

Munich Security Conference endorses US call for expansion of neo-colonial wars

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4 February 2013

This year's Munich Security Conference, held over the weekend, took place against the background of the re-colonization of the Middle East and Africa by the US and its European allies. It was an unabashed affirmation of the type of naked imperialist domination of these regions that characterized the first half of the 20th century.

Even as the meeting was underway, French President François Hollande was making a celebratory visit to France's former colony Mali while French troops and war planes continued to attack insurgent-held territory, and British Prime Minister David Cameron was holding talks with UK-backed leaders in Algeria and Libya.

For three days, leading political, military and defense industry representatives of the major powers, along with invited officials from other nations, met to discuss current and future military operations and geo-strategic issues. The conference demonstrated the consensus among the major imperialist powers, led by the United States, for an expanded political and military drive to install puppet governments and seize control of critical natural resources across the Middle East, Central Asia and the African continent.

The tone was set by US Vice President Joseph Biden, who delivered a bellicose speech singling out as targets of US and NATO aggression nations ranging from Syria, Iran and Yemen to Somalia, Mali and the rest of North Africa.

Some 400 participants from nearly 90 countries were invited to the privately organized conference, which has been held for the past 49 years at the Hotel Bayerischer Hof in Munich. Among those taking part were Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and, for the first time, representatives of the Western-backed Syrian opposition.

Biden used the conference to reaffirm the US claim to

global power. In his speech on Saturday, he declared: "The United States is a Pacific power. And the world's greatest military alliance [NATO] helps make us an Atlantic power as well. As our new defense strategy makes clear, we will remain both a Pacific power and an Atlantic power."

The US vice president used the social devastation caused by the Western powers as a pretext to justify a policy of potential military intervention in geo-strategically important regions of the world. "Today, across North Africa and in parts of the Middle East," he said, "extremists are seeking to exploit the following: increasingly porous borders; a broad swath of ungoverned territory; readily available weapons; new governments that lack the capacity and sometimes the will to contend with extremism; a swelling generation of disaffected young people whose futures are stifled by stagnant economies."

This situation, he continued, requires a "comprehensive approach—employing a full range of tools at our disposal—including our militaries." The French invasion of Mali, he suggested, was only one of many such actions to come. "That is why," he declared, "the United States applauds and stands with France and other partners in Mali..."

Biden described the brutal wars against Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya as great successes and models for future enterprises. The United States, he said, was "cognizant of an evolving threat posed by [Al Qaeda] affiliates like AQAP in Yemen, al-Shabaab in Somalia, AQI in Iraq and Syria and AQIM in North Africa."

On Iran, the vice president maintained Washington's belligerent tone, implicitly threatening military attack if Tehran did not accept US and European demands for a sharp curtailment of its nuclear enrichment program. "There is still time, there is still space for diplomacy,

backed by pressure, to succeed,” he declared. The obverse, clearly, is that the US is prepared to use military force at some point in the not-too-distant future.

Biden made a point of reiterating that the Obama administration’s policy is to do whatever is necessary to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon—something Tehran denies it is seeking to achieve—rather than isolate and weaken a nuclear-armed Iran. “Our policy is not containment,” he declared.

In response to a question, Biden said the Obama administration did not rule out direct bilateral talks between the US and Iran, but he made clear that a precondition for such talks was a signal that Iran was prepared to accede to the substance of US demands. “We are not just prepared to do it for the exercise,” he said.

Outgoing Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak openly threatened Iran with military attack when he addressed the conference, declaring: “We all say the same thing: that a nuclear Iran is unacceptable and that we do not rule out any option to prevent this. But Israel is serious about this and expects the same from others.”

On Syria, Biden repeated the US demand for regime-change. He declared Syrian President Assad to be “a tyrant, hell-bent on clinging to power,” who “is no longer fit to lead the Syrian people” and “must go.” According to a report in the *Times* of London, the US has given Israel a green light for further air strikes on Syria following Tel Aviv’s bombing of targets in Syria last Wednesday.

The US vice president made no secret of the fact that the American-led offensive in the Middle East and North Africa is directed against Chinese influence in the region and is bound up with the Obama administration’s anti-China political and diplomatic offensive, known as the “pivot to Asia.”

Representatives of the European powers made clear that they were only too willing to participate in the re-colonisation of the Middle East and North Africa in cooperation with the US. The German government made it known that it was not prepared to stand on the sidelines. Both German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle and Defense Minister Thomas de Maiziere stressed the importance of cooperation with the US and their support for the Western intervention in Syria, as well as the war in Mali.

Westerwelle promised the leader of the US-sponsored National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, Muas Ahmed al-Khatib, Germany’s “active support.” De Maiziere used the occasion to announce that the German government would increase its support for French troops in Mali. He said the German army would deploy 40 troops to train Malian forces and supply tanker aircraft for the French Air Force.

Behind the united front against the former colonial peoples of the world, tensions continue to build between the major powers, in part over the division of the spoils. Germany, in particular, has little interest in the confrontation with China and Russia that is developing in regard to Africa and the Middle East. This is why Westerwelle stressed several times the importance of partnership with Russia.

While Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed to hold talks with al-Khatib of the US/NATO-backed Syrian opposition, he responded to Biden’s speech by reaffirming Moscow’s opposition to war preparations against Iran and the drive for regime-change in Syria.

On Iran, Lavrov spoke of the need to provide “incentives” for Iran to engage in serious talks, adding, “We have to convince Iran that it is not about regime-change.” On Syria, he said the main reason for the “continuing tragedy” was “the persistence of those who say that priority number one is the removal of President Assad.”



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