

Trump, Iran and the US drive for world hegemony

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At the conclusion of a bellicose and dishonest speech on Friday, US President Donald Trump vowed to blow up the 2015 Iran nuclear accord unless it is rewritten in accordance with US demands.

The speech epitomized the arrogance and criminality of America's ruling elite. Trump denounced Iran for spreading "conflict, terror and turmoil throughout the Middle East and beyond." This from the leader of a country that has subjected the people of the Middle East to untold horrors, waging aggressive wars that have destroyed entire societies, causing the deaths of millions of people in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria and forcing many millions more to flee their homes.

Trump denounced the 1979 Iranian revolution, painted Iran's bourgeois-clerical government as an international outlaw regime, and cast the United States as the protector of the democratic rights of the Iranian people.

As if the Iranian masses have forgotten that the CIA organized the 1953 coup that overthrew Iran's elected president, Mohammad Mossaddegh, and installed the Shah's savage dictatorship, which Washington maintained in power for the next quarter-century. Or that for the past four decades the US has carried out an unrelenting campaign against Iran, repeatedly threatening it with attack, supporting Baghdad in the eight-year Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), and imposing punishing economic sanctions that culminated, under Obama, in all-out economic warfare.

Trump made clear that his demands for "correcting" the nuclear accord's "many flaws" are nonnegotiable. They amount to an ultimatum that Tehran unilaterally disarm while the US maintains an armada in the Persian Gulf and arms its Saudi and Israeli allies to the teeth. They would require Iran to accept permanent incursions

on its sovereignty and its *de facto* reduction to the status of a vassal state.

The demands include: making permanent the stringent restrictions on Iran's civil nuclear program, which are set to lapse in the agreement's eleventh year; allowing unfettered International Atomic Energy Agency inspections of Iranian military sites; and dismantling Iran's ballistic missile program.

European leaders responded by angrily denouncing Washington for acting as a law unto itself, inciting a global nuclear arms race, and heightening the danger of war in the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula. German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned that if the US persists on this path it "will drive us Europeans into a common position with Russia and China against the USA."

What happens next is unclear. Much of the US political and military-security establishment, including Trump's own top advisers—Defense Secretary James Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster—have counseled Trump against jettisoning the Iran deal. Both Mattis and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford, testifying last week before Congress, acknowledged that Iran is in compliance with the nuclear accord and said they believed upholding the agreement is in the United States' interests.

This is not because Trump's generals are any less determined to bring Iran to heel and secure US hegemony over the Middle East, the world's most important oil-exporting region and the strategic pivot between Asia, Africa and Europe.

Trump's Democratic Party and media critics are no different. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have repeatedly urged a more aggressive US military and diplomatic offensive against Iran,

beginning in Syria, where Tehran has played a major role in the defeat of the US-supported Islamist forces. In an editorial Saturday, “Trump has charted a perilous course on Iran,” the *Washington Post* accused the president of “geopolitical folly” and chastised him for “having no clear plan to address Iran’s military entrenchment in Syria, which is threatening to touch off a new conflict with Israel.”

The disagreements, while sharp, are entirely tactical. They revolve around the question of the appropriate target and timing of the next US war, amid widespread fears that a showdown with Iran will undercut Washington’s military-strategic offensives against China and Russia, and inflame relations with America’s traditional European allies, which, through NATO, continue to play a major role in projecting US global power, especially against Russia.

Opposition to Trump’s plan to trash the Iran accord is a factor in the unprecedented political warfare in Washington, which has now reached the point of public discussion about using the 25th Amendment to the US Constitution to remove Trump.

With Trump planning to use Wall Street’s dominance of the global banking system, and access to the US market, to bully the Europeans into imposing new economic sanctions against Tehran, the Iran issue threatens to further envenom the already fierce commercial struggle between the US and Europe, especially Germany. Already the European powers are talking of retaliatory action.

The European imperialists are no less predatory than Washington. They were key partners in the economic war against Iran. But the renewed US drive against Tehran threatens their plans to invest billions to economically exploit Iran, which has the world’s fourth largest oil reserves and the second largest natural gas reserves. Moreover, given their proximity to the Middle East and their dependence on Mideast oil, they fear the destabilizing fallout from another US war—one that could quickly involve nuclear powers such as Russia and China.

While Trump is an accelerant, the basic source of the divisions within the US ruling elite over America’s policy toward Iran and its broader imperialist strategy lies in the failure of the drive Washington initiated, in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, to offset the erosion of its economic power by waging

Wars of aggression.

In the pursuit of global hegemony, the US has razed the Middle East. Iran has been a principal target of US aggression, with American troops invading two of its neighbors, Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet Iran has been able to expand its influence, while both Russia and China are now major economic and geopolitical players in the Middle East, combining to frustrate Washington’s plans to use Islamist proxy forces to overthrow Syria’s government, as it successfully did in Libya.

US imperialism’s response to these reversals is to accelerate its war plans, directly targeting its major rivals, beginning with China and Russia. Europe and Japan, for their part, are furiously rearming to assert their own imperialist interests in opposition to the US.

Mankind is faced with the real and present danger of being dragged by the imperialist powers into a Third World War, this time employing nuclear weapons.

There is no “peace” faction in the ruling class of any of the major powers. The social force that can halt the descent into a nuclear holocaust is the international working class, mobilized on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program directed at the overthrow of capitalism, the source of war, social inequality and dictatorship. The International Committee of the Fourth International is fighting to build a mass international antiwar movement on this revolutionary basis.



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