Chinese and Russian presidents meet as US targets both countries

Peter Symonds
23 March 2023

Chinese President Xi Jinping has just concluded his high-profile two-day trip to Moscow and meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin at which the two leaders declared their cooperation had "reached the highest level in history" and, in opposition to the United States, declared their determination to "safeguard the international system" based on the United Nations.

Their joint statement not only outlined agreements reached to strengthen bilateral economic and strategic ties but amounted to a diplomatic counteroffensive against Washington's belligerent propaganda as it recklessly escalates the conflict against Russia in Ukraine and accelerates its preparations for war with China.

The two leaders hit out at Washington, urging "the United States to stop undermining international and regional security and global strategic stability in order to maintain its own unilateral military superiority."

The US media paints Xi and Putin as a threat to the "international rules-based order"—that is, the post-World War II order in which Washington set the rules. But China and Russia have been driven together, despite longstanding disputes and disagreements, by necessity out of weakness, not great strength, to push back against US aggression and provocations that threaten to engulf the world in a global war between nuclear-armed powers.

There was absolutely nothing progressive about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. But the chief responsibility for the devastating war rests with Washington, which pushed NATO towards Russia's borders and poured billions into the Ukrainian military to destabilise and ultimately subordinate Russia. The US and its allies have imposed crippling sanctions on Moscow and effectively excluded it from global finance.

With staggering hypocrisy, the US has pushed for the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for Putin for alleged war crimes—a move that would be far more appropriate for a string of US presidents, including Biden.

Washington, however, regards the war against Russia as the prelude to a conflict with China, which it regards as the chief threat to its global dominance. In a replay of the lead-up to the Ukraine war, the Biden administration is seeking to goad Beijing into attacking Taiwan as the pretext for war with China.

The US is engaged in an accelerating arms build-up throughout the region, including provocatively in Taiwan, and the strengthening of its military alliances in Asia, including with NATO members such as Britain, France and Germany. At the same time, the Biden administration has maintained the massive tariffs on China imposed under Trump and is seeking to cripple Chinese hi-tech industries by banning the sale of advanced semiconductors and related equipment.

The Xi-Putin summit in Moscow marks the end of American geopolitical strategy pioneered more than 50 years ago by US president Richard Nixon and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger who engineered a rapprochement with China and de facto alliance against the Soviet Union. The deal was sealed by Nixon's visit to Beijing and meeting with Mao Zedong in February 1972.

Mao's pact set into motion the process of the restoration of the market in China amid the rise of economic globalization in subsequent decades. The effect of these global processes on the Soviet Union and the crisis of the nationalist dogma of socialism in one country also produced the crisis that led to the dissolution of the USSR.

The US strategy set in train processes that ultimately led to the dissolution in 1991 of the Soviet Union, the establishment of Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics as separate nation-states and a massive economic and social regression. Mao's pact with US imperialism also opened the door for the processes of capitalist restoration, spurred as in Russia by the

© World Socialist Web Site

globalization of production.

More than 30 years after the end of the Soviet Union, US imperialism, facing a continuing historic decline and an immense economic and social crisis at home, has swung geopolitical policy into reverse over the past decade. Russia and China, now two capitalist powers, have retained a degree of independence from the US-dominated world order that is intolerable to Washington. That is particularly the case with China, whose economy ballooned as a result of the massive influx of investment and technology by American and international corporations eager to make super-profits from cheap Chinese labour.

Significantly, it is Xi who is projecting China on the world stage as the peacemaker in opposition to the US. A key aspect of the discussion between the two leaders was Beijing's proposals announced last month for negotiations between Ukraine and Russia for a ceasefire and an end to a war that is devastating both countries.

On Tuesday, following talks with Xi, Putin embraced the Chinese peace plan, declaring it could "be taken as the basis for a peaceful settlement in Ukraine, when the West and Kyiv are ready for it." In a barely disguised criticism of NATO's encroachment in Eastern Europe, the joint statement opposed "any country or group of countries harming the legitimate security interests of other countries in pursuit of military, political and other advantages."

Not surprisingly, the US slammed the Chinese peace plan as it cuts across Washington's aims to use the war to bring Moscow to its knees. Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced any call for a ceasefire "that does not include the removal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory," claiming it would effectively be "the ratification of Russian conquest" and "allow President Putin to rest and refit his troops."

Blinken also latched onto Putin's arrest warrant conveniently issued just days before Xi's visit to criticise China for failing "to hold the Kremlin accountable for the atrocities committed in Ukraine, and instead of even condemning them, it would rather provide diplomatic cover for Russia to continue to commit those very crimes."

Despite the US stance which Kiev publicly echoes, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was open to "dialogue" with China about its proposals. Prior to Xi's arrival in Moscow, a possible online video call was mooted between the Chinese and Ukrainian presidents. Citing a senior Ukrainian official, CNN reported on Tuesday that discussions were underway between the two countries to facilitate such a call but nothing had been scheduled.

The joint statement between Xi and Putin highlighted an extensive list of geopolitical issues on which the two agreed, and areas of economic cooperation to be facilitated.

The leaders expressed their "serious concern" about the AUKUS pact between the US, United Kingdom and Australia and the timeline just announced for the provision of nuclear-powered attack submarines to the Australian navy that are clearly targeted against China. They also express the same serious concern over "NATO's continued strengthening of military security ties with Asia-Pacific countries, which undermines regional peace and stability."

Putin and Xi also announced a further boost to China's purchase of Russian energy and the building of a second major gas pipeline—the Power of Siberia-2—across Mongolia to China. Russia in return is helping to build several new nuclear power reactors in China. The joint statement listed other major joint projects "in civil aircraft and helicopter production, nonferrous metallurgy, space exploration, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, as well as other science-intensive areas.

Under intense pressure from the US and its closest allies, Russia and China are being driven together—economically, politically and militarily. The latest Xi-Putin summit is another sign that what is rapidly emerging are opposing blocs in a world war driven by US imperialism but for which neither the Chinese or Russian regimes have any progressive solution.

The sole social force capable of halting the headlong plunge towards a nuclear holocaust is the international working class through the building of a unified anti-war movement on a socialist perspective to put an end to the profit system and its division of the world into rival nation states that is the root cause of war.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site