the capitalist system that is defended by both parties.



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