

US-China summit brings no respite in global war

Andre Damon
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US President Donald Trump returned to Washington Friday from a two-day state visit to China—the first by an American president in nearly a decade—that offered no let-up in the global eruption of American imperialism. The trip produced no easing of the US blockade of Iran, no halt to the US arming of Taiwan, no reduction of Trump’s anti-China tariffs and no communique.

The meeting took place in the shadow of the US attack on Iran that had been launched less than three months earlier. Despite the brutality of the US onslaught, the Trump administration had failed to achieve its aims of overthrowing the Iranian government, destroying its military and gaining control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump hoped to have arrived in Beijing as the conqueror of Iran, ready to dictate terms to China with a stranglehold on its energy supplies. Instead, he was facing a geopolitical disaster, and he sought Xi’s aid in resolving the crisis created by the war.

Xi sought to use the crisis created by Trump’s disastrous war on Iran to strengthen China’s bargaining position. He put on a disgusting display of subservience to Trump, who was greeted by a stage-managed crowd of people waving American and Chinese flags as he disembarked Air Force One. At the state banquet, Xi toasted that “achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making America great again can go hand in hand,” and told Trump the two should be “partners, not rivals.”

This red carpet treatment was being given to a murderer and criminal, who assassinates and kidnaps the leaders of sovereign states, who routinely threatens to exterminate entire societies and drops hints at using nuclear weapons against civilian populations.

But for all this display, the summit achieved no public breakthrough, and any private promises Trump made Xi in order to secure his cooperation to resolve the Iran crisis are completely worthless.

The Trump regime confronts a deepening political, social and economic crisis. Trump’s approval rating has fallen to 34 percent, the lowest of his presidency. The US national

debt has reached 100 percent of gross domestic product, one year after the latest of three separate debt downgrades by the major rating agencies. Mounting doubts about the dollar’s status as the world’s reserve currency hung over the trip.

Against this backdrop, the summit made clear that the US effort to economically strangle China — begun in earnest under the first Trump administration — has failed. In October 2018, Vice President Mike Pence declared the intent of the United States to seize “the commanding heights of the twenty-first century economy.” The campaign of economic warfare that followed, waged through tariffs and export controls, was continued through the Biden administration and into the second Trump administration. This effort has not destroyed China’s technology sector, which has made major advances in robotics, autonomy and artificial intelligence.

Despite these advances, or rather because of them, China confronts a US-led imperialist world order determined to strangle and subjugate it through economic and military warfare. The US rampage in Latin America and the Persian Gulf, alongside its efforts to acquire Greenland and the Panama Canal, are part of a drive to seize the world’s strategic choke points in preparation for direct military conflict with China.

In the face of this offensive, aimed at reducing China, alongside the entire former colonial world, to subjugation, Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping spent the summit making entreaties toward peaceful cooperation between the United States and China.

Xi opened the summit by asking whether the two countries could “transcend the so-called Thucydides Trap and forge a new model for relations between major powers.” He added that “the common interests between China and the United States outweigh our differences.”

The Trump administration, by contrast, sees any potential thaw in relations with Beijing as an occasion to accelerate US rearmament and better position the country for war.

These calculations were expressed by Wes Mitchell, Assistant Secretary of State in the first Trump administration

and a close ally of leading strategists in the current one. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Mitchell described the administration as seeking “to buy time and get the pieces in place... for a stronger future position.” In such a scenario, the US “would have a deeper arsenal of weapons, backed by a reanimated American industry that is less reliant on its main rival to develop lifesaving medicines, power the U.S. economy, or acquire the materials to wage war.”

There can be no peaceful coexistence between American imperialism and China. American capitalism, crisis-ridden and indebted, cannot tolerate China’s continued economic growth. To accept China’s economic ascent would mean the collapse of the dollar-denominated world order on which the entire system of US power rests.

Ultimately, the US drive to subjugate China arises from the structure of the capitalist world order itself — the irresolvable contradiction between a globally integrated economy and a system of competing nation-states, each defending the interests of its own ruling class.

The Chinese state is not a workers’ state, a socialist state, or even a “socialist market economy.” It is headed by a regime that subordinates everything to a capitalist oligarchy, the product of the decades-long process of capitalist restoration that began with Deng Xiaoping’s “reform and opening up” in the late 1970s — a process the ICFI analyzed at each step as a betrayal rooted in the Maoist variety of Stalinist nationalism. That restoration created an enormous working class of hundreds of millions, integrated China into the circuits of world capital, and produced a stratum of billionaires tied to global markets, international supply chains, and the dollar-denominated financial system that Washington wields as a weapon.

The peaceful coexistence Xi proposed is a fantasy. Despite the enormous economic ties binding the Chinese and American economies, the dominant tendency is military escalation. As David North outlined in his address to the 2023 May Day rally:

There is much talk today about the coming of a “multi-polar” world, which will supposedly supersede the “unipolar” hegemony of American imperialism. The rule of Washington will be replaced, according to the academic and pseudoleft theorists of “multi-polarity,” by a consortia of capitalist states, which will collectively and harmoniously preside over a more peaceful division of global resources.

This new version of a peaceful “ultra-imperialism” is no more theoretically coherent and politically viable than it was a century ago, when it was first

proposed by the German reformist Karl Kautsky and comprehensively refuted by Lenin. The peaceful distribution and allocation of global resources among capitalist and imperialist states is impossible. The contradictions between the global economy and capitalist nation-state system lead to war.

In any event, the realization of a “multi-polar” world, setting aside its incorrect theoretical foundations, requires its peaceful acceptance by today’s dominant imperialist power, the United States. This is not a realistic prospect. The United States will oppose with all the means at its disposal efforts to block its drive for “unipolar” hegemony. Thus, the utopian striving to replace a “unipolar” with a “multi-polar” world leads, by its own twisted logic, to World War III and the destruction of the planet.

The working class must formulate its own response to the global eruption of US imperialism. Trump has already made clear that the global war being launched by US imperialism will be a war on the working class at home. At a White House Easter luncheon on April 1, he declared: “It’s not possible for us to take care of daycare, Medicaid, Medicare, all these individual things. We have to take care of one thing: military protection.” “We’re fighting wars,” he said.

The American worker gains nothing from a tariff war fought to preserve the profits of the corporations that destroyed his industry. Chinese workers must understand that there is no national solution to the crisis: however significant China’s technological progress, the country cannot secure its development through appeals to the better angels of the imperialist powers that are moving to crush it.

World war can be stopped only by the international working class, organized independently of all factions of the capitalist class and fighting on the program of socialist internationalism. That program is fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Parties and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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