

Obama's nuclear disarmament hoax

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This week's gathering of world leaders at the Nuclear Security Summit in South Korea was the occasion for a great deal of cynical posturing about nuclear disarmament and world peace.

US President Obama took the lead, telling students at Hankuk University that the summit's deliberations on "nuclear terrorism" were part of "our vision of a world without nuclear weapons." Under his presidency, he declared, the US had signed a new START treaty with Russia to reduce nuclear warheads, committed itself to not developing new warheads, and "narrowed the range of contingencies under which we would ever use or threaten to use nuclear weapons."

No one should be fooled by this high-blown rhetoric. The ruling classes have always prepared for war under the banner of peace. The slogan of "disarmament" is the means not only for duping working people, but of ensuring military advantage over any rivals, both immediate and potential.

As Obama admitted, even if the START treaty is fully implemented, the US will have a massive nuclear arsenal—more than 1,500 deployed nuclear weapons and around 5,000 warheads—that can obliterate any potential rival or alliance of rivals. As for "narrowing the range of contingencies", the US has never renounced a first nuclear strike—that is, the "right" to use nuclear weapons in a pre-emptive war of aggression.

While it is not upgrading American nuclear warheads, the Obama administration is committed to spending at least \$600 billion over the next decade to modernise weapons production facilities and delivery systems. These include a new generation of land-based ballistic missiles, a new fleet of nuclear-armed submarines and 100 new strategic bombers.

What is under way is not nuclear disarmament, but an arms race. The key index of this new build up is not the absolute number of nuclear warheads, but the sophistication of the delivery systems and their ability to evade detection and defensive measures. Moreover, while limiting the number of "deployed nuclear warheads," the

US retains the ability to rapidly construct tens of thousands of new ones from its huge stockpile of 400 tonnes of highly enriched uranium.

Under the guise of "disarmament", the US is determined to maintain its absolute nuclear supremacy. The real purpose of the South Korean summit was to bar access to fissile material and thus nuclear weapons to countries that do not already have nuclear weapons. In that way, the US does not have to take a potentially nuclear-armed foe into account as it wages new wars of aggression.

Obama, the evangelist of nuclear disarmament and world peace, also used the opportunity in Seoul to renew his threats against Iran and North Korea. At Hankuk University, he ominously warned Tehran that "time was short" to reach a "diplomatic resolution" to the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program. Having imposed what amounts to an economic blockade on Iran, the US and its European allies are demanding that Tehran dismantle facilities and programs developed legitimately under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Obama's stance on Iran is utterly hypocritical. Iran has signed the NPT, its nuclear facilities are monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and its leaders insist that they will not build nuclear weapons. Yet the Obama administration is preparing to wage war on Iran even as it turns a blind eye to Israel, India and Pakistan, all of which have nuclear weapons and refuse to sign the NPT or allow IAEA inspections.

Obama has repeatedly declared that "all options are on the table" for dealing with Iran—that is, the use of nuclear weapons is not ruled out. More than once, the American media has reported that Pentagon planners have considered employing nuclear bombs to destroy Iran's underground uranium enrichment plants.

As with the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the main objective in launching an illegal war of aggression against Iran is to establish a regime in Tehran conducive to the economic and strategic interests of US imperialism. The Obama administration, like its

predecessor, is determined to assert US dominance over the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia as a means of dictating terms to Washington's European and Asian rivals.

The worsening global capitalist crisis is profoundly exacerbating geo-political tensions. Far from diminishing the danger of nuclear war, the Obama administration has significantly heightened it. Over the past three years, it has shifted the US strategic focus to Asia in what amounts to a "full court press" against China. Throughout the region, the US has strengthened alliances and strategic partnerships, established new military basing arrangements and staged diplomatic and military provocations against China.

Obama's comments in Seoul about the dangers of North Korea's nuclear weapons were not directed primarily against Pyongyang, but against its ally Beijing. At a press conference, he accused China of consistently "rewarding bad behaviour, turning a blind eye to deliberate provocations" by North Korea. The localised wars of the 1990s and 2000s now assume a new and far more dangerous form as American imperialism confronts nuclear-armed China across a region with numerous potential flashpoints.

Leon Trotsky explained in 1938 in the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, that "disarmament" was one of the abstractions employed by the bourgeoisie and its agents to deceive people as war was prepared. "The entire question revolves around who will disarm whom," he wrote. "The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers."

The only force on the face of the planet capable of preventing a catastrophic nuclear war is a unified, revolutionary movement of the international working class to abolish capitalism and establish socialism.

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