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European powers endorse US war provocations against Iran

Berlin, London and Paris issued an endorsement of US pretexts for military aggression against Iran in an official statement yesterday. As Donald Trump prepared his denunciation of Iran as a bloodthirsty threat to peace at the UN General Assembly in New York, the governments of the three largest European imperialist powers baldly declared that the US war provocations against Iran are self-evident truths.

Referring to their “shared security interests, in particular upholding the global non-proliferation regime and preserving stability in the Middle East,” they fell into line with Washington’s narrative on the recent bombing of Saudi oil installations: “We condemn in the strongest terms the attack on oil facilities on Saudi territory, on September 14, 2019 in Abqaiq and Khurais, and reaffirm in this context our full solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its population.”

The three European powers presented no evidence whatsoever to support US allegations that the bombing was carried out by Iran and is an act of war deserving a military response. They simply continued, “It is clear to us that Iran bears responsibility for this attack. There is no other plausible explanation. We support ongoing investigations to establish further details.”

Noting the “risk of a major conflict,” Berlin, London and Paris turned the situation upside down, placing blame for the danger of war not on the aggressive actions of US imperialism—from its scrapping of the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal to its threat this year to

bomb Iran—but on Tehran. They demanded that Iran fully comply with the nuclear deal Trump scrapped last year and “refrain from choosing provocation and escalation.”

As Washington dispatches troops to Saudi Arabia and warships to the Persian Gulf to prepare war against Iran, the content of this statement is unambiguous. The leading European imperialist powers are abandoning their initial criticisms of Trump for scrapping the 2015 treaty. Endorsing the build-up to a new US-led war in the Middle East, based on political lies just like the US-led war in Iraq in 2003, they are signaling that they can this time support and possibly join in such a war.

Washington, for its part, hailed European support for its campaign against Iran. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted: “The U.S. thanks our close friends, UK, France, and Germany, for their clear articulation of Iran’s sole responsibility for the act of war against Saudi Arabia and its impact on the region and the world.” In a second Tweet, Pompeo continued praising the European statement, using the technique of the Big Lie: “This will strengthen diplomacy and the cause of peace. We urge every nation to join in this condemnation of Iran’s actions.”

The European endorsement of US war threats against Iran will not strengthen peace, but encourage the Trump administration to step up its threats and provocations, risking a catastrophic war.

Predictably, Trump used his speech at the UN General Assembly yesterday not only to denounce socialism but hysterically threaten Iran. “One of the greatest security threats facing peace-loving nations today is the repressive regime in Iran,” he declared, appealing for support against Iran: “All nations have a duty to act. No responsible government should subsidize Iran’s blood lust. As long as Iran’s menacing behavior continues, sanctions will not be lifted. They will be tightened.”

The US president’s arguments and the European powers’ statements supporting them are a pack of lies. For three decades, since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union and the US-led Gulf War in 1991, the imperialist powers have devastated the Middle East and Central Asia. Their wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen caused millions of casualties, ravaged entire societies, and surrounded Iran with a ring of US and European military bases. The main threat to peace comes from the intrigues of Washington and its allies.

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Neither Washington nor the Saudi monarchy have presented any evidence that Iran carried out the bombings at Abqaiq and Khurais. A statement claiming responsibility for the attack has been attributed to Houthi forces in Yemen, a country that has been targeted by a Saudi-led, NATO-backed war that since 2015 has killed over 90,000 people including tens of thousands of civilians and led to the starvation of at least 84,701 children. If this statement proves to be correct, Houthi forces could claim to have acted in self-defense against the Saudis.

The contrast between the European powers' response to the US war drives in 2003 and today is stark. In 2003, when the Bush administration lied, claiming it had to invade Iraq because Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and planned to give them to Al Qaeda to carry out nuclear terrorist attacks, Germany and France jointly opposed it. France threatened to veto US resolutions authorizing military aggression against Iraq at the UN Security Council.

Then-Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin disputed the lies Washington was using to justify its war in a February 14, 2003 speech to the UN Security Council. He said, "Ten days ago, the US Secretary of State, Mr. Powell, reported the alleged links between Al Qaeda and the regime in Baghdad. Given the present state of our research and intelligence, in liaison with our allies, nothing allows us to establish such links. On the other hand, we must assess the impact that disputed military action would have ..."

Today, the European powers not only rush to judgment before any "further details" about the attacks in Saudi Arabia are known, but claim that everyone must agree with Trump's rush to blame Iran, as there is supposedly no "plausible" alternative.

The 16 years since Villepin's speech have provided a bitter lesson in the bankruptcy of attempts to oppose war based on supporting Washington's imperialist rivals. Not only did Washington attack Iraq, but the European imperialist powers, calculating on the basis of their commercial and strategic interests in the Middle East and their fear of growing anti-imperialist sentiment internationally, soon turned 180 degrees. Paris and Berlin repaired relations with the Bush administration, sending oil companies and troop deployments to US-occupied Iraq and Afghanistan.

The only force providing a social basis for a movement against war is the international working class, where there is deep and growing disillusionment with war and explosive anger at social inequality produced by capitalism.

Berlin and Paris for their part are lining up with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who yesterday denounced the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, calling for European support for Trump to hold new talks with Iran, while noting that a US war with Iran would “not necessarily help the situation.”

“The reality is, as President Trump right said, it was a bad deal,” Johnson said. “It has many defects. Iran was and is behaving disruptively in the region. ... I think there’s one guy who can do a better deal and one guy understands how to get a difficult partner like Iran over the line, and that is the president of the United States.”

The greatest danger is that the international working class is not fully aware of the enormous danger of a catastrophic conflict. The Middle East is ablaze with wars from Yemen, to Syria to Afghanistan. Trump, who is reviewing target lists for US bombings of Iran, is only a few steps away from launching a region-wide war that would spell a major escalation in the conflict with nuclear-armed Russia and China and the danger of nuclear war.

With their reactionary statement, the European imperialist powers are joining Washington as it toboggans with eyes closed towards catastrophe.

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