

US war drive against China accelerates

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The presence of two US aircraft carrier strike groups in the South China Sea conducting “high end” war games starting Saturday, involving round-the-clock aircraft launches, is just the most graphic demonstration to date of the Trump administration’s accelerating preparations for war against China. The fact that the two-carrier operations were timed to coincide with Chinese naval exercises in the same strategic waters makes them all the more provocative and dangerous.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically exacerbated the crisis of global capitalism, centered in the United States, and all of its fundamental contradictions, leading to a further rapid rise of geopolitical tensions. Confronting a deep social and economic crisis at home, with growing opposition in the working class to the reckless back-to-work drive, the Trump administration is seeking to divert social tensions outward at an external enemy.

Trump, backed by the Democrats and the media establishment, is seeking to whip up a climate of war fever through a relentless campaign of anti-China propaganda based on lies and disinformation. Without a shred of evidence, top officials routinely blame China for the coronavirus pandemic and the huge American death toll, for which the White House is directly responsible through its criminal negligence and indifference.

The anti-China campaign goes across the board. The US has ramped up its denunciations of Beijing over “human rights” abuses in Hong Kong and against the Muslim Uyghur minority in the Chinese province of Xinjiang.

Punitive US sanctions have already been imposed over these issues. The Trump administration’s rank hypocrisy is underscored by its push for the military and National Guard to be deployed, in breach of the American Constitution, to violently suppress protests against police killings in the US. Once again, as with its

criminal wars in the Middle East, Washington is seeking to exploit “human rights” to pursue economic warfare and a massive military buildup against China.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the root cause of the US war drive. It is rather the accelerant of longstanding processes. The Obama administration announced its “pivot to Asia” in 2011 directed against China, involving an aggressive diplomatic offensive to undermine Chinese influence throughout the Indo-Pacific and the world, to isolate China through the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and to build up and restructure the American military presence throughout the region. Obama recklessly inflamed dangerous regional flashpoints, including the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula.

The Trump administration has intensified the drive to war against China. While he abandoned the TPP, Trump launched a full-scale economic war against China, imposing a raft of punitive tariffs on virtually all Chinese goods, most of which remain in place. He demanded not only greater US exports and investment in China, but the country’s subordination to the US in hi-tech industries. Trump’s economic nationalism and insistence that supply chains, especially those crucial for the military, have to be American-based are nothing less than the economic preparation for war.

On the pretext of protecting American intellectual property and preventing Chinese spying, Washington has targeted the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei. It has pressured allies such as Britain not to use Huawei equipment and threatened sanctions on firms supplying Huawei with key components. While the US makes unsubstantiated allegations of Chinese spying and hacking, its own intelligence agencies like the NSA, as revealed by whistleblower Edward Snowden, spy on the world’s population, including its own citizens, on an industrial scale.

The Trump administration has also targeted Chinese

students and researchers in the US, imposing tough entry restrictions. It is now threatening to deport thousands of students if they are enrolled only in on-line college courses due to COVID-19 measures. The White House is widening its restrictions on Chinese media operating in the US, with another four organisations last month designated as “foreign missions.”

The military preparations for war are also proceeding apace. Obama set the target of 2020 for the redeployment of 60 percent of US warships and warplanes to the Indo-Pacific. Under Trump, the Pentagon announced in 2018 that great power competition, not the “war on terror,” was its top priority, with Russia and China identified as its chief rivals. The focus on China reflects the view in American strategic circles that China’s extraordinary economic expansion represents the chief threat to the continued global dominance of American imperialism.

In preparation for military conflict, the US has been strengthening military alliances and strategic partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific, in particular, the so-called “Quad,” involving Japan, Australia and India.

The reckless character of the US anti-China campaign is nowhere clearer than in its encouragement of India in recent military clashes with China over disputed borders. In this dangerous stand-off between nuclear-armed powers, Trump’s chief of staff, Mark Meadows, sided unequivocally with India in comments on Monday, declaring, “We’re not going to stand by and let China or anyone else take the reins in terms of being the most powerful, dominant force, whether it’s in that region or over here.”

All the preparations for a US war against China, which would rapidly escalate into a catastrophic conflict involving the whole world, are very advanced. Any number of flashpoints, whether in the South China Sea or on the Indian borders with China, could lead to an incident, whether accidental or deliberate, that would provide a casus belli for a US president under siege at home.

The only social force capable of halting the precipitous plunge towards world war is the international working class. In 2016, the International Committee of the Fourth International issued a statement titled, “Socialism and the Fight against War,”

calling for the building of a unified antiwar movement of workers and youth around the globe. The dangers identified in that statement have only become more acute in the past four years and thus the urgency of constructing such a movement.

The statement outlined the fundamental principles that must form the political basis for uniting the working class against war:

- * The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.

- * The new antiwar movement must be anticapitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and put an end to the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

- * The new antiwar movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.

- * The new antiwar movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

That is the task to which workers and young people today should turn to ensure the future of humanity.



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