

Trump appoints John Bolton as National Security Advisor, replacing McMaster

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Donald Trump announced yesterday that the former US ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, will replace Gen. H.R. McMaster as National Security Advisor effective April 9.

Trump announced the decision via tweet exactly one week after White House officials leaked McMaster's likely removal to the *Washington Post*.

Bolton's appointment brings one of the chief architects and advocates of the Iraq War back into the White House, where he last served under the Bush administration from 2005 to 2006. Bolton's blatant role in lying to the public, first about the justifications for launching the war and then, as UN ambassador, about the conduct of the war itself, made him one of the most hated figures of the Bush administration.

Having gotten his start politically as a lawyer for the tobacco industry and a political protégé of the arch-reactionary senator from North Carolina, Jesse Helms, an opponent of racial integration and rabid anti-communist, Bolton received a series of plum positions in the Justice and State Departments as well as the Agency for International Development.

Through his belligerent speeches before the UN, Bolton came to epitomize the Iraq war and its criminality. As opposition to the war grew, the Bush administration could not even secure a full Senate vote to confirm Bolton when Bush re-nominated him in November 2006. Bolton was forced into the outer circles of power, relegated to a position at the American Enterprise Institute and as a talking head on Fox News.

His political resurrection is a further sign that the Trump administration is assembling a cabinet even more right-wing and militaristic than before the recent reshuffling. In recent weeks, Trump nominated CIA Director Michael Pompeo, a far-right stooge of the Koch brothers, to replace outgoing former Secretary of

State Rex Tillerson. Trump's nominee to take Pompeo's place is Gina Haspel, who ran a US black site torture center in Thailand under the Bush administration.

Bolton recently advocated for war with North Korea in a February 28, 2018 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* titled "The legal case for striking North Korea." Bolton reiterated the doctrine of pre-emptive war—outlawed by the Nuremberg trials of the surviving leadership of Hitler's Third Reich—that the Bush administration used to justify the illegal launching of the War in Iraq:

"Pre-emption opponents argue that action is not justified because Pyongyang does not constitute an 'imminent threat.' They are wrong. The threat is imminent, and the case against pre-emption rests on the misinterpretation of a standard that derives from pre-nuclear, pre-ballistic-missile times. Given the gaps in U.S. intelligence about North Korea, we should not wait until the very last minute."

President Trump recently announced one-on-one meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un scheduled for May. Trump has dismissed figures like McMaster and Tillerson, both of whom raised opposition to the proposed meeting.

Bolton is also a longtime advocate of pre-emptive war against Iran.

In 2015, Bolton advocated launching a war against Iran. In a March 26 *New York Times* op-ed titled, "To stop Iran's bomb, bomb Iran," Bolton wrote that "even absent palpable proof," war was justified because "time is terribly short, but a strike can still succeed." In January 2018, Bolton wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that the P5+1 deal between the United States along with the other major powers and Iran is "a massive strategic blunder," a position shared by Secretary of State nominee Pompeo.

In 2017, Bolton advocated ending the “One China” policy that acknowledges China as the sovereign over Taiwan. Bolton took the position that the US should establish military bases on Taiwan, a position that would likely result in a military confrontation between two nuclear-armed powers.

Bolton took a leading role in the Bush administration’s efforts to justify the war of aggression against Iraq based on the lie that Saddam Hussein was developing “weapons of mass destruction.” As Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security in 2002, he was responsible for promoting forged evidence that Iraq was attempting to buy uranium (“yellowcake”) from Niger. Like the rest of the Bush administration’s pretexts for the war in Iraq, this was a bold-faced lie.

Bolton will not only have the ear of President Trump, he will run the National Security Council, which coordinates the policies of the intelligence agencies, the different branches of the armed forces and the State Department. As Vox News wrote, “He will present the president with strategic assessments of high-level officials like the secretaries of defense and state, offer his own thinking, and then communicate Trump’s ultimate decision to the agencies and work to ensure it’s implemented.”

Bolton’s reemergence within the inner circle of American imperialist decision-making exposes the role played by the Democratic Party since the run-up to the Iraq War, launched 15 years ago this week. At each stage in the preparation, launching, and expansion of the war, the Democratic Party sought to divert mass opposition to war behind its own electoral campaigns, including that of John Kerry in 2004, the 2006 midterm elections, the Barack Obama campaign in 2008, and those of Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton during the Democratic primaries and general election of 2016.

Despite the fact that the Democratic Party controlled the presidency from 2009 to 2017, not a single leading figure responsible for war crimes, including the CIA officials responsible for torture, have been punished or even fired.

Instead, Obama escalated imperialist war around the world. Just this week, the Democratic Party voted for a \$1.3 trillion federal budget which includes massive increases in military spending. As a result of the imperialist character of both parties, a detestable figure

like John Bolton is able to return to the Oval Office.



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