

Withdraw From Syria Should Have Been a “Slam Dunk”

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Relying on an outdated foreign policy document of lapsed authority, the US House of Representatives rejected [HR 21](#) by a lopsided 321 – 103 vote affirming that American belligerents span both political parties when the Uniparty needs to coalesce.

Introduced by [Rep. Matt Gaetz](#) (R-FL), the Resolution would have, under Congressional approval of the War Powers Act, directed President Biden to withdraw US military forces from northeast Syria within 180 days of enactment.

Especially revealing has been the role of two prestigious House Committees with obvious jurisdiction: Armed Services and Foreign Affairs are predominant Congressional authorities yet neither grasped the contradiction that being a War Party is about peddling public money in pursuit of speculative military adventures like Syria.

How many Members of Congress are cognizant that there are fiscal consequences for every militaristic whim or conflated armed conflict that are contrary to the long term interests of the American people? How would those committees occupy their time if there were no countries to interfere with, no wars to initiate, no statutory nuance to debate – which may justify public discussion about downsizing to a part time Congress.

The overwhelming predisposition of each Committee was disturbing with [171 Republican Noes](#) and [150 Democratic Noes](#) against the Resolution as [47 Republicans](#) and [56 Democrats](#) voted Aye.

While an archetypical illustration of President Obama's unwelcomed intervention in 2014 as a US interloper intent on stealing Syrian oil, with air strikes and military occupation in the name of counterterrorism with no tangible American interests, Syria remains an enigmatic quagmire with no end in sight.

While opposition to the Resolution relied on an outdated [22-year old military authorization](#), the [AUMF of 2001](#) (Authority for Use of Military Force) was adopted specific to the 9/11 attack and is better known today as the ‘forever war’ authority. Never meant to be a wide open door to future [decades of war](#), Congressional hawks use the AUMF as Constitutional and [political cover](#) for airstrikes and ground ops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Syria or wherever needed.

It is readily apparent that a “civil war’ facilitated a US-backed deal taking control of Syrian oil fields as a façade for the State and Defense Departments to legitimize American troop presence as counter to the Islamic State. It does not take a PhD in poli science to speculate that many terrorists, some repugnant in their brutality, protest the theft of the US taking their natural resources.

We now know that a week before the House vote, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mark Milley made a surprise, more like a tiptoe, visit into [northeast Syria](#) stressing the ‘[enduring defeat](#)’ mantra of PKK/YPG terrorists who, according to Turkish sources, both receive US aid. Milley’s unlikely visit came the day after a series of [US led operations](#) killed IS operatives.

Even before Milley’s trip, it has been a source of speculation why a relatively insignificant number of 900 US troops were left behind. Of special interest is their assignment in the petroleum-rich northeast, why Milley would make a clandestine visit and whether such a negligible number is sufficient to thwart a [dedicated terrorist](#) presence. The answer may lie in the closing days of the Trump Administration which has been reconfigured by the Biden Administration.

The CRS Report [Armed Conflict in Syria](#), March, 2019 confirms that the Syrian conflict is riddled with complexity and contradictions which cost American taxpayers an estimated \$30 Billion from 2014 – 2019. Trump’s 2018 order for removal of all US troops from Syria was refuted by National Security Advisor John Bolton stating that Americans would remain until an Iran presence in Syria was eliminated. At about the same time, the Worldwide Threat Assessment prepared by US intelligence stated that *“The conflict has decisively shifted in the Syrian regime’s favor...”*

By 2019, Trump announced ISIS defeat and again ordered removal of all US troops prompting the resignation of Defense Secretary Mattis. Senators Graham (SC), Shaheen (NH), Ernst (Iowa), King (Maine), Cotton (Ark), and Rubio (FL) opposed the withdrawal in a letter to Trump stating, *“We believe that such action at this time is a premature and costly mistake...”* until Trump’s Secretary of Defense Mark Esper confirmed that 900 US troops would remain as a [“stabilization operation”](#) to guard Syrian oil fields from Islamic terrorists and deny Syria its own oil.

With the Delaware-based Delta Crescent Energy company in charge of the Syrian fields and a waiver from US sanctions, Trump’s [response](#) in October, 2019 was *‘we are keeping the oil..’ “ \$45 million a month” “we are [leaving troops behind](#) only for the oil.”* The deal has since been discarded by the Biden Administration thus reinstating US sanctions against Syria. A [Senior State Department](#) official confirmed that *‘We have a military presence there exclusively fighting Daesh.’*

Not surprising, after the House vote, Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Mao Ning called on the US to end its *‘illegal unilateral sanctions’* and cease raiding *“80% of Syria’s daily oil*

production” without allowing access by the Assad government. The US Treasury Department has applied sanctions on [35](#) sovereign nations around the world as Syria remains caught in the cross hairs.

Supporting the Gaetz resolution was former Obama Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford whose [letter to Congress](#) probably went unread since Ford specifically addressed that the *“last ISIS territory was captured by Syrian militia in March 2019”* consequently leaving *“serious debate about whether their mission is achievable”* and given that *“many more American resources would be required without guarantee of success.”* Ford could not have been more explicit but those who are devoted to war will not be denied. Ford continued *“After more than eight years of military operations in Syria, there is no definition of what the ‘enduring defeat’ of ISIS would look like.”*

The [House floor debate](#) was disappointing with the observance that no HR 21 opponents seemed aware of Ford’s message but rather allowed their own machismo to dominate their thinking despite facts on the ground. Most especially [Rep. Ryan Zinke](#) (R-Mont.) myopic justification that *“either we fight ‘em in Syria or we’ll fight ‘em here’* or that *‘we’ll fight them on the streets of our nation’* as one example of 1950’s cold war mentality that guide the majority of Members decision making.

As Rep. Andy Biggs (R- Az.) pointed out there is *“no statutory authority for the US to be in Syria.”* There was no mention of the role of Israel as a rationale for US undermining Assad until Trump’s 2019 proclamation recognizing [usurpation](#) of the Golan Heights as Israel territory.

While the House [Armed Services Committee](#) chaired by Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) has thirty voting members with only three Members of the Committee voting in favor of HR 21. Those opposing the Resolution included Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.) who is expected to run for the Senate in 2024 and Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wisc) Chair of the newly formed Select Committee on China. Those Republican members voting in favor of the Resolution included newly elected Rep. Corey Mills (Fl) who spoke eloquently during the debate, Rep. Nancy Mace (R-SC) and its author Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fl.)

On the other hand, the House [Foreign Affairs Committee](#) which is chaired by Rep. Mike McCaul (R-Tex) has 28 eight voting members with four Committee Members voting in favor including Rep. Mills who serves on both committees, Rep. Matthew Perry (R- Pa.), Rep. Ken Buck (R-Co.) and Rep. Tim Burchett (R- Tenn.) Voting against the Resolution included newly elected, Trump-endorsed Rep. John James (R-Mich.).

In a position to understand fiscal reality, the House Budget Committee with [37 members](#) exhibited a better appreciation that Math speaks Truth. With a \$1.5 Trillion annual service debt payment and for every \$1 the Federal government collects, the Feds spend \$1.29 as an unsustainable bad habit, 14 members (seven Dems and seven Republicans) voted in support of the Gaetz resolution – setting an example for those Members of the House unable to connect the dots.

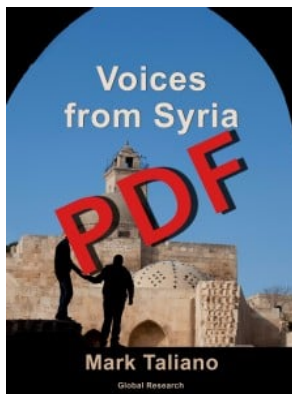
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