

Chinese president orders troops to be “ready to fight”

Mike Head
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Reflecting mounting global and internal tensions, Chinese President Xi Jinping conducted a “mobilisation meeting” of the country’s armed forces on Wednesday, ordering soldiers to be ready to fight and win wars.

Speaking at a large military assembly in the northern province of Hebei, Xi told about 7,000 People’s Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers they should fear “neither hardship nor death” as they obeyed their orders.

Xi’s speech was a measure of the escalating pressure on the Chinese regime by the US “pivot to Asia”—launched by Barack Obama and ramped up by Donald Trump—to combat China’s growing influence, if necessary by war. The unprecedented military rally was also an indication of the buildup of the armed forces to deal with mounting domestic unrest.

Like the US and other governments around the world, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) administration, which represents a thin layer of the super-rich billionaires, is resorting to nationalism and militarism in response to growing geo-strategic conflicts and internal political discontent.

The *People’s Daily*, the official newspaper of the CCP regime, reported that troops assembled in 4,000 separate locations across China to hear Xi’s address.

Sending a calculated message, the publication highlighted the event on its front page yesterday. It showed thousands of soldiers, lined up in battle gear, chanting in response to Xi, alongside a photograph of him addressing them, clad in combat fatigues and black leather gloves.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the CCP, spoke in his capacity as chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC)—effectively the armed forces commander-in-chief. The *People’s Daily* emphasised it was the first time the CMC had held a mobilisation

meeting for the whole armed forces.

According to the newspaper, Xi declared that the PLA should “create an elite and powerful force that is always ready for the fight, capable of combat and sure to win in order to fulfill the tasks bestowed by the party and the people in the new era.”

Another CCP publication, the *Global Times*, called the assembly a “landmark” event. “This is the first time since the founding of the country that instructions on military training have been directly issued by the chairman of the CMC, and it shows that improving combat readiness is now a strategic mission for the Chinese military,” Xu Guangyu, a retired major general, told the *Global Times*.

Xu presented the shift as a defensive reaction to the expansion and increasing combat readiness of the much larger US military. “China can’t copy the US measures to improve combat capability through actual combat overseas since our national defence policy is defensive rather than offensive. Therefore, military training becomes extremely important for China.”

On the same day that the CCP staged the assembly, Trump used Twitter to blatantly threaten a nuclear war against North Korea, the small impoverished state that sits on China’s northeastern border, just 800 kilometres from Beijing. Taunting North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, Trump wrote: “I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!”

The turn by China’s venal, corrupt and despotic capitalist class to military mobilisation is not only a reaction to Washington’s war-mongering, however. It expresses the material interests and aspirations of the wealthy elite that has arisen rapidly in China since the restoration of capitalism under CCP leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s and 1980s.

Song Zhongping, described as a military expert and TV commentator, told the *Global Times* that the ceremony demonstrated the new norm of military training after the 19th CCP National Congress, held last October.

That congress saw Xi, who came to power in 2012, consolidate his position as state president, party general secretary and military commander, after ousting factional rivals and restructuring the PLA to concentrate control in the CMC, which he chairs.

As the WSWS explained at the time, Xi has emerged not as an unchallengeable political strongman, but as a Bonapartist figure, seeking to maintain party unity by balancing, arbitrating and suppressing the conflicting interests in the CCP's massive bureaucratic police-state apparatus.

Domestically, the social chasm between the party bosses and billionaires, and the vast majority of the population whose cheap labour has underpinned global capitalism for three decades, is generating explosive class tensions, aggravated by signs of economic turmoil.

This year, while officially forecasting growth to continue at around 6.7 percent, Chinese officials are warning of "over-capacity" in traditional industries, "structural contradictions" in the economy and financial risks produced by record levels of debt.

Around 600 strikes or protests were reported during the first eight months of 2017, according to the *China Labour Bulletin*, a Hong Kong-based monitoring web site, which said this tally may represent only 10–15 percent of the actual number. This was despite increased police powers to break up demonstrations.

Unable to credibly claim to represent "socialism," the CCP is drumming up nationalism, invoking an image of restoring China to a mythical great power status, in a bid to divert the disaffection of the working class.

The social powder keg is being exacerbated by Trump's "America First" threats of trade war and nuclear conflict. Trump is ratcheting up Obama's "pivot" even more openly and aggressively, reflecting the view in American ruling circles that Beijing is a key obstacle to Washington's world dominance.

Trump's National Security Strategy, released last month, branded China and Russia as "revisionist powers" and "hostile competitors" seeking "to shape a world antithetical to US values and interests" and

"challenge American power, influence, and interests." In essence, the document called for the preparation for a new era of "great power" conflict and world war.

Under Xi, China has reacted to Washington's offensive by accelerating its own military build-up and efforts to assert economic power. Xi's One Belt, One Road policy, in particular, involves ambitious transport and infrastructure projects to link up the Eurasian landmass, excluding the US and encouraging the European powers to loosen their ties to Washington.

While the CCP has sought to postpone a confrontation with the US, bowing to some demands for greater trade and investment access in China and for punitive sanctions on North Korea, it has refused to back down on critical strategic issues such as Chinese land reclamation in the South China Sea. Xi's military "mobilisation" ceremony is another warning that global capitalism, with the US in the lead, is threatening to plunge humanity into another, even more terrible, world war.



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