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The UN General Assembly and the threat of imperialist aggression against China

The UN General Assembly is opening today in New York City under the shadow of the sudden announcement last week of the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) alliance targeting China.



Members of South Korean K-pop band BTS watch a music video on the General Assembly Hall monitors during a meeting on Sustainable Development Goals at the 76th session of the U.N. General Assembly at U.N. headquarters on Monday, Sept. 20, 2021. (John Angelillo/Pool Photo via AP)

Three-quarters of a century ago, the UN was founded on the claim that, after two catastrophic world wars, the victorious Allied powers would outlaw aggressive war. Article 1 of its Charter pledged “effective collective measures for the prevention and

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removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace.” It affirmed on December 11, 1946, the finding of the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals, that “planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression” are crimes punishable by death.

The founding of the UN and the post-World War II settlement in fact resolved none of the essential contradictions that had led to the world wars—above all, that between world economy and the nation-state system, dominated by a handful of ruthless imperialist states. The UN went on to approve countless imperialist atrocities, from the carpet-bombing of North Korean cities in the 1950–1953 Korean war, to the wars NATO launched in Libya in 2011.

As the capitalist and Stalinist regimes of the postwar era hailed the UN as a guarantor of world peace, only the Trotskyist movement warned that opposition to war and the attack on democratic rights was impossible without a struggle against capitalism and was the task of a revolutionary movement for socialism in the working class.

The Fourth International in 1945 branded the UN a “new thieves’ kitchen,” echoing Lenin’s condemnation of the UN’s predecessor, the League of Nations formed after World War I, that failed to halt Europe’s descent into fascism and the eruption of World War II. Citing verbatim Lenin’s warnings to workers about the League of Nations, it called the UN “a group of beasts of prey, who only fight one another,” and “fakery from beginning to end.”

These lines aptly describe the debased proceedings getting underway in New York. The public will not be spared the usual humanitarian rhetoric, of course. In his report, unveiled on September 10, UN Secretary-General António Guterres appeals for world unity. Nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, with at least 4.7 million confirmed deaths, he laments official “paralysis” on the pandemic and global warming, the rise of “unchecked inequality,” and “the incalculable social and environmental damage that may be caused by the pursuit of profit.”

None of the major imperialist powers make any pretense, however, that they do not use murder and aggressive war as routine tools of statecraft. Indeed, the divisions between the imperialist powers, including among the former Allied victors in World War II, have never

been greater. The presidents of three of the five UN Security Council powers—Emmanuel Macron of France, Vladimir Putin of Russia and Xi Jinping of China—are absent, as the US war drive against China provokes one of the deepest diplomatic crises since the end of the Cold War.

The AUKUS alliance, prepared for months behind the backs of the EU, led Australia to suddenly cancel a €56 billion order for French diesel-electric submarines and instead buy US nuclear subs, able to patrol for long periods off China's coastline. Beijing denounced the agreement as "extremely irresponsible," as it "seriously damages regional peace and stability, intensifies the arms race, and undermines the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

Yesterday evening, European Union (EU) Commission President Ursula von der Leyen officially joined Paris in demanding formal explanations from Washington. "One of our member states has been treated in a way that is not acceptable," von der Leyen told CNN. "We want to know what happened and why."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who will represent France at the General Assembly in Macron's absence, warned: "We see the rise of an Indo-Pacific strategy launched by the United States that is militarily confrontational. That is not our position ... We don't believe in the logic of systematic military confrontation, even if sometimes we must use military means."

Engaging in "systematic military confrontation," in plain language, means preparing for war. The conflicts over profits and strategic influence now erupting among the NATO powers are driven by the imminent prospect of a global US war with China—abetted by Britain and Australia—waged in a bid to maintain US imperialism's world primacy in flagrant violation of international law.

Thirty years after the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which bourgeois propagandists hailed as opening an era of world peace, the major powers are again tobogganing eyes closed towards catastrophe. Their war preparations against each other testify to the impossibility of fashioning any coherent international policy to address critical world problems like the pandemic or global warming within the framework of the capitalist nation-state system.

Mobilizing and coordinating humanity's resources to resolve any of the great problems confronting mankind requires building an international movement in the working class, independent of the national capitalist governments and union bureaucracies. A critical task of this movement is to oppose the accelerating drive of world capitalism towards new imperialist wars, notably targeting China.

The line-up of criminals attending the UN proceedings this week provides yet another illustration of the political degeneration of the entire capitalist order.

The first speaker today will be Brazil's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro, who is boasting of his refusal to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and campaigning for a coup by the Brazilian military. He is joined by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, a leading figure in AUKUS and in opposing a scientific fight to eradicate COVID-19, infamous for declaring: "No more f*cking lockdowns—let the bodies pile high in their thousands."

There will be Egyptian General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, a friend of Le Drian, who halted two years of revolutionary struggles by the Egyptian working class by a bloody military coup in 2013—shooting thousands of unarmed civilians in cold blood in the streets of Cairo.

US President Biden appears with blood on his hands, after US officials admitted at least 10 innocent civilians including seven children were murdered in a US drone strike in Kabul on August 29. He is at the center of the reactionary AUKUS intrigues targeting China.

The preparation of the AUKUS alliance has gone hand-in-hand with a vicious press campaign, also led by Washington, suggesting that the COVID-19 pandemic is caused not by a naturally-occurring virus, but of a virus created in a Chinese lab. This slander, which has no support among credible scientific authorities, amounts to war propaganda falsely blaming the now nearly 2 million dead in North America and Europe on China.

Blame for the horrific COVID-19 death toll lies above all with the NATO powers, which opposed such scientific policies as an intolerable restriction on corporate profits. As a result, the collective wealth of the world's billionaires has exploded by 60 percent, from \$8 trillion to \$13.1 trillion, while workers and youth were sent into unsafe workplaces and schools.

The degraded spectacle set to unfold at the UN General Assembly is a historic warning to the working class. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a trigger event, vastly intensifying the crisis of world capitalism and exposing the inability of the ruling class to devise any progressive, common solution to the urgent international crises of today. That task falls to the working class, fighting to build an international movement against war, for a scientifically-guided campaign to eradicate the coronavirus, and for socialism.

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