

# China uses Boston bombing to appeal to US for unity

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China's state-controlled media has seized upon the Boston Marathon bombing to call for unity with Washington in stoking up the "war on terrorism." This response seeks to convince the Obama administration to ease its relentless strategic and diplomatic "pivot to Asia" aimed at undercutting Chinese influence.

Chinese media outlets used the fact the one of three Boston bombing victims was a 23-year-old Chinese student, Lu Lingzi, at Boston University, to argue for the mutual interests of the two countries in combatting terrorism. The official news agency, Xinhua, stated: "In this regard, China and the United States, both victims of the latest terrorist attack, shared common ground. As two major powers, the pair can jointly play a constructive role in promoting global counter-terrorism cooperation."

The *People's Liberation Army Daily*, which earlier this year issued a call for Chinese troops to prepare for war, in the face of the mounting US military buildup in the Asia Pacific region, called for "global cooperation on the war on terror." The newspaper declared that since the US killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011, anti-terrorism efforts had been "constantly weakened," with the Boston bombing one of the consequences.

"Therefore," the Chinese military's mouthpiece insisted, "leaders of all countries, especially the major powers, must place the lives of the world's population as their top interests, abandon Cold War mentality, put aside previous misunderstandings, and work hand-in-hand to construct a global anti-terror front."

A commentary in a pro-Beijing newspaper in Hong Kong, *Ta Kung Bao*, summed up the real considerations in Beijing. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, "the US war on terror gave China a hard-to-find strategic opportunity." A decade later, "the US was shocked by China's vastly improved combined

strength, its GDP [gross domestic product] had surged ahead to be the No.2 in the world, its military had made a great leap forward."

The Chinese regime is conscious that it enjoyed a "strategic opportunity" under the former George W. Bush administration. Initially, the Bush White House had taken a hard-line stance toward China, branding it a "strategic competitor." However, these tensions were eased after Washington exploited the 9/11 attacks to mount its bogus "war on terror" to justify US-led neo-colonial invasions, first of Afghanistan, then Iraq.

Subsequently, according to *Ta Kung Bao*, the US felt the threat and pulled back from the war on terror in order to "return to Asia" to confront China, supported by Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines. "Overnight, the dark clouds of war gathered in the Asia-Pacific region." But the Boston bombing demonstrated that "Obama's judgment was wrong." Instead, "the greatest security threat to the US comes not from China, but international terrorist organisations."

But the "war on terror" was no more about combatting terrorism than Obama's "pivot" is to preserve peace and stability in Asia. Both have been driven by the economic and strategic interests of US imperialism—firstly, to secure its domination in the key oil rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia, and secondly, to prevent China from becoming a potential challenge in the Asia Pacific region.

The Obama administration's "rebalancing" to Asia reflected concerns in sections of the American political establishment that the Bush administration had bogged the US down in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq while a potential rival, China, had gained in influence in Asia and other parts of the world.

These concerns stemmed from China's economic growth. In 2001, China's GDP was only one eighth of

America's, but by last year, it was half. China displaced the US as the world's largest manufacturer in 2010, a position the US had held since 1889, and replaced as the world's largest trading nation in 2012, a status America held maintained since 1945.

While China remains predominantly a cheap labour platform for Western transnational corporations, its huge demand for energy and raw materials to feed its rapidly expanding industry has brought it into competition with the US and Europe in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Obama's "pivot", like the "war on terror", aims to use US military might to offset its relative economic decline—in this case, to contain China, economically and strategically. Since 2009, Washington has strengthened military alliances throughout the Asia Pacific, encouraged allies like Japan and the Philippines to take a tougher stand in their territorial disputes with Beijing, and restructured and repositioned its military in the region to fight a potential war against China. It has gained access to bases in Australia for US Marines, warships and warplanes, in Singapore for the US navy's new littoral vessels, and is seeking similar arrangements with the Philippines.

To imagine the Boston bombing will open up a new era of cooperation between China and the US on the "war on terror" is wishful thinking.

On one issue, the Chinese regime is in full agreement with the Obama administration—the police state measures that were employed to lock down the city of Boston, complete with armed troops, military vehicles and warrantless house searches. The Chinese leadership routinely employs such methods to suppress protests or strikes by the working class and rural poor.

China's state-owned *Global Times* wrote an editorial this week supporting the police operations in Boston. Because the US had previously criticised Beijing over "human rights" and its use of similar methods, now the editorial lectured Washington on the need for order. "Public security is the basis for social harmony. Negative sentiments in a society, when turned into a destructive power, will always threaten public security first," it stated.

The editorial pinpoints the source of "negative sentiments" in the "serious social and political polarisation" underway in the United States. In other words, while the American press deliberately obscures

the class character and purpose of the police-state methods used in Boston, the Chinese media openly acknowledges that they are needed to suppress opposition and discontent, especially from the working class.



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