

Against backdrop of UN General Assembly

Trump to intensify economic war on Iran

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25 September 2018

US President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Adviser John Bolton and the other Iran regime-change hawks at the helm of the Trump administration intend to use this week's opening of the annual United Nations General Assembly as the backdrop for an intensification of Washington's economic war and military-strategic offensive against Iran.

Washington's stated goal is to crash the Iranian economy. Starting November 4, the US will dramatically expand the punishing sanctions it imposed on Iran in early August. It is vowing to enforce a complete embargo on Iranian oil exports and Iran's total exclusion from the US-dominated world banking system, thereby crippling its trade in all other commodities.

The US actions, which in their aims go beyond even the brutal sanctions the US and European Union imposed on Iran between 2011 and 2015, are both manifestly illegal and reckless. Under international law, they are tantamount to an act of war.

It is Washington that has reneged on its commitments under the UN-backed 2015 Iran nuclear accord. All the other great powers that are signatories to the accord and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has the principal role in monitoring Iran's compliance, are adamant Tehran has fulfilled to the letter all its obligations, including dismantling and mothballing civilian nuclear infrastructure.

And it is Trump, Pompeo, Bolton and their minions who in Mafia-style fashion are threatening countries around the world with retaliatory action, including sanctions, fines and exclusion from US markets, if they do not bow to Washington's diktats and cease trading with and investing in Iran.

Yet Trump will use the UN as the backdrop to rail against Iran as a "rogue state" and to denounce Tehran as the world's leading "state-supporter of terrorism." This from the president of a country that, in pursuit of unbridled domination of the world's most important oil-exporting region, has waged or fomented a series of ruinous wars since 1991 that have razed entire societies, including Iraq, Libya and Syria, and, in the process, repeatedly supported and armed Islamist terrorists.

Today, nearly one year to the day after Trump used the UN as a platform to threaten to "totally destroy" North Korea, a country of 25 million people, the US president will again go before the UN General Assembly. According to previews of his speech provided the media by administration officials, Trump will combine an "America First" rant about the seminal importance of "national sovereignty"—whose essential content is that US imperialism

reserves the right to be a law unto itself—with a litany of denunciations of Iran, many of them lifted from the songbook of his close ally Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

On Wednesday, Trump will chair a session of the 15-member UN Security Council that the US, exercising its rights as chair, has allotted to discussion of nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction. As is his wont, the fascist-minded billionaire gave a cruder, but truer description of his intentions on his Twitter account, declaring, "I will chair a United Nations Security Council meeting on Iran."

Trump apparently intends to use much of his time in his back-to-back UN appearances to fulminate against Iran's ballistic missile program, claiming it constitutes an intolerable threat to the region. No matter that Washington has plied its regional allies, including nuclear-armed Israel and Saudi Arabia, with tens of billions of dollars' worth of advanced weaponry.

Elimination of Iran's ballistic missile program is among the list of demands Trump and his aides have set out as the ostensible basis for a "renegotiated" Iran nuclear deal. Others include Iran's acceptance of permanent limits on its civil nuclear program far more onerous than those imposed on any other signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; and an end to Tehran's "malign activities" in the Middle East, i.e., its military and political support for Hezbollah, Hamas and other regional allies.

In toto, these amount to a demand for Iran's bourgeois nationalist regime to renounce any opposition to US domination of the Middle East, its effective disarmament and reduction to the status of an American client state.

US military action and threats against Iran

Washington has accompanied its economic war on Iran with increased military action against Iran and its allies and war threats from the Pentagon and top administration officials, including Trump himself. On Friday, Pompeo said that should "US interests" come under attack from "Iranian proxies," the US stands ready to strike at Iran itself. "Iran will be held accountable for those incidents," the US Secretary of State told CNN.

In late July, Trump vowed that if Iran so much as threatened action against US forces, it would "suffer consequences the likes

of which few throughout history have ever suffered.”

American forces in Syria and the Israel Defense Forces have repeatedly attacked Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards fighting in support of Bashar al-Assad’s Baathist regime. And earlier this month the Trump administration let it be known that the US military will indefinitely occupy much of eastern Syria, including the country’s main oil fields, so as to push for a “political settlement” in alignment with the US interest in the removal of all Iranian forces from Syria.

All factions of the US political and military-intelligence establishment share the objective of subjugating Iran and ensuring US hegemony over the Middle East, because of both its oil wealth and its geostrategic importance as the hinge between Europe, Asia and Africa.

But Trump’s scuttling of the Iran nuclear accord has been sharply criticized by a significant section of the ruling elite, who fear it will embroil the US in a Mideast-wide war and undercut what they consider the more pivotal military-strategic offensives against American imperialism’s more substantial rivals, Russia and China.

Last week, more than 50 retired congressional leaders, diplomats and generals, including former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, issued a statement under the banner of the “National Coalition to Prevent an Iranian Nuclear Weapon.” It voiced support for most of Trump’s demands on Iran, but expressed concern the administration was pursuing a policy of “brinkmanship,” emphasizing “coercion and threats of military action” without any “exit ramp to avoid collision.”

The statement deplored the fact that the Trump administration’s Iran policy was estranging Washington’s traditional European allies and thereby encouraging “common cause among the Europeans, Russia and China in opposition to the US.”

Many, if not all, of the statement’s signatories have been advocates of a much more aggressive US military intervention in Syria, which they argue is the more effective way of “rolling back” both Iranian and Russian influence in the Middle East.

A further exacerbation of tensions among the imperialist powers

The major European powers, Germany, France and Britain, all deplored Trump’s pullout from the Iran nuclear accord, which has trashed their plans to capture Iranian markets and cash in on Tehran’s offer of lucrative oil and natural gas concessions.

The European powers are all frantically rearming, with the aim of pursuing their own predatory interests on the world stage, under conditions of trade war, the erosion of US global hegemony, Washington’s turn to “America First” unilateralism and the rise of new powers.

But the European imperialists fear the explosive consequences of Washington’s reckless belligerence. A military clash between Iran and the US would set the Middle East ablaze, triggering a mass

exodus of refugees, sending oil prices soaring, and unleashing a re-partition of the Mideast under conditions where the European powers as yet lack the military means to assert decisive influence.

Yesterday, German, French and British diplomats joined Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and representatives of the other signatories of the Iran deal, China and Russia, to discuss how to prevent its total collapse.

The EU has sought to push back against the US sanctions, including invoking a law first passed in the 1990s to make it illegal for European companies to comply with US extraterritorial sanctions. It has also begun working on a scheme to enable trade with Iran using the euro, in lieu of the US dollar, or even through a barter system.

But European big business has no confidence that the EU will be able to protect it from the reach of US reprisals and is voting with its feet. Scores of major European firms have announced they are pulling out of Iran, including Peugeot, Renault, Deutsche Telekom, Airbus, Volvo and Total, the French energy company, which was awarded a huge share of Iran’s South Pars natural gas field.

Iran’s clerical bourgeois regime, which came to power by appropriating the mass working class-led revolution that toppled the Shah’s US-backed absolutist regime in 1979, hoped through a rapprochement with the US and European imperialist powers to strengthen its hand against an increasingly restive working class and win recognition as a regional power.

Instead, three years after making sweeping concessions to secure the nuclear accord, it faces a rapacious Washington bent on forcing total capitulation and a growing challenge from a working class angered by rampant social inequality and years of austerity.

In response, it has stepped up repression against the working class while maneuvering on the world stage. These maneuvers involve a combination of threats, including warnings that if Washington illegally blocks Iran from exporting its oil it will prevent Saudi Arabia and other US allies from shipping their oil via the Strait of Hormuz, and pledges to work with the European powers and assist in restabilizing the Middle East.

Yesterday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who has traveled to New York to attend the UN General Assembly, insisted that Iran will stick with the nuclear accord and signaled that Tehran would be ready to enter talks with the Trump administration if it returned to the 2015 deal.



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