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US Gears Up for War With Iran

Can a state that condemns, without real justification, an international disarmament treaty it spent years negotiating then threaten a co-signatory with military aggression? Can it order other countries to fall into line with its capricious, bellicose stance or face punitive sanctions? The US can.

It's pointless trying to argue with the Trump administration's claimed reasons for its escalation against Iran. One can even imagine National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo telling their diplomats and intelligence staff, 'You come up with the pretexts; we'll take care of the war.'

Bolton does not lack experience or singleness of purpose. In March 2015, when his zeal for the invasion of Iraq had diminished his influence, he wrote an op-ed in the New York Times: 'To stop Iran's bomb, bomb Iran'. In it he claimed Iran would never wind up its nuclear programme by negotiation and concluded, 'The United States could do a thorough job of destruction, but Israel alone can do what's necessary. Such action should be combined with vigorous American support for Iran's opposition, aimed at regime change in Tehran' (1).

Three months later the major powers, including the US, signed a nuclear agreement with Iran. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran is scrupulously adhering to the treaty terms. Bolton was undeterred. In 2018, going even further than the hawkish stance of the Israeli government and Saudi regime, he pushed hard for regime change again: 'America's declared policy should be ending Iran's 1979 Islamic

Revolution before its 40th anniversary ... Recognising a new Iranian regime in 2019 would reverse the shame of once seeing our diplomats held hostage for 444 days. The former hostages can cut the ribbon to open the new US Embassy in Tehran' (2). Donald Trump campaigned against the policy of 'regime change', meaning US wars of aggression. So war is not yet inevitable. But any peace that depends on Trump's ability to rein in his snarling advisors must be fragile. In strangling Iran economically, with the support (through docility or compulsion) of other western countries and big business, the US claims its sanctions will force Iran to give in. In reality, Bolton and Pompeo are well aware that similar economic warfare failed with North Korea and Cuba. They are counting on an Iranian reaction that they can present triumphantly as an act of aggression demanding a US response. Obsession, falsification, manipulation, provocation: after Iraq, Libya and Yemen, the neoconservatives have identified their next target.

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Notes.

(1) John Bolton, 'To stop Iran's bomb, bomb Iran', New York Times, 26 March 2015.

(2) John Bolton, 'Beyond the Iran nuclear deal', Wall Street Journal, New York, 15 January 2018.

Translated by George Miller.