

The G20 Summit in Osaka: The war of all against all

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World leaders gathered in Osaka, Japan Friday for the G20 summit amid the relentless promotion of trade war, protectionism and militarism.

The climate at the G20, formed to coordinate an international and multilateral response to a series of global financial crises in the late 1990s, could be described with the phrase coined by Thomas Hobbes: *Bellum omnium contra omnes* (“the war of all against all”).

The divisions, Bloomberg reported, “extend well beyond the familiar sticking points of steel, environment and trade.” The report added, “One person involved in the process said that the ability to compromise had virtually dropped to zero. Another person participating in the drafting said that so many accords had been broken unilaterally that they had begun to lose meaning.”

Bloomberg concluded, “A US official involved in the process simply called the final communique a waste of time.”

Since the G20 dropped the call to “resist all forms of protectionism” from its final communique in March of 2017, the White House has launched a trade war against China and threatened one against the European Union, while demanding that its allies, including Japan and NATO, pay up for American military protection.

The growth of trade war and military threats kicked into high gear following the last G20 summit in Buenos Aires in December:

- On February 2, the United States officially suspended its compliance with the INF treaty with Russia, moving to rapidly encircle both Russia and China with nuclear-capable medium-range missiles.

- On May 10, the White House more than doubled tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods.

- On May 15, Trump signed an executive order

barring US telecommunications companies from selling components to Huawei, China’s leading telecommunications company and the world’s second-largest smartphone maker. In response, Xi called on China to begin a “new long march” in a struggle against the United States.

- On June 11, the Department of Defense published, then took offline, an official doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons that all but urged the use of nuclear weapons, declaring that “Using nuclear weapons could create conditions for decisive results and the restoration of strategic stability.”

- On June 20, the Trump administration authorized, then abruptly cancelled, a series of air and missile strikes against Iran.

- The United States has threatened to impose sanctions on European companies that do business with Iran, and against Germany if it goes ahead with plans to purchase natural gas from Russia via the Nord Stream II pipeline.

- Beyond these conflicts, the United States is attempting to overthrow the government of Nicholas Maduro in Venezuela, has threatened to withhold F-35 fighters from Turkey amid a dispute over missile defense systems, and has revoked special trade benefits extended to India amid a dispute ranging from trade to military technology.

In all of the member nations of the G20, the eruption of trade war and protectionism has coincided with an outpouring of nationalism, xenophobia and antirefugee policies.

When Russian President Vladimir Putin declared ahead of the summit that the “liberal idea,” which he identified with multiculturalism and openness toward foreigners, has “become obsolete,” he was roundly condemned by leading Western newspapers and

politicians. But detestable as Putin's remarks were, his statements reflect the dominant political trends in every country.

In Germany, the grand coalition government under "Mutti" Angela Merkel has set up concentration camps for refugees, while fascist bands, operating with the protection of the state, draw up "kill lists" of their political opponents.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron has praised the Nazi collaborator Philippe Pétain, while in the United States, the Democrats last week passed a \$5 billion appropriations package giving Trump a blank check to expand his refugee concentration camps, carry out mass immigration roundups and effectively end the right to asylum.

Trump's "opposition" in the Democratic Party has spent the week leading up to the summit denouncing the fascist-minded resident of the White House for not taking a hard enough line against China.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York declared that Trump "cannot go soft now and accept a bad deal that falls short of reforming China's rapacious economic policies—cyber espionage, forced technology transfers, state-sponsorship, and worst of all, denial of market access."

Commenting on these remarks, the *Wall Street Journal* observed that Trump faces "many Democratic presidential candidates willing to pummel him if he accepts what is seen as a weak deal with China." It added that "at Wednesday night's Democratic primary debate, four of 10 candidates picked China as the greatest threat facing the US."

In the immediate aftermath of Trump's election as president, he was proclaimed by newspaper columnists and foreign policy commentators as an accidental figure or an aberration in an otherwise healthy "liberal world order." But in the subsequent two-and-a-half years, it has become clear that Trump is merely the foremost expression of a general international process: the turn by all factions of the ruling elite, in every country, to trade war, protectionism, military conflict, xenophobia and authoritarianism amid the breakdown of the postwar geopolitical order.

These developments confirm the analysis made by the International Committee that all those who proclaimed in the period before the 2008 financial crisis a new golden age of capitalist cooperation "are placing

heavy bets against the lessons of history."

Instead, every global development since the outbreak of the financial crisis has confirmed the analysis of the great Marxists of the past two hundred years: that capitalism tends inexorably toward social inequality, war and dictatorship.



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