

AFD 253 Links and Notes

- Yemen

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/15/america-stop-participating-yemen-war>

November 14th: In an odd spectacle, representatives went back and forth between speaking about wolves, who kill other animals, to the Saudi monarchy, which has killed hundreds of thousands of people – mostly civilians including children – and pushed 14 million people to the brink of starvation.

The Republicans had hijacked the “Manage our Wolves Act” – a bad but unrelated piece of legislation – to pass a rule that would prohibit the House from debating H Res 138, introduced by Ro Khanna, a Democratic representative from California. The latter resolution would give the president 30 days to get the US military out of the war in [Yemen](#).

The Republicans [won](#) by a vote of 201-187. But the Democrats could have easily defeated this surprise attack with some of the 17 members of their party who didn’t vote and the 6 who voted with the Republicans.

What the Republicans did on Wednesday was illegal and unconstitutional. Under the War Powers Resolution of 1973, Khanna’s resolution [must be allowed](#) a debate and vote.

- <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/12/15/18138308/democrat-yemen-resolution-house-saudi>

December 12th: On Wednesday, Republicans in the House snuck a provision to block votes on Yemen-related War Powers Resolutions for the remainder of this Congress to a procedural vote on an unrelated bill — a massive bipartisan legislative package that subsidizes agriculture and funds food assistance programs, known as the farm bill.

Republican leaders were giving the impression that lawmakers had to choose between Yemeni people and Americans. And it worked. Five Democrats, Reps. Jim Costa (CA), Al Lawson (FL), Collin Peterson (MN), Dutch Ruppersberger (MD), and David Scott (GA) voted to advance the farm bill to a floor vote, giving Republicans enough support to block action on Yemen.

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/14/yemen-ceasefire-hope-gives-way-to-concerns-about-implementation>
- <https://www.thenation.com/article/paul-ryan-yemen-saudi-arabia-vote/>

“Yemen has become a hell on earth for millions of children. Today every single boy, every single girl in Yemen is facing extremely dire need,” says UNICEF regional director [Geert Cappelaere](#), who reports that, on average, [a child is dying every 10 minutes in Yemen](#)—a country where more than 400,000 children are starving and an additional 1.5 million are acutely malnourished.

“For the second time in less than a month, Speaker Paul Ryan and other Republican leaders in the House have opted to undermine our democracy by slipping a rule to block a vote on ending U.S. support for the war in Yemen into an entirely unrelated bill,” [explained Paul Kawika Martin](#), Peace Action’s senior

director for policy and political affairs. “They have once again taken the position that ending or even debating the U.S. role in the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet is not worth serious consideration, even as the United Nations warns the war-induced famine in Yemen could soon become the worst famine in 100 years. There’s a grotesque irony in Republican leadership using the farm bill, legislation meant to ensure Americans are fed, to stop debate on ending U.S. support for a war that is starving millions in Yemen.”

Ro Khanna was outraged. “This is why people hate Congress,” declared the congressman. “Speaker Ryan is not allowing a vote on my resolution to stop the war in Yemen because many Republicans will vote with us and he will lose the vote. He is disgracing Article 1 of the Constitution, and as a result, more [Yemeni] children will die.”

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/30/congress-finally-pushin-g-us-withdraw-yemen>
- https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=115&session=2&vote=00266
- <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/138/text>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-46573156>
- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/12/12/yemen-death-toll-six-times-higher-estimated/>
- <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/colin-peterson-yemen-rule-farm-bill-saudi-war.html>

There are many reasons why Peterson’s explanation is ... unsatisfying. For one, by [all accounts](#), voting against the Yemen resolution would not have doomed the farm bill.

But Peterson’s most fascinating argument is surely this: *I voted to prolong American involvement in a foreign war (that doubles as the world’s most severe, ongoing humanitarian crisis) because I don’t know a damn thing about it!*

Now look: I get that Peterson’s (largely rural and conservative) constituents aren’t calling his office everyday to express their concerns about the Saudi blockade of Yemen. And I understand that Peterson is a Blue Dog Democrat, and thus, contractually obligated to scold his party for “getting off on a tangent” whenever it contemplates issues that do not concern rural white people or major corporations.

But Collin Peterson is not an isolationist. He does not actually believe that the U.S. government shouldn’t involve itself in matters that don’t directly concern the good people of Moorhead, Minnesota. The representative reliably votes to expand (already gargantuan) Pentagon budgets that are designed to ensure American military hegemony over the entire planet. Which is to say: Collin Peterson believes the United States should maintain a globe-spanning military empire — but that U.S. congressmen shouldn’t be expected to read the foreign affairs section of the newspaper.