

The growing danger of a US war against China

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The Obama administration has placed the United States on a path for a military confrontation with China in the South China Sea. Washington's reckless and provocative brinkmanship underscores that the danger of war—which would engulf the region and threaten the lives of millions—is far more advanced than the international working class is aware.

The Obama administration leaked on Tuesday that Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter has called for plans for the deployment of US naval and/or air assets to assert “freedom of navigation” within the 12-nautical mile exclusion zone surrounding Chinese-occupied territory. The sole aim of such a deployment would be to force Beijing to repudiate its claims to sovereignty over islands and reefs where it is constructing docks and airstrips.

The Chinese foreign ministry responded Wednesday by warning that China would uphold its “national sovereignty and security,” and warned “relevant countries to refrain from taking risky and provocative action.” The English-language state-controlled *Global Times* editorialised on Wednesday: “...although war is the last thing they want to see, both nations are actually considering the possibility.”

A second *Global Times* editorial, headlined “A firm response to meet US sea provocation,” declared: “It [Washington] should keep in mind that China is a major power with nuclear weapons, and there is no way that US forces can take reckless actions in the South China Sea.”

Assistant Secretary of Defense David Shear retaliated, telling a Senate hearing that the US was “committed to taking effective and appropriate action.” He announced that surveillance aircraft and B-1 bombers—the longest-range US bomber capable of carrying nuclear or conventional payloads—would be

deployed to northern Australia as part of the preparations for a challenge to China's claims in the South China Sea.

US Secretary of State John Kerry is due to arrive in Beijing on Saturday, ostensibly to discuss the planned visit to Washington by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September. Kerry's agenda, however, will be dominated by fraught discussions over the possibility of open conflict.

Some form of diplomatic words may be found by Kerry and Chinese officials that enables Washington to back off, for now, from sending ships or aircraft into the disputed areas. US imperialism, however, is not engaged in empty posturing. It is preparing for war.

For over two decades, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has sought to utilise its overwhelming military superiority to stem the long-term decline of its global economic hegemony. It has engaged in endless violence and intrigue in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia to assert its domination over key markets and resources.

China, which has emerged as the centre of global manufacturing, is now the prime target of Washington's militarist agenda. As was spelt out in a recent report to the US Council for Foreign Relations, its growing economic weight and influence is viewed as an unacceptable threat to American imperialist interests, regardless of whether China seeks to challenge the US or not. The military pressure applied to Russia over Ukraine during the past year has been squarely aimed at weakening a potential ally of Beijing and preparing the conditions for a confrontation and China's reduction to semi-colonial status.

The humiliation suffered by the Obama administration in March, when the major European powers defied Washington and sided with Beijing to

establish the new Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), was interpreted in Washington as confirmation that China must be curbed, sooner rather than later.

Every country in the region, to one degree or another, is embroiled in these rising tensions and preparations for war. The Australian political establishment is so thoroughly integrated with US imperialism, through a military alliance and basing agreements, that US official Shear appears to have announced the B-1 bomber deployments without even consulting the Australian government. Barely two weeks ago, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed the US Congress and hailed his “collective self-defense” pact with Washington, which will oblige Japanese military forces to fight alongside the US.

Throughout the Indo-Pacific region, the US has been systematically strengthening alliances and strategic partnerships, forging new basing arrangements and boosting its own military deployments. All governments and military commands in Asia, as well as in Western Europe, will have experts bunkering down to consider the implications of a US-Chinese clash in the South China Sea. Increasingly the question on the diplomatic table is: where will the ruling classes of every state align in the event of open conflict?

The response of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime to the threats by Washington is utterly reactionary. Its nationalist hubris about Chinese “strength,” and counter-threats that it is prepared to fight a nuclear war and slaughter millions of Americans, are only aimed at trying to extract concessions from Washington. The sole concern of the CCP is protecting the corrupt capitalist oligarchy it represents, whose profits and privileges depend on the ruthless suppression and exploitation of the Chinese working class. Its policies will lead to a catastrophe.

The only social force that can prevent the drive to war is the international working class, unified on the revolutionary perspective of ending the source of the war danger, the capitalist profit system. The actions of US imperialism are only the most explosive expression of the breakdown of world capitalism as a result of the inherent contradictions between a globally-interconnected economy and its division into rival nation-states, in which the private ownership of production is rooted.

The international online May Day rally held by the

International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) powerfully outlined the historically-derived socialist and internationalist program that provides the basis for the unification of the working class and the development of a mass international anti-war movement.

The strategic task of the day is to build the ICFI, through the development of its existing sections and the establishment of new sections in China, Japan and countries throughout the region and around the world.



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