

Ukraine and Iran votes expose support by Democrats and Republicans for global war

Patrick Martin
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In an overwhelming bipartisan vote, the US Senate approved legislation to tighten sanctions on Russia, empower President Trump to impose 100 percent tariffs on countries buying Russian oil and gas or other exports, as well as extending sanctions on Iran, even as US military forces continue to bomb and blockade that country.

The 86-11 vote saw hefty majorities of both capitalist parties support the legislation. Republicans voted 49-1, with three members absent, while Democrats backed the bill 37-10. The lone Republican opponent was Rand Paul, the fascist who only the day before pushed through a Senate committee resolution finding Dr. Anthony Fauci in contempt of Congress and referred him to the Department of Justice for criminal prosecution.

The 10 Democrats who voted no, including nominal independent Bernie Sanders, comprise the “left” wing of the caucus. Not one of them opposed the sanctions. Their objection was to the tariff provision, on the grounds that it would provide back-door congressional authorization for tariffs the Supreme Court has ruled unconstitutional—a procedural complaint over the separation of powers, not political opposition to war with Russia.

The fate of their amendment exposes the fraud. It was defeated 32-64, with 16 Democrats, including minority whip Richard Durbin and Jeanne Shaheen, the senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, joining 48 Republicans to kill it. Thirty Democrats voted for the amendment. Only 10 voted against the bill. Twenty of them registered a toothless protest and then voted for the war.

The legislation was written by the late Senator Lindsey Graham, the war-hawk Republican who died suddenly last month, shortly after returning from a visit

to Ukraine, and Democrat Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut. “Today, President Zelensky is watching from Ukraine—and Putin is watching from Moscow,” Blumenthal declared during the debate on the bill. “Today we say to the people of Ukraine: You are not alone. And today we say to Vladimir Putin: You will not conquer Ukraine.”

The purpose of the US-NATO war in Ukraine, to which the sanctions are an adjunct, is not to defend Ukraine from Russian conquest. It is to prepare the conquest and dismemberment of Russia itself by the imperialist powers, a goal which has been pursued ruthlessly since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The bill also extends economic sanctions on Iran for another five years, a provision added to gain the support of the White House. Trump had blocked the bill for more than a year, while conducting talks with Putin aimed at a deal that would guarantee American imperialism, rather than its European rivals, first crack at the vast natural resources of both Russia and Ukraine. Trump is now backing the bill, calling on the Republican-controlled House of Representatives to pass the legislation as soon as it returns from its August recess.

The Senate vote comes after Ukrainian President Zelensky visited Washington to attend the funeral of Senator Graham, along with Israel’s war-criminal prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. In the course of that visit, Zelensky had a notably friendly visit with Trump at the White House, and then a meeting with nearly the entire Senate, at which he pleaded for more military aid to Ukraine and more sanctions on Russia.

The sanctions on Russia are significant both as a political signal of US support for Ukraine and for their impact on the Russian economy. Senate Minority

Leader Chuck Schumer (D-New York) said the bill would send “an unmistakable message to Moscow that America will back Ukraine to the hilt.”

Chief Democratic sponsor Blumenthal addressed Putin directly, saying, “Your economy, already on its heels, is going to be throttled, even decimated by cutting off the flow of revenue from Russian oil and gas.” But he added, referring to the increasingly desperate position of the Zelensky regime in Kiev, “Time is not on our side.”

The Senate action came only two days after a devastating Russian missile strike on Kiev, after which Zelensky said the Ukrainian military had been unable to shoot down a single missile because it had run out of interceptors, mostly US-built and supplied through European NATO powers.

The US military’s own stockpiles of anti-missile and anti-drone weapons have been severely depleted by the war against Iran, now in its sixth month, with Pentagon officials warning that it will take years to rebuild the supplies needed for wars with larger military powers like Russia and China.

Senator Chris Coons (D-Delaware), told *The Hill* last week, “Zelensky’s been clear with us; they’re steadily running out of interceptors.” He added, “What really matters is not this bill; it’s what does Donald Trump do with it. Will President Trump finally actually take the side of the country that is aligned with our values and our interests and our priorities against the country that isn’t? And we can pass a bill as an important sign that Congress wants him to take more of an active role, but he’s got to decide to do it. That’s what matters.”

The principal conflict between the congressional Democrats and the Trump White House is not over his attacks on democratic rights, his preparations for dictatorship, or his assault on what remains of social provision. It is over Ukraine. On that question their demand is that he wage war more aggressively.

The conflict over expanding Trump’s power to impose tariffs was a further display of this priority. The bill would give Trump the authority to target the five largest purchasers of Russian oil and gas for retaliatory tariffs. China is number one, followed by India. Trump would have the power to waive these tariffs by citing unspecified “national security” concerns. Congress is thus approving a new economic weapon against China, and other targets of the White House, in response to the

Supreme Court decision which held that Trump needed congressional sanction for his tariffs.

The bill also authorizes sanctions, and by implication US military action, against the so-called shadow fleet, tankers chartered secretly by Russia to deliver oil and gas to its customers. This could well result in armed confrontations between US and Russian military forces.

As the WSWS noted, the funeral of Lindsey Graham became a bipartisan mobilization for war, with the Democrats’ eulogies for the most ferocious supporter of wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Ukraine and Iran demonstrating that on the central question of imperialist aggression—the war in Ukraine above all—the two parties are united.

Now the passage of the bill he drafted, and which will be named after him, has become the occasion for the Democratic Party to show its unwavering support for the military-intelligence apparatus and its overseas operations on behalf of American imperialism.

This action demonstrates that the struggle against imperialist war, whether against Russia in Ukraine, or against Iran, requires a political break by the working class from the Democratic Party, and building of an antiwar movement based on a socialist and internationalist program.



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