Obama uses UN speech to threaten war against Iran

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President Barack Obama postured before the United Nations Tuesday as the champion of peace and democracy, while threatening war against Iran and demanding a crackdown against the wave of anti-US demonstrations that have swept the Middle East.

This, Obama's fourth address to an opening session of the UN General Assembly since taking office in 2009, was saturated with hypocritical invocations of "American values" and lies about Washington's actions on the world stage.

The US president delivered an unmistakable threat that the US is preparing to launch yet another war of aggression, this time against Iran, with potentially far bloodier consequences than those it has carried out in Afghanistan and Iraq over the last decade.

"Make no mistake: a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained," Obama declared. "It would threaten the elimination of Israel, the security of Gulf nations, and the stability of the global economy. It risks triggering a nuclear arms race in the region and the unraveling of the non-proliferation treaty. That is why… the United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

Asserting that there is "still time" for the US to force Iran to cede to its demands by means of diplomacy, he added, "that time is not unlimited."

The facts are that international inspectors have found no evidence that Iran has embarked on a nuclear weapons program or is doing anything other than developing nuclear power for peaceful purposes. Israel, which is supposedly threatened with "elimination," has built some 400 atomic weapons while refusing to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and categorically rejecting any inspection of its secret nuclear program. If there is a threat of an arms race in the region and a breakdown of the non-proliferation agreement, this Israeli nuclear stockpile is its source.

Obama's speech came one day after the US Treasury Department claimed to have uncovered links between Iran's state oil company and the country's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, providing a pretext for escalating its unilateral sanctions against banks doing business with the company.

Meanwhile, the US has assembled its largest ever armada in the Persian Gulf, including two aircraft carrier battle groups, a new "forward staging base" vessel, and half of the US Navy's mine-sweeping fleet, all of which are participating in joint exercises with warships from over 30 countries.

Much of the US president's 30-minute speech was dedicated to the recent upheavals that swept the Middle East and predominantly Muslim countries in South Asia and Africa, with crowds attacking US embassies in over a dozen capitals. Describing the protests as "mindless violence," Obama lumped them together with the September 11 attack by an Islamist militia on the US consulate and a CIA headquarters in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi that killed US Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.

Obama declared these events "an assault on the very ideals upon which the United Nations was founded—the notion that people can resolve their differences peacefully; that diplomacy can take the place of war."

What insolence! After a decade of US wars that have claimed the lives of over a million Iraqis and Afghans, the US president is the last person to lecture the people of the Middle East on how to "resolve their differences peacefully" and the advantages of diplomacy over war.

Obama added, "If we are serious about these ideals, we must speak honestly about the deeper causes of this crisis." However, he did no such thing. Instead, he treated the anger against the US as merely the product

of the crude anti-Islamic video "Innocence of the Muslims" and of those who promote "hatred of America, or the West, or Israel."

There was nothing in the speech about Washington's wars, its unconditional support for Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, or its reliance on dictatorial regimes and absolute monarchs to secure semi-colonial control over the region and its energy resources.

Obama went on to present a potted history of US reaction to the so-called "Arab Spring" that began with working class uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt early last year. Washington, he claimed, had "supported the forces of change," had been "inspired by the Tunisian protests," had "insisted on change in Egypt," and had "supported a transition in Yemen, because the interests of the people were not being served by a corrupt status quo."

Anyone familiar with the recent history of the region knows that the American president is lying. The US government was so "inspired" by the revolt in Tunisia that it approved a $12 million military aid package to the dictatorial regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to help it beat and shoot the demonstrators into submission.

It pursued the same policy in Egypt, seeking to the bitter end to prop up Hosni Mubarak, whose regime had been kept in power with US military aid and political support for three decades. Only after it was clear that the two dictators could no longer cling to power did the US shift policy, working to salvage as much as it could of the old regimes.

As for Yemen, the US-backed "transition" has kept in power a regime that is virtually identical to the old one, with the dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh replaced by his vice president, and with the US carrying out far more intense military intervention, with dozens of drone assassinations and special forces raids.

Obama presented the US-NATO war for regime-change in Libya as well as the attempt by Washington and its allies to topple the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria as a continuation of this "Arab Spring."

In Libya, he claimed, the US intervened under a UN mandate to protect civilians. In reality, it brazenly violated this mandate, waging an aggressive war that led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Libyans. The proxy forces it supported on the ground included the same Islamist militia elements that killed the US ambassador in Benghazi. Its aims, as in Iraq, were not humanitarian or democratic, but predatory—principally to assert US hegemony over Libyan oil reserves, while denying control to its rivals, particularly China.

Obama repeated his demand for regime-change in Syria while expressing concern that the current civil war "not end in a cycle of sectarian violence." In reality, the US has done everything it can to stoke sectarian warfare as part of its scheme to mobilize the Sunni monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, as well as Al Qaeda-linked militias, in a campaign to bring down the Syrian government and thereby weaken Washington's main regional rival, Iran.

The US president offered no proposal whatsoever on the Israel-Palestine question. Instead, he called for the region to "leave behind those who thrive on conflict, and those who reject the right of Israel to exist." This amounts to a blanket endorsement of Israel's illegal occupation and its continuous expansion of settlements in West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Echoing the bellicose rhetoric of his predecessor, Obama spoke three times in his address about "bringing to justice" those who attacked Americans abroad. It was a not-so-subtle reminder of the US president's status as "assassin-in-chief," holding weekly meetings at the White House to choose targets for execution by US drone attacks.

The hollow rhetoric, hypocritical sermonizing and bullying threats received a tepid response from the assembled delegates. The US president had not a single new initiative or original conception to offer. The speech only made clear that his administration will continue to employ military aggression, economic pressure and CIA destabilization to secure US control over the Middle East and its energy wealth, all the while posing as the patron of "democracy."