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## END WAR POWERS

• Populist support for reining in presidents grows in Congress

By the AFP Staff

**O**n March 10, Congress quietly voted down a major bipartisan War Powers resolution that called on the U.S. military to bring troops home from Syria immediately and to end the illegal occupation of that country. The measure may have failed, but it managed to attract support from both sides of the aisle—bringing together populists on the right, like sponsor Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), and the left, such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.)—to curb presidential powers to wage wars without congressional approval.

Writing for the news and commentary website “Responsible Statecraft,” Blaise Malley and Connor Echols noted, “The bill is the latest in a series of congressional efforts to end the little-known U.S. military presence in Syria.”

In a press release announcing the bill, Gaetz argued, “Congress has never authorized the use of military force in Syria. The United States is currently not in a war with or against Syria, so why are we conducting dangerous military operations there?”

To justify the measure, Gaetz cited “mounting concerns” over Presi-



**REP. MATT GAETZ**  
End presidential war powers.

dent Joe Biden’s failing mental faculties. Gaetz referred to an August 2021 interview with ABC News on the U.S. occupation of Syria where Biden didn’t even know the U.S. has troops in that country. “[W]e don’t have military in Syria to make sure that we’re going to be protected,” Biden incoherently told the ABC reporter.

At the time of that interview, the U.S. military had nearly 1,000 U.S. soldiers in the northern part of Syria, down from over 2,000 troops in 2018.

Top U.S. officials have repeatedly criticized Russia for violating Ukraine’s territorial integrity, yet they remain wholly unconcerned about the

glaring hypocrisy over Syria. Syrian officials say the United States’ ongoing occupation is illegal and violates their national sovereignty.

While Gaetz’s legislation may have failed, it is part of a growing effort in Congress to take back the power to declare war from presidents.

In mid-March, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee deliberated a bill that would repeal the 1991 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against Iraq.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) added that he plans to introduce a measure to end the 2001 AUMF, which gave President George W. Bush broad powers to respond to any individual, group, or nation that officials claim were involved in the 9/11 attacks.

“For years I’ve led the fight to return war making powers back to Congress where they belong,” said Paul. “Over 20 U.S. military actions are justified by claiming the 2001 AUMF authorizes worldwide military force. My amendment would make clear that the current Congress must authorize current war not a congress from two decades ago.”

Recently, Robert Ford, the ambassador to Syria under Barack Obama, also came out in favor of bringing troops home from Syria. In a letter to Congress in support of Gaetz’s bill, Ford said the U.S. mission has no clear objective. “We owe our soldiers serving there in harm’s way a serious debate about whether their mission is, in fact, achievable,” wrote Ford.

According to estimates, since 2001, U.S. wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan have cost American taxpayers nearly \$7 trillion. Note that Joe Biden says he will sign measures revoking the 2002 and 1991 AUMFs if they come across his desk. ★

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