

Blinken at the UN: A Colin Powell moment

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Developments over the past 24 hours make clear that the Biden administration, speaking for dominant sections of the American ruling class, is determined to escalate the confrontation with Russia, even to the point of triggering a world war.

The Biden administration does not want a compromise settlement: it is seeking the total subjugation or even the breakup of Russia, including by military means. Having in the past quarter century broken apart Yugoslavia and destroyed Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, the United States is once again on the warpath.

The danger of all-out war is escalating. On Thursday, no doubt in coordination with the United States, the Ukrainian military began shelling the positions of pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk, prompting the pro-Russian forces to return fire. The offensive occurred the day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited troops in eastern Ukraine.

Over the past several weeks, the US media endlessly trumpeted the claim that an invasion of Ukraine by Russia was “imminent,” even setting a date: Wednesday, February 16. The date came and went, and no Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred. Instead, Russia withdrew a portion of its troops from Crimea and Belarus following the scheduled completion of military exercises there.

The United States responded to the pullback by dispatching Secretary of State Antony Blinken to denounce Russia at the United Nations Security Council.

Blinken’s performance was an uncanny repeat of the notorious speech delivered in February 2003 by then Secretary of State Colin Powell in the run-up to the Iraq war. Powell flagrantly perjured himself on national television to justify an illegal war of aggression that has cost the lives of an estimated one million Iraqis.

In its display of lies and hypocrisy, Blinken’s performance was even more shameless than that of his predecessor.

“The basic principles that sustain peace and security, enshrined in the wake of two world wars and the Cold War, are under threat,” Blinken claimed. “The principle

that one country cannot change the borders of another by force; the principle that one country cannot dictate another’s choices or policies, or with whom it will associate; the principle of national sovereignty.”

Who does Blinken think he is kidding? He spoke as the representative of a government that has been engaged for decades in a continuous string of interventions, coups, wars and CIA-backed regime change operations targeting countries throughout the world.

In the 1990s, the US under the Clinton administration, along with its NATO allies, forced the breakup of Yugoslavia into a number of small states (Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Slovenia). In 1999, the US and Nato bombed Serbia for 78 days to compel its acceptance of the secession of Kosovo.

The United States instigated innumerable coups in Latin America and the Caribbean aimed at “dictating their choices and policies,” including the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz (1954); the overthrow and murder of Chilean President Salvador Allende (1973); the invasion of Grenada (1983); the repeated interventions in Haiti, including US military deployments in 1994 and a CIA-backed coup in 2004; etc., etc., etc.

Over the last 30 years, the US has systematically violated the “principle of national sovereignty” and basic international law by invading, bombing or instigating civil war in Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. It proclaims the right to conduct drone strikes in any country, assassinating anyone it chooses, including Iranian General Qassem Suleimani in January of 2020.

In the form of a charge of Russian aggression, Blinken then laid out how the US plans to provoke a conflict with Russia. “First, Russia plans to manufacture a pretext for its attack. This could be a violent event that Russia will blame on Ukraine, or an outrageous accusation that Russia will level against the Ukrainian Government,” including “a fabricated so-called terrorist bombing inside Russia,” a “staged drone strike against civilians,” or “a fake, even a real attack, using chemical weapons.”

In other words, Blinken is giving the fascistic paramilitary groups that have been integrated into the Ukrainian state and military a carte blanche to carry out any manner of crime against pro-Russian separatists or within Russia itself. Any response from Russia will be cited as proof that it has staged as “false flag” operation.

Indeed, this was precisely how the US media responded to the shelling by the Ukrainian military of pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk on Thursday. The *New York Times* declared that the “dramatic spike in shelling... may now offer Moscow the kind of pretext the United States says it is looking for to invade.”

Blinken concluded his account of how Russia was planning on justifying an invasion of Ukraine by declaring that the US was “laying out in great detail” its proof of Russia’s aggressive intentions. In fact, Blinken provided no “details” about anything. His speech consisted entirely of unsubstantiated assertions about the conclusions of “American intelligence.”

The record of American imperialism in lying to justify war is so notorious that even Blinken was forced to acknowledge it in a backhanded way. “Now, I am mindful that some have called into question our information,” he said, “recalling previous instances where intelligence ultimately did not bear out. But let me be clear: I am here today, not to start a war, but to prevent one.”

The ghosts of dead Iraqis haunted the UN Security Council meeting. However, the blood produced by the previous lies of American imperialism—not “intelligence [that] ultimately did not bear out”—could not be washed away so easily. Blinken’s declaration that he came “not to start a war, but to prevent one” stood out as the most flagrant lie of his entire speech.

The United States, with utter recklessness, is threatening to push the world into a new world war. There is an element of madness in the Biden administration’s actions, but one with a definite logic.

There are two fundamental and intersecting causes of the hysterical warmongering.

First, there are the geopolitical calculations. The military operation now unfolding was years or even decades in the making. The United States saw the dissolution of the USSR 30 years ago as an opportunity to abandon all restraints on its global military operations. In relation to Europe, the United States has overseen the continual eastward expansion of NATO, seeking to encircle Russia. As Hitler did in 1941, US and European imperialism see in Russia a vast arena for plunder.

Second, and even more decisively, there is the

increasingly explosive social and domestic crisis within the US and its NATO allies. The COVID-19 pandemic has already claimed the lives of nearly one million Americans, according to official figures. Somewhere on the order of 15,000 Americans are dying every week from COVID-19.

As Jack F. Matlock, Jr., the last US ambassador to the Soviet Union, noted in an article published on *Consortium News* on Wednesday, “I cannot dismiss the suspicion that we are witnessing an elaborate charade, grossly magnified by prominent elements of the American media, to serve a domestic political end. Facing rising inflation, the ravages of Omicron, blame (for the most part unfair) for the withdrawal from Afghanistan, plus the failure to get the full support of his own party for the Build Back Better legislation, the Biden administration is staggering under sagging approval ratings just as it gears up for this year’s congressional elections.”

Matlock occupied key foreign policy posts during the Cold War and cannot be accused of pro-Russian sympathies. This makes his indictment of the US incitement of the crisis all the more devastating.

Facing a series of insoluble crises, the American ruling class, like countless bankrupt ruling classes before it, turns to war as a way out. Yet, as thousands die every day from the pandemic, the ruling class has not bothered to explain why a war with Russia will resolve any of the real problems confronting the American population. Instead, it relies on a compliant media to churn out its lies and propaganda, dragooning the country and the entire world into a war with the most far-reaching and disastrous consequences.

The warmongering of American imperialism arises fundamentally not out of a position of strength, but of weakness and desperation. It is a response to a domestic and global situation that is producing a massive eruption of social anger and opposition in the working class.

The urgent task is to convert this objective process into a conscious political movement for socialism. This requires, above all else, the building of a revolutionary leadership—against war, inequality, dictatorship, and the capitalist profit system.



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