

Obama at the United Nations: Washington Prepares Heightened Aggression against Damascus and Moscow

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Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, President Barack Obama portrayed himself and the US government as the preeminent defenders of international law and diplomacy. He did so even as the catastrophic consequences of the illegal wars of aggression he has overseen continued to send waves of refugees fleeing the ruins of entire countries—including Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen—and as Washington took new steps to turn Eastern Europe into a militarized zone for eventual war against Russia.

With his trademark hypocrisy and contempt for the intelligence of his audience, Obama hailed “an international system that imposes a cost on those who choose conflict over cooperation.” He proclaimed his support for the “international principles that helped constrain bigger countries from imposing our will on smaller ones,” and denounced those who maintain “that might makes right; that strong states must impose their will on weaker ones; that the rights of individuals don’t matter; and that in a time of rapid change, order must be imposed by force.”

This from a man who asserts the right of his government to launch “preemptive” wars against any country or group deemed hostile to Washington’s drive for hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East and the rest of the world; who has killed untold thousands in drone missile assassinations; waged an unprovoked war against Libya and murdered its leader, Gaddafi; and armed and financed a sectarian civil war using Al Qaeda-linked killers as its proxy force, turning Syria into a chamber of horrors.

The main focus of Obama’s remarks was Syria, where the debacle of US policy had become so pronounced that Obama was obliged to pull back from his previous demand for the immediate removal of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. He has proposed talks with the Baathist regime’s main allies, Russia and Iran, on a “managed transition” that would likely retain elements of the current government while eventually easing Assad out of power.

Later on Monday, Obama met with Russian President Putin to discuss the possibility of engineering such a settlement of the four-and-a-half-year war. It was the first formal face to face meeting between the two since 2013, when the White House cancelled discussions with Putin in retaliation for Moscow’s decision to grant NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden temporary asylum. That was followed by a freeze on all high-level talks after the US-sponsored and fascist-led coup last year that overthrew Ukraine’s pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich. Since it installed the ultra-nationalist and fascistic regime in Kiev,

Washington has backed a brutal assault on pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine that has killed thousands and devastated entire cities.

The US finds its position in Syria and the broader region severely weakened, despite the mass killing in the country—estimated at 200,000 deaths in a country with a population of 23 million—caused by the sectarian civil war instigated by Washington and its regional allies, Turkey and the semi-feudal sheikdoms of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Iraq's announcement Sunday that it had signed an agreement with Syria, Iran and Russia to share intelligence and coordinate security in the battle against Islamic State forces in Syria and Iraq appeared to take Washington by surprise.

It was preceded by a series of developments exposing Washington's failure to create a non-jihadist "moderate" force to fight both ISIS and Assad. These included the resignation of the top US commander in the anti-ISIS war; congressional testimony by a leading general admitting that after more than a year and the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars, the US had trained "four or five" fighters; reports that the ranks of ISIS fighters were rising despite months of US and coalition bombing; and other reports that forces trained by the US in Turkey had defected or turned over their weapons to Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the al-Nusra Front.

Moreover, recent weeks have seen an increase in Russian military support to the Assad regime, which Washington has been unable to block.

The net result of Washington's reckless and murderous war for regime-change in Syria has been to turn the country into yet another geopolitical flashpoint where US and allied military forces face off against those of Russia, raising the very real danger of an armed clash and the eruption of a wider war between nuclear armed powers. On the eve of the UN assembly, France began its own bombing campaign in Syria, making clear that it was prepared to attack forces allied with Assad, potentially including Russian forces, as well as ISIS. Britain is lining up to begin bombing the country later this year.

It would be a dangerous mistake to believe that Washington's decision to seek talks with Russia and Iran means the US is backing off from the use of military violence. On the contrary, with its economic and diplomatic position weakening, the response of American imperialism will be to ratchet up its bullying and military aggression.

This was clear from Obama's speech. He denounced the main targets of US aggression, calling Assad a "tyrant," accusing Russia of violating "the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Ukraine, implied that China was attacking "the basic principles of freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce" in the South China Sea and singled out Iran for continuing to "deploy violent proxies to advance its interests." The chief backer of tyrants in the Middle East, violator of national sovereignty and territorial integrity in Ukraine, threat to freedom of navigation in East Asia and deployer of violent proxies is, of course, the United States.

In the midst of his cynical paean to the international law and diplomacy, Obama issued an unambiguous threat to any nation that dared to get in America's way, declaring: "I lead the strongest military that the world has ever known, and I will never hesitate to protect my country and our allies, unilaterally and by force where necessary."

The preparations for a US military escalation against both Syria and Russia are well

underway. Last week, *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius reported that discussions are being held between US military officials and leaders of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria for Washington to step up its military support, including close air support for YPG fighters on the ground.

Powerful factions within the US ruling elite and state are opposed to any talks with Russia or Iran and are demanding the creation of so-called "safe havens" policed by US and allied forces in Syria and an all-out drive for regime-change.

At the same time, the Pentagon and CIA are stepping up their war preparations against Russia. The upcoming US-NATO Trident Juncture 2015 war games, the largest held since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, are designed to prepare Western forces to engage in hybrid warfare operations in the Baltic region and beyond.

Last week, an article appeared in *Foreign Policy* magazine with the title: "The Pentagon is Preparing New War Plans for a Baltic Battle Against Russia." The article stated, "For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US Department of Defense is reviewing and updating its contingency plans for armed conflict with Russia."

Finally, the US is planning to upgrade its nuclear arsenal in Europe with highly sophisticated B61-12 guided nuclear bombs, each one of which is more than three times as powerful as the atomic bomb that killed over 130,000 people in Hiroshima.

For decades, US imperialism has sought to overcome the decline in its global economic position by relying on its military supremacy. In response to its latest setbacks in the Middle East, this tendency will only be expressed with greater brutality and recklessness.

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