

Washington protests proposal for nuclear disarmament

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On Monday, the United States, together with Britain and France, walked out of a session of the United Nations General Assembly set to discuss a global ban on nuclear weapons.

After leaving the session, the United States and its imperialist allies lined up in front of reporters to give a statement protesting the UN proposal, beginning with an incoherent diatribe by Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN and right-wing ideologue who formerly served as governor of South Carolina.

Haley declared, “As a mom, as a daughter, there is nothing I want more for my family than a world that has no nuclear weapons.” However, she cautioned, “Our jobs is [sic] to protect the people in our country.”

She plaintively denounced the fact that “suddenly the General Assembly wants to have a hearing to ban nuclear weapons,” saying, “we have to be realistic. Is there anyone that believes that North Korea would agree to a ban on nuclear weapons...

“In this day and time, we can’t honestly say that we can protect our people by allowing the bad actors to have them and those of us that are good, trying to keep peace and safety, not to have them.”

The hypocrisy of these statements is breathtaking. It should first be noted that the supposed keeper of “peace and safety” is the only country to use a nuclear weapon in war, incinerating two Japanese cities at the end of the Second World War as part of its effort to establish unrivaled military domination in the postwar era.

More recently, the American ruling class and its allies have used the pretext of “weapons of mass destruction” to launch one war and regime-change operation after another, killing more than a million people in the process. Most notably, in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US falsely alleged that the government of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein had

failed to comply with UN resolutions on disarmament.

On March 17, 2003, just three days prior to the beginning of “shock and awe,” George W. Bush declared, “We have passed more than a dozen resolutions in the United Nations Security Council... The Iraqi regime has used diplomacy as a ploy to gain time and advantage. It has uniformly defied Security Council resolutions demanding full disarmament.”

The Bush administration’s claims about weapons of mass destruction were a pack of lies. The war that Bush launched on the grounds of advocating “disarmament” led to a brutal occupation that plunged the country into a bloodbath that continues to this day, engulfing much of the Middle East in sectarian warfare.

Today, the United States is using similar pretexts to escalate confrontations with Iran and North Korea.

Earlier this month, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson made clear that Washington is prepared to go to war again with North Korea unless it ceases to develop nuclear weapons, saying all options were “on the table.”

Tillerson’s declaration has been accompanied by a nonstop media offensive demanding an even more aggressive response by the Trump administration to the developments in North Korea.

To cite just one example, the *Wall Street Journal* published an op-ed column by Bret Stephens Tuesday calling for the United States to “make regime change an explicit aim of US policy,” demanding that the US press ahead with a policy of escalation in the Asia/Pacific region that could result in an all-out nuclear war with not only North Korea, but with China.

Even as the US policy establishment clamors for military escalation, behind the scenes major think tanks are warning of just how close the United States stands to full-scale war with one or more nuclear-armed powers.

Among the most chilling of these warnings was an article published in this week's *Foreign Affairs* by Philip Gordon, entitled "A Vision of Trump at War." The article paints three scenarios, all narrated in real time, hypothesizing how the United States might find itself in a full-scale war with China, North Korea or Iran within the next two years.

Here is just one example of the China scenario: "[A]n incident in the South China Sea led to the escalation so many had feared. The details remain murky, but it was triggered when a US surveillance ship operating in disputed waters in heavy fog accidentally rammed a Chinese trawler that was harassing it. In the confusion that ensued, a People's Liberation Army Navy frigate fired on the unarmed US ship, a US destroyer sank the Chinese frigate, and a Chinese torpedo struck and badly damaged the destroyer, killing three Americans." The ensuing conflict could "quickly lead to hundreds of thousands of casualties, draw in neighboring states, and destroy trillions of dollars' worth of economic output."

The article is couched in the form of a warning that US President Donald Trump's brash and aggressive diplomatic style risks a miscalculation that could lead to an unintentional war; in that sense it paints Trump as an exception. In reality, however, Trump merely represents, in the most advanced form, the war fever gripping all of the capitalist countries, and both parties in the United States. Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, initiated a \$1 trillion nuclear modernization program while sharply escalating conflicts with both Russia and China. Meanwhile Trump's Democratic opponents in Congress have centered their criticism of the Trump administration on the effort to force it to take a harder line against Russia.

The war fever is likewise raging throughout Europe and Asia. NATO members, including Britain, France and Germany, have each sent tanks, heavy weapons and troops to Russia's western borders after having substantially increased their military spending last year. Citing a potential conflict with Russia, Sweden has introduced conscription, and Emmanuel Macron, the frontrunner in the French presidential election, has vowed to do the same, with other countries likely to follow suit. Meanwhile, the German press has called for Germany to develop nuclear weapons, a proposition previously considered unthinkable in light of the crimes perpetrated by the German military in the Second

World War.

All over the world, the imperialist powers, drenched in self-righteous hypocrisy, are arming themselves to the teeth in preparation for a third world war. The conception that the capitalist powers, each mired in its own domestic political, economic and social crisis, will willingly renounce war as an instrument of policy, or even the use of nuclear weapons, is a utopian pipe dream.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Program* of 1938, "Disarmament... the entire question revolves around who will disarm whom. The only disarmament which can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers. But to disarm the bourgeoisie, the workers must arm themselves."

Trotsky meant that the workers must arm themselves first and foremost politically, with an international party capable of seizing political power from the financial elite that benefits from war, and reorganizing the world's feuding nation-states in an international socialist federation, based on reorganization of economic life in the interests of social need, not private profit.

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