War summit in Warsaw

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The conference jointly hosted by the US and Polish governments in Warsaw this week under the phony banner of working to "Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East" has laid bare the immense and imminent threat that US imperialism is preparing to drag humanity into another and potentially world catastrophic war.

On the eve of the conference, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the only prominent head of government to fly to Poland for the event, gave an interview in Warsaw in which he declared the importance of the conference was that it involved "an open meeting with representatives of leading Arab countries that are sitting down together with Israel in order to advance the common interest of war with Iran."

The text of this bellicose statement was then posted on the Israeli prime minister's twitter account. Subsequently, apparently as a result of political pressure from the event's US and Polish sponsors, the tweet was changed to read "in order to advance the common interest of combating Iran."

Much of the media treated Netanyahu's original statement as a gaffe. It was nothing of the kind. The Israeli prime minister was describing the real aims of the conference in Warsaw in blunt terms because it suited his own political interests as he confronts an election in two months amid mounting corruption scandals and is anxious to rally his right-wing base.

Israel and the reactionary monarchical dictatorships of the Persian Gulf, which were well represented at the Warsaw gathering, constitute the two pillars of the anti-Iranian axis being forged by the Trump administration.

The attempts by US and Polish officials to mask the genuine purpose of the conference with talk about "peace" and "security" were farcical. Polish officials insisted that the meeting did not concern any one country, but rather "horizontal issues" confronting the region, such as weapons proliferation, terrorism, war, etc. As it turned out, however, Iran was found to be at the root of each and every one of these problems.

US Vice President Mike Pence delivered a sanctimonious sermon in which he denounced Tehran for threatening "another Holocaust" and attempting to recreate the Persian Empire by opening up a "corridor of influence" through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Pence, who peppered his speech with Biblical references and claimed that faith and God would deliver peace to the Middle East, described Iran as "the leading state sponsor of terrorism, and that state which sows the greatest harm and greatest discord across the region about which we gather here today."

This phrase "leading state sponsor of terrorism" has been repeated ad nauseum by US officials, with no attempt to substantiate the allegation with facts or evidence. This from a government that poured billions of dollars into funding terrorist wars by Al Qaeda-linked militias in the quest for regime-change in both Libya and Syria.

Even as the Warsaw conference was taking place, a terrorist suicide bombing in Iran claimed the lives of at least 27 members of the country's Revolutionary Guard coming home from deployment on the country's border with Pakistan. A shadowy Al Qaeda-connected group with ties to Washington's main ally in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia, claimed responsibility for the attack.

As for the "state which sows the greatest harm and greatest discord," can anyone claim with a straight face that Washington, which has waged a quarter-century of unending and ruinous wars in the region, razing entire societies to the ground and leaving millions dead, maimed and displaced, has any close competition for this title?

The most jarring element of Pence's speech, however, was directed against Washington's erstwhile

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NATO allies for failing to toe the US line in relation to Iran. The US vice president demanded that Germany, France and the UK, all signatories to the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, follow Washington's lead in tearing up the agreement and imposing an economic blockade that is tantamount to an act of war.

Outside of the UK, none of the European powers sent so much as a foreign minister to the Warsaw gathering, which was seen accurately as a US-sponsored rally for war against Iran. The EU's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, who participated in the negotiation of the Iran nuclear accord, also declined to attend.

Pence accused "some of our leading European partners" of trying "to break American sanctions against Iran's murderous revolutionary regime." He was referring to a financial mechanism introduced by the UK, Germany and France to allow the barter of goods between European companies and Iran without direct financial transactions or the use of the US dollar in order to evade sweeping US extraterritorial sanctions. The measure was taken in an attempt to prop up the Iran nuclear deal and prevent Tehran from renouncing it in the face of the wiping out of all of the sanctions relief that it was supposed to entail.

The US vice president demanded that the European powers "stand with us" by killing the nuclear accord and, presumably, preparing for war with Iran. Acknowledging that Iran was in compliance with the nuclear accord, Pence declared that the issue was not compliance, but the undesirability of the deal itself.

US imperialism has never forgiven the masses of Iranian workers and poor for their 1979 revolution that overthrew the US-backed dictatorship of the Shah, the linchpin of US domination of the region. While that revolution was usurped by the bourgeois-theocratic regime established under Ayatollah Khomeini, Washington has refused to settle for anything less than regime-change and the re-imposition of a US puppet dictatorship.

Pence warned in his Warsaw speech that any attempt to evade the US sanctions regime would "create still more distance between Europe and the US."

In the run-up in 2003 to the US invasion of Iraq, then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld ridiculed the opposition of Germany and France to the criminal war of aggression by referring to these countries as "old Europe" and extolling the support for US imperialism from a "new Europe," consisting of the Eastern European regimes and, principally, Poland.

The sponsorship of the Iran war conference by Poland, which has not played a particularly decisive role in the affairs of the Middle East, resurrects this earlier bid to pit "new" against "old" Europe.

Warsaw's support for the anti-Iranian crusade is bound up with its right-wing government's own bid to secure a permanent US military presence in Poland as a supposed bulwark against any threat from Russia. In September of last year, Polish President Andrzej Duda proclaimed at a White House press conference his government's desire for the erection of a "Fort Trump" on Polish soil.

The virulent anti-Iranian rhetoric spouted at the Warsaw conference for "peace" and "security" was matched by a diatribe against Russia delivered by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who combined his attendance at the conference with an appearance with troops on maneuvers in Poland.

Pompeo invoked his military career as a tank officer in Germany during the Cold War. He declared that while at that time Germany's Fulda Gap was seen as the point of confrontation with a hypothetical Soviet invasion of Western Europe, Poland now occupied a similar position because of "Russian aggression."

Today, Washington's bid to play off the right-wing regimes of "new Europe" against its erstwhile allies in "old Europe" is bound up not only with a potential bloodbath in Iran, but with the preparations for a new world war. US imperialism is determined to assert its hegemony over Iran, the Middle East, Central Asia and Venezuela in order to establish its unchallenged control over all of the world's energy reserves, giving it the ability to deny access to its principal global rival, China.

The Warsaw conference, for all of its farcical aspects and overheated rhetoric, has a deadly serious content. It constitutes a nodal point in the drive towards a third world war between the world's major nuclear powers.

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