Trump threatens Iran with a catastrophic war

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24 July 2018

US President Donald Trump issued a bloodcurdling threat of all-out war against Iran late Sunday night.

Using language akin to that he previously employed in threatening North Korea, a state of 25 million people, with annihilation, the US commander-in-chief tweeted that Iran would "SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED, if it "EVER" dared to "THREATEN" Washington "AGAIN."

Trump's all in-caps tweet was no idle bluster. His administration is pursuing a provocative and reckless drive for regime change in Iran that threatens to ignite a catastrophic war that would set the entire Middle East ablaze, and potentially trigger a head-on clash between the US and other great powers.

In May, Washington blew up the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and relaunched full-scale economic warfare against Iran—an illegal act tantamount to war. Next month sanctions will "snap back" on Iran's auto sector and trade in gold and other metals. In November, sanctions targeting Iran's energy, shipping and insurance sectors and the transactions of its central bank are to take effect.

Washington has vowed to reduce Iran's oil exports, which provide the bulk of the state budget, to near zero. To date it has refused to provide sanction waivers to its ostensible allies in Europe and Asia and instead demonstratively threatened them with exclusion from the US market and financial system if they do not comply with the unilateral American embargo on Iran.

The Pentagon is already engaged in fighting with Iranian forces. US troops in Syria, deployed in the name of fighting ISIS, have repeatedly targeted Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces supporting the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and Washington is providing vital logistical and tactical support for the Saudi monarchy's savage war in Yemen against the Iranian-supported Houthi.

Yesterday, John Bolton, Trump's national security advisor and a longstanding proponent of a US attack on Iran, gleefully reiterated Trump's threat, saying the president had told him, "if Iran does anything at all to the negative, they will pay a price like few countries have ever paid before."

Trump cast his ominous Sunday tweet as a response to a warning from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani that if the US persisted in seeking to destroy Iran's economy and impose a pro-US government in Tehran, it risked unleashing "the mother of all wars."

Earlier this month, Rouhani—unnerved by his failure to win a commitment from the European powers that they would not bow to US pressure and renege on their obligations under the Iran nuclear accord—said that were Iran denied the right to export its oil it might close the Strait of Hormuz.

Within hours, the Pentagon issued a statement vowing to ensure "freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce" through the strait, which is the conduit for one-fifth of all world oil exports.

Trump's claims that Iran threatens the US are preposterous.

It is American imperialism that for a quarter-century served as the bulwark of the tyrannical dictatorship of the Shah and that, with the aim of once again reducing Iran to a neo-colony, has waged a four-decade-long campaign of sanctions, bullying, and war threats against the Islamic Republic, the bourgeois nationalist regime that misappropriated the popular revolution that overthrew the Shah.

It is Washington that illegally invaded Iran's north-eastern neighbor, Afghanistan, in 2001 and its western neighbor, Iraq, in 2003, in what top Bush administration officials, including Bolton and Vice President Dick Cheney, publicly boasted was a prelude to regime change in Tehran.

It is the US that, in pursuit of untrammeled

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dominance of the world's principal oil-exporting region, has waged a succession of ruinous wars since 1991 in the Mideast and North Africa that have razed whole societies, leaving millions dead, injured and displaced.

It is the US that between 2011 and 2015 spearheaded the imposition of sanctions that halved Iran's oil exports and crippled its economy. It did so while repeatedly threatening Iran with war if it did not submit to Washington's demands that it dismantle its civilian nuclear program, and while continuing to arm Israel, Saudi Arabia and other regional client states with hundreds of billions of dollars worth of high-tech weaponry.

And it is the Trump administration that has repudiated the Iran nuclear accord and is now waging all-out economic war on Iran, although the International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly found Tehran in full compliance with the 2015 agreement.

Yesterday various Democrats and retired Pentagon and CIA officials criticized Trump's bellicose tweet. Democratic House Whip Steny Hoyer said Trump was trying to distract attention from his "essentially un-American" performance at his July 16 summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. "He's weak on Putin, and he wants to prove he's tough on Rouhani," Hoyer told the *Washington Post*.

The Democrats share the objective of Trump's "America First" policy—the assertion of US global hegemony—and they, no less than the Republicans, have been complicit in the drive, since 1991, to use the residual military power of the US to compensate for the vast erosion of its relative economic power and global position.

But there are deep and explosive tactical differences over how to pursue this strategy. This is exemplified by the frenzied campaign of the Democrats, mounted in close concert with the CIA and broad sections of the military-security apparatus, targeting Trump for being "soft on," if not an outright patsy of, Putin.

This faction of the American ruling elite is bitterly opposed to any let-up in the US military-strategic offensive against Russia, and views Trump's focus on an immediate showdown with Iran as a distraction from the struggle against this more formidable strategic foe. It has been campaigning for the US to mount a massive military escalation in Syria, arguing that this would provide the US the opportunity to deal a body blow to Russia, while simultaneously augmenting strategic pressure on Iran.

Trump, on the other hand, calculates that a temporary accommodation with Russia could serve US interests. First and foremost, by forestalling the further strategic alignment of Russia and China, but also by smoothing the way for the US war-drive against Iran.

One of Trump's objectives in Helsinki was to pressure Putin to press for the elimination, or at least drastic curtailment, of Iranian influence in Syria as part of any "peace settlement." Russia, it should be noted, has in recent months effectively given the Israelis and Americans a free hand to attack Iranian forces in Syria.

Trump's eagerness to provoke a confrontation with Iran is bound up with his calculation that China must be confronted sooner rather than later. The re-subjugation of Iran would give the US a stranglehold over the oil resources of the Middle East, which are vital to sustaining China's economy, as well as eliminate an important link in China's One Belt, One Road strategy to deepen the integration of Eurasia.

Whatever the outcome of this conflict over how best to pursue US imperialism's predatory aims, Washington is moving inexorably down the path to a volcanic explosion of violence that threatens the people of the Middle East and the world with catastrophe.

As for the European imperialist powers, they resent Trump's policies only because these threaten their own interests, including their plans to capture Iran's markets and oil resources. Thus Berlin, London and Paris have all responded to the further escalation of US imperialist violence in the wake of the 2008 world financial implosion by arming themselves to the teeth.

The resurgence of class struggle around the world, including in the US and the Middle East, underscores that the struggle against imperialist war must be founded on the independent political mobilization of the international working class and the fight for socialism.

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