China-Russia summit forges quasi-alliance against Washington

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Amid the acute danger of a US war against Russia over Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chinese President Xi Jinping last Friday, coinciding with the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing. While Russia and China are not formal military allies, the summit affirmed what is in essence a quasi-alliance in the face of Washington's escalating threats against the two countries.

The Biden administration has dramatically ramped up the danger of conflict with Russia with an extraordinary campaign of lies and disinformation, touting an imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has flatly rejected guaranteeing that Ukraine will not become a NATO member—a move that would put NATO forces on the Russian border. Instead, it has provided war materiel to Ukraine and dispatched US troops to Eastern Europe.

At the same time, Biden, following on from Trump, has heightened the aggressive US confrontation with China, which can be traced to the "pivot to Asia" initiated by the Obama administration in which Biden served as vice-president. Indeed, US propaganda that Russia is about to invade Ukraine is paralleled by the fiction that China could take advantage of conflict in Europe to invade Taiwan.

The transparent objective of US imperialism is the subordination and fracturing of both China and Russia in its bid to maintain global domination. In its reckless pursuit of this goal, fuelled by mounting social, economic and political crises at home, the Biden administration has driven together what it regards as its two main rivals, ensuring any war that breaks out will rapidly become global.

In their lengthy joint statement, Xi and Putin repeatedly condemned the US and its allies, while not always naming them. Some actors, they declared, "advocate unilateral approaches to addressing international issues and resort to force; they interfere in the internal affairs of other states, infringing their legitimate rights and interests, and incite contradictions, differences and confrontation."

In an unusually blunt declaration of mutual support, the statement committed Russia and China to "stand against attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in their common adjacent regions," "counter interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of sovereign countries under any pretext," "oppose colour revolutions" and "increase cooperation in the aforementioned areas."

The statement, despite its diplomatic language, represents a clear challenge to the United States and was centrally focussed on security concerns. Xi and Putin dispensed with vague appeals for international collaboration, world peace and the need for a multipolar world as opposed to a unipolar world—that is, one dominated by the US. They listed grave concerns "about serious international security challenges."

* Russia reaffirmed "its support for the One China principle, confirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and opposes any forms of independence of Taiwan." Over the past year, Biden, following Trump, has deliberately undermined the One China policy, which recognises Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan, by strengthening ties with Taipei and placing US troops on the island. The policy was the basis for US-China diplomatic relations established in 1979.

* In a repudiation of US actions over Ukraine, China supported Russia in opposing "the further enlargement of NATO" and "calls on the North Atlantic Alliance to abandon its ideologised Cold War approaches, [and] to

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respect the sovereignty, security and interests of other countries." In the 2014 crisis that followed the right-wing US-backed coup in Ukraine, China maintained a far more equivocal stance and did not strongly support Russia.

* The two countries took a stand against "the formation of closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the Asia-Pacific region and remain highly vigilant about the negative impact of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy on peace and stability in the region." The statement explicitly named Australia, the United Kingdom and the US in expressing "serious concern" about the formation of their AUKUS security partnership in September and "in particular their decision to initiate cooperation in the field of nuclear-powered submarines." It warned of "the danger of an arms race in the region" and "serious risks of nuclear proliferation."

* China and Russia expressed fears about the mounting danger of nuclear war, calling for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons deployed abroad and the elimination of global anti-ballistic missile systems. The US alone has such deployments. The statement opposed the US withdrawal from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and called on Washington "to abandon its plans to deploy intermediate-range and shorter-range ground-based missiles in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe."

The statement condemned that manner in which the US hypocritically exploits "human rights" to further its strategic objectives, including the fomenting of separatist tendencies within Russia and China with the aim of fragmenting the two countries. Putin and Xi emphasised closer economic collaboration, including the signing of a new energy deal and the boosting of annual bilateral trade to $250 billion.

The summit clearly sent a shudder through the military and political establishments in the US and its allies. An immediate concern in Washington is the potential for China to undermine US efforts to impose another round of punitive economic measures on Russia in the event of conflict. On the day before the Xi-Putin summit, US State Department spokesman Ned Price declared that the US and its allies "have an array of tools" that can be used against "foreign companies, including those in China" that try to evade US sanctions.

The fears, however, run deeper. A central preoccupation of US policy has been to prevent the domination of the strategic Eurasian landmass by hostile powers. President Nixon, together with his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, engineered a rapprochement with China that culminated in Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972. That established an alliance with US imperialism to undermine the Soviet Union in which Mao Zedong's regime sided with reactionary pro-US regimes, such as that of Iran's Shah and General Pinochet in Chile.

Over the past decade, however, one US administration after another has torn up the deal with China. US threats, provocations, military build-up and strengthening of alliances have intensified, both in Europe and the Asia Pacific. The ongoing debate in American strategic circles over whether to tackle Russia or China first, and how to manipulate disputes between the two powers, has in effect been resolved by the two targets coming together.

The recklessness of Washington's foreign policy is a measure of the depth of the economic and social crisis at home, which has been greatly worsened by its criminal "let it rip" pandemic measures. Far from causing US imperialism to pause in its build-up to war, Washington will only redouble its efforts, spurred on by the fear that in its historic decline time is running out.

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