

Behind Biden's invocations of "democracy," US military prepares for nuclear war

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US President Joe Biden's first major speech on foreign policy, delivered at the State Department Thursday, was hailed as a sharp reversal of Trump's thuggish and bullying relations with other countries.

In a speech dubbed by *Foreign Policy* magazine as a "Kinder, Gentler Spin on 'America First,'" Biden called on the United States to "lead not just by the example of our power but the power of our example."

Unlike Trump, who made a point of never using the terms "democracy" and "human rights" in connection with US foreign policy, these words were liberally sprinkled throughout the speech. Biden declared America would "unite the world in fighting to defend democracy."

He added that America would defend the rights of "women and girls, LGBTQ individuals, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities, the people of every ethnic background and religion," and so on and so forth.

With the world having teetered on the brink of a series of major wars throughout the Trump presidency, millions of people who voted for Joe Biden did so, among other reasons, because they believed he opposed the type of nuclear brinkmanship expressed in Trump's threats to unleash "fire and fury" on North Korea.

But the military is making clear that the new administration will not change what many in the US foreign policy establishment see as the Trump White House's signature policy: the massive buildup of the US military and, in particular, the US nuclear forces in preparation for what Trump's 2018 national security strategy called "great-power competition."

Writing in *Proceedings*, the magazine of the US Naval Institute, Adm. Charles A. Richard, the head of the US Strategic Command (STRATCOM), made clear

that the United States nuclear buildup, begun under Obama and massively expanded under Trump, will continue.

"Nuclear employment is a very real possibility," Richard bluntly declared, saying that the US must prepare for such a war.

"There is a real possibility that a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons," he wrote. "Consequently, the U.S. military must shift its principal assumption from 'nuclear employment is not possible' to 'nuclear employment is a very real possibility,' and act to meet and deter that reality."

Richard continued, "we must also accept the gauntlet of great power competition with our nuclear-capable peers."

In 2016, the Obama administration initiated a massive expansion of the US nuclear forces, planning to spend a total of \$1 trillion on nuclear weapons over the next three decades. As part of this program, the military initiated the development of a nuclear-tipped cruise missile, which experts warned was a "uniquely destabilizing type of weapon."

The title of a report by Andrew F. Krepinevich—"Rethinking Armageddon"—summed up the madness of this campaign. The longtime Pentagon advisor said the United States had entered the "second nuclear age."

The four years of the Trump administration saw one guardrail after another removed from Washington's use of nuclear weapons.

In August 2019, the Trump administration withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty as part of its efforts to vastly expand the US arsenal of nuclear weapons and loosen restrictions on their use.

The INF treaty, signed over 30 years ago by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, banned a whole class of weapons that had vastly increased the risk of a nuclear conflict.

As part of the treaty, the two countries agreed to end all use and production of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers (310 to 3,417 miles).

By December 2019, the US military had tested a nuclear missile that would have been banned under the treaty. In February of last year, the US deployed a new, smaller “usable” low-yield nuclear weapon.

The systematic buildup of nuclear forces was accompanied by the Trump administration’s constant threats to use them. In 2017, as Trump threatened to unleash “fire and fury” upon North Korea, Defense Secretary James Mattis reportedly slept in his gym clothes every night so he would have a head start in case a war between the two nuclear-armed powers broke out.

In June 2019, Trump ordered the bombing of Iran from air and sea, only to call the attack off at the last moment. When, on January 3, 2020, Trump ordered the murder of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani in Iraq, Iran retaliated by sending cruise missiles at American bases, miraculously only injuring, but not killing, US troops.

For all his invocations of “democracy” and “human rights,” Biden accepts the entire framework of “great power competition” initiated by Trump in preparation for a major conflict with Russia or China.

Like former President Barack Obama, who sought to capitalize on opposition to the Iraq war but started US wars in Syria and Libya and massively expanded the US drone wars throughout the Middle East, Biden’s invocations of democratic ideals and “diplomacy” are nothing but a cover for a warmongering policy.

Under conditions of a global pandemic, in which more than 3,000 people are dying every day in the United States alone, the US ruling elites’ preparations for nuclear war are a testament to the utter madness and irrationality of the entire capitalist system.



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