

United States: Impeachment Inquiry Reveals Deep Ruling Class Divisions

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The current impeachment inquiry into President Trump by the Democrats in the House of Representatives was launched by Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House. This marked a departure by her from her previous stance of resisting calls by the left wing of the Democrats (only “left” in the context of a party that has moved to the right, but not as far as the Republicans) to begin the impeachment process.

The issue which caused her to make this step was an exposure by an as yet anonymous “whistle blower” of an attempt by Trump to force the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to open an investigation of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and his son Hunter, for alleged corruption related to Hunter’s past lucrative business operation in Ukraine. We now know that the “whistle blower” was a CIA agent dispatched to the White House.

The Constitution states that the president may be impeached, or charged, for “high crimes and misdemeanors” by the House. What Pelosi charged was that Trump’s asking the leader of another country to get dirt on one of his rivals in the 2020 election was an unconstitutional “high crime”.

It certainly appears to be just that. However, Trump’s record as president has included a whole series of impeachable offenses, many far worse than trying to get Zelensky to interfere in a U.S. election. One example: Trump’s war on asylum seekers at the Mexican border, which has included separation of children from their parents, imprisoning children in small cages, torture and horrible conditions leading to death in many cases and everything else we know about his war on the border.

Why did Pelosi resist impeaching Trump for such criminal acts, but seized on the attempt to pressure a foreign country to get dirt on Biden?

Cris Hedges, a leftist author and activist, said on Democracy Now that he thought the reason was that Biden is the preferred candidate of the Democratic establishment, which Nancy Pelosi is the leader of in the House. She wants to pre-empt any possible attack on Biden that could emerge from Ukraine.

I agree with Hedges. Moreover, the impeachment process puts Biden front and center in the eye of the public, turning attention away from the other Democratic candidates, especially Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, and the reforms they raise such as national health insurance, which the establishment opposes.

In recent polls of Democratic voters, the combined preferences for Sanders and Warren are more than for Biden, who is dropping a bit but still the front-runner.

Pelosi’s announcement brought over many reluctant Democrats to support the impeachment inquiry.

In the short time since Pelosi announced the inquiry on September 24, each day has brought new revelations. The evidence so far, which includes admissions by Trump himself, indicates that he did pressure Zelensky to investigate Joe and Hunter Biden, and that this pressure included a quid pro

quo of releasing of over 200 millions worth of military aid to Ukraine that Trump had put on hold, as well as a promise of a trip to the White House for the Ukrainian president.

Trump's response has been erratic and contradictory. He has said that the head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee leading the impeachment inquiry should be investigated for "treason" and that the whistle blower is a spy and implied he or she should be shot. He dismisses the inquiry as illegal.

Trump has also threatened mass unrest if he is removed from office. He referred to a statement by white racist evangelical pastor Robert Jeffress which threatened "a Civil War like fracture in this Nation from which our Country will never heal" if Trump is removed from office.

Jeffress was in Jerusalem with Trump and Netanyahu, where he gave a prayer at the ceremony for the shifting of the U.S. embassy to that city. The white Christian evangelicals are fiercely anti-Semitic but also pro-Israel — they want all U.S. Jews to get out of the country and go to Israel. They are also one of the main groups which constitute Trump's base in the population.

Trump's defense at present is to double-down on claiming that candidate Joe Biden is thoroughly corrupt, and insisting (after initially denying it) that his request for an investigation of the Bidens by the Ukrainians was completely proper and correct. He then publicly called on China to investigate the Bidens too.

Trump's barrage of insults and threats, his stock in trade, is meant to harden his base, estimated to be about one-third of the population. So far, almost all Republican spokespersons back Trump's assertions, with somewhat less inflammatory rhetoric. They know that without Trump, the Republican Party would be in deep disarray.

Hunter Biden did work for one of Ukraine's largest gas companies, Burisma, as a legal advisor. He was paid \$50,000 a month. On October 4, Ukraine's top prosecutor said he would audit several important cases previously dropped by his predecessors, including the very wealthy owner of Burisma.

This audit would have to be completed before any decision was taken to open an investigation, and would take some time.

One thing that has emerged from all this is that corruption is rampant in Ukraine. Previously the U.S. mainstream media had held up Ukraine as a model of democracy and good government as against Russia. The truth is that both countries are very much alike internally since their return to capitalism, however much they are at odds.

If the House does vote to impeach Trump, he will be tried in the Senate, where the Republicans have a 53-47 majority. To convict, there has to be a two-thirds vote in favor, or at least 67 Senators. So far, the Republican Senators are holding firm behind Trump, with few exceptions.

Right now, it seems likely that the Democrats in the House will use their majority to impeach Trump, but he will not be convicted in the Senate.

Clearly, there are major differences and sharp conflicts among the politicians of the two capitalist parties. This reflects divisions in the ruling class itself.

Back in 1848-51 in France, there was a struggle between the rising autocrat Louis Bonaparte and an opposition. Marx called the opposition the "Party of Order". A Marxist economist I respect, whose blog is called Critique of Crisis Theory, uses the same term to refer to those in the U.S. ruling class

who oppose Trump.

He recently wrote: "The U.S. capitalist class is deeply divided on the question of whether or not Trump should remain in office after 2020. Many U.S. capitalists – those who form the Party of Order – fear that Trump by whipping up white racism is radicalizing the Black-Brown part of the U.S. population, which is rapidly becoming the majority of the U.S. working class.

"These capitalists always complain that the president is 'dividing us rather than uniting us.' What they fear above all is that Trump is dividing an increasing section of the working class from the exploiting capitalist class.

"Also, the extremely reactionary nature of the Trump administration in all aspects is encouraging the growth of support for socialism – even if vaguely defined at present – on a mass scale not seen in the U.S. since the Great Depression. Today even bourgeois polls show that a majority of young people, including a significant sector of the white population, favor socialism over capitalism....

"Other U.S. capitalists, also affiliated with the Party of Order, are concerned that Trump's increasingly nationalist economic policies will destroy the entire global division of labor, foreign trade, and most importantly, the system of surplus value production that has grown up since the end of World War II and the end of the Cold War. Under this system, the bulk of surplus value is contained in commodities produced in the countries of the Global South but consumed in the Global North.

"Trump's trade war is encouraging those in China who believe China should develop its own products and trademarks in high-growth industries, especially 'high tech,' rather than depend on the current international division of labor, which ensures that most of the surplus value – or profit – goes to the capitalists of the imperialist countries, above all the U.S....

"At the same time, the Party of Order fears that Trump's nationalist policies are not only encouraging more nationalism in China, the same policies have also encouraged the growth of nationalism in Europe, since his trade wars also affect the European capitalists....

"However, many other U.S. capitalists strongly support Trump.... If Trump wins a second term and the Republicans end up in control of Congress once again[they] will also attempt to cut Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

"The Trump-supporting capitalists point to the pro-corporate tax cuts and his withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, combined with his ignorant mocking of the dangers of climate change and his enthusiastic support for expanding fossil fuel production. They are delighted by his 'deregulation' and strongly anti-union policies....

"The pro-Trump wing of the capitalist class ... believes the current form of the U.S. empire is no longer serving their interests. They agree with Trump that the time has come to get tough with rival capitalists and use the full power, including military power, of the U.S. state to grab more markets and sources of raw materials ... while doing everything possible to increase the exploitation of the workers at home."

Exactly how this plays out, including between the two capitalist parties and factions within them, remains to be seen.

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