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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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15.04.2022

Pentagon mania 1992: Bush disowns but won't denounce plan for world domination



The following article by then chairperson of Workers World Party was first published in Workers World on March 19, 1992. Despite the 30 years that have passed, it is relevant to

the current expansion of NATO and its use to impose U.S. hegemony on Europe and threaten Russia.

On March 8, 1992, the New York Times published excerpts from a 46-page secret Pentagon draft document that it said was leaked by Pentagon officials. This document is truly extraordinary.

It asserts complete U.S. world domination in both political and military terms and threatens any other countries that even “aspire” to a greater role. In other words, the U.S. is to be the sole and exclusive superpower on the face of the planet. It is to exercise its power not only in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, but also on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

The position laid out in this document is so extreme that it must have terrified the governments under U.S. pressure. Telephone calls must have poured into Washington from around the world after its disclosure.

Yet it took several days for the White House to finally comment on it. And even then, the language used only disowned or dismissed the document but did not denounce it.

No official comment

First the Times published a second article dated March 10 citing “senior U.S. officials” as critical of the document. However, they are not identified. Pete Williams, a Pentagon spokesperson, disavowed some parts of the document, but no “senior officials” with the stature of the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of State, CIA Director or the President would comment on it.

At a news conference the next day, however, President George H.W. Bush responded to a question about the document by claiming he hadn’t seen it and hadn’t read the press accounts about it. Instead of attacking the very idea of such a plan, he emphasized that “we are the leaders, and we must continue to lead.”

A Pentagon official tried to pass off the document as “couched in language that is a little like the bluster of the officers’ club.” But this document doesn’t come from the officers. Rather, it was written by civilians in the Pentagon.

This document surpasses in importance the Pentagon Papers, which the New York Times, followed by the Washington Post and other papers, published in 1971. At that time a considerable section of the ruling class, under the pressure of the massive antiwar movement in the United States and the unrelenting determination of the Vietnamese people to free themselves from colonial tutelage, had become convinced of the hopelessness of the U.S. imperialist adventure in Southeast Asia.

It should be noted that at the time the USSR was a formidable military power, a superpower if you will, and was giving political and military support to the Vietnamese war effort, as was the People’s Republic of China. The case is otherwise today.

The ruling class this time is solidly for maintaining, strengthening and invigorating the U.S. military position worldwide, in order to regain its economic superiority against its imperialist rivals, principally Japan and Germany.

It is one thing for the Pentagon to assert in a document that it plans to exercise domination over the entire globe. It is another matter altogether to brazenly announce this to the public in such terms as to threaten not only its alleged foes but its allies as well.

Considering the worldwide repercussions that the publication of such a document would have, one would have expected an outburst of open protest — from abroad but most particularly from here at home. What is really astonishing about the publication of this document is how little public response there has been to it, although there certainly must have been private ones.

Not suppressed like Pentagon Papers

There’s no question that this leak to the Times for publication had the blessing, to one degree or another, of the Pentagon and the Bush

administration. Otherwise the White House would have quickly set in motion the kind of attack mounted by the Nixon administration against the publication of the Pentagon Papers. It ordered the Justice Department to obtain an immediate restraining order after the first installments of the Pentagon Papers began to appear in the New York Times. But the Supreme Court upheld the press at the time and overruled the Nixon administration

Isn't it obvious that the disclosure of this Pentagon plan for world domination, coming almost at the climax of the presidential primaries, could have become a principal issue for public debate? However, as of this writing, it has been virtually ignored. Perhaps it will be picked up later, but right now the momentous issues raised by this document seem headed for the dead-letter department, if the capitalist media and politicians have their way.

And even where the capitalist newspapers did subject it to some criticism, as have the Boston Globe, the Times itself and a few other newspapers, this has been directed not at the substance of the document, which concerns the domination of the world by U.S. military might, but at the way in which it was so brazenly and publicly expressed.

'Prevent re-emergence of a new rival'

Precisely what does this draft document, called in Pentagonese the "Defense Planning Guidance," have as its aim?

"Our first objective," it states, "is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union."

This is aimed not only against a new revolutionary government or a new socialist revolution in the world. It is aimed at any potential new capitalist rival to the U.S. In fact, one wonders whether this document is not really intended to let the imperialist competitors know that they should not even dare to aspire to a greater role, let alone attempt to surpass the U.S.

The document says that to achieve this objective: "First, the U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing

potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests.”

There is no question that this is a message to the imperialist rivals — Japan, Germany, France, perhaps even Britain. The language is so rude as to be unprecedented in a public document.

Next, says the document: “we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. Finally, we must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

This is meant for Japan, China and India in Asia, certainly for Germany and other imperialist countries in Europe, and for countries like Brazil and Argentina or a new revolutionary government in Latin America.

Later on, the document speaks specifically of Europe: “[I]t is of fundamental importance to preserve NATO as the primary instrument of Western defense and security, as well as the channel for U.S. influence and participation in European security affairs.”

But then it adds: “While the United States supports the goal of European integration, we must seek to prevent the emergence of European-only security arrangements, which would undermine NATO, particularly the alliance’s integrated command structure.” The latter, of course, is led by the U.S.

So, while on the one hand it seems to support NATO, it only does so as a channel for “U.S. influence,” as it says so crudely.

Elsewhere in the document, it says that what is most important is “the sense that the world order is ultimately backed by the U.S.,” and “the United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated.”

This indicates frustration by the Pentagon. Its allies appear to be quite openly disappointed with the results of the war against Iraq and the benefits accruing to each of them. It indicates the U.S. reneged on the promises it made when rounding up their support.

Of singular significance is the scorn and contempt this document demonstrates for the United Nations. It says it is for NATO and the U.N., as long as they will follow U.S. military orders. If not, it will act without them.

How will Japan and Germany react?

How the Japanese and German imperialist governments react to this remains to be seen. The document cannot be very comforting, coming at a time when Japan has now followed the U.S. into a deep economic crisis. Britain is also in economic turmoil, while Germany has begun closing down shipyards in what was originally the [formerly socialist] GDR, a measure it would rather have avoided, had not the signs of economic recession already begun to appear.

It should be plain that the publication of this document is not likely to soften the sharp economic rivalry between U.S. finance capital and its imperialist allies. On the contrary, this will sharpen it.

The document is not directed solely at the imperialist rivals.

“Defense of Korea will likely remain one of the most demanding major regional contingencies. . . . Asia is home to the world’s greatest concentration of traditional Communist states, with fundamental values, governance and policies decidedly at variance with our own and those of our friends and allies. . . .

“Cuba’s growing domestic crisis holds out the prospect for positive change; but over the near term, Cuba’s tenuous internal situation is likely to generate new challenges to U.S. policy. Consequently, our programs must provide capabilities to meet a variety of Cuban contingencies, which could include an attempted repetition of the Mariel boatlift, a military provocation against the U.S. or an American ally, or political instability and internal conflict in Cuba.”

Translated, this means that the Pentagon is already planning new attacks on Cuba and the DPRK. This should be of fundamental importance for us in the anti-imperialist movement

and signal the need to plan for major activities to counteract this danger, not only to Cuba and the DPRK, but to the oppressed people all over the world.

New world order

The Pentagon document is one more example that, notwithstanding all the talk of a “new world order” and a cooperative world commonwealth of freedom and peace, etc., etc., these phrases are only calculated to deceive world public opinion, and in particular the broad working class and the oppressed masses.

In the criticisms that have appeared thus far, only Patrick Buchanan — Bush’s ultraright opponent in the primaries — has dug up the old isolationist rhetoric expounded by Sen. William E. Borah (R-Idaho) in the 1920s and Sen. Robert Taft (R-Ohio) in the 1950s.

According to Buchanan, “This is a formula for endless American intervention in quarrels and war where no vital interest of the United States is remotely engaged. It’s virtually a blank check given to all of America’s friends and allies that we’ll go to war to defend their interests.” (New York Times, March 10, 1992)

Such is the criticism of the extreme right wing of the ruling class. It’s a fraud from beginning to end. The inference from all this is that the U.S. is intervening to help foreign powers at the expense of American taxpayers and that the U.S. ruling class has no vital interests abroad. Of course it’s a lie.

The tremendous weight of the U.S. transnational corporations, especially the giant banks like Citicorp, Chemical, Manufacturers Trust and BankAmerica, is spread all over the world. It is to defend these interests that the Pentagon has conceived this monstrous picture of a world they totally dominate.

Yes, the document says the U.S. military machine will defend its European military allies. It will defend them against the oppressed countries in which they operate and garner vast profits, should there be an insurrectionary movement against their overlordship.

The U.S. military machine will also defend its allies against the working classes of their own countries. But it will in no way defend the imperialist rivals against the interests of U.S. finance capital. And it would certainly never extend any lavish aid to them without a quid pro quo.

The right-wing demagoguery of the Buchanans and others actually aids Bush in this way: It inevitably creates fear in large masses of people of the specter of fascism, of a right-wing political assault upon the progressive movement, which can push them toward Bush and his cohorts.

In the current situation as it is unfolding, however, the conservative constituency in the Republican party is really narrow by comparison to the broad mass of the workers and oppressed masses. Together the latter constitute an overwhelming progressive force, vastly superior to the ultraright and its fascist tail in the form of David Duke, whose followers are scurrying to the Buchanan camp.

The workers will not be easily fooled to go over to the Bush camp solely as a reaction to the fear raised by Buchanan's racist, reactionary, anti-lesbian/gay and anti-Semitic propaganda.

Candidates Paul Tsongas and Bill Clinton were also interviewed by the Times about the Pentagon document. They took the standard Democratic Party approach that the U.S. should not engage in these military hostilities without first attempting to get the U.N. to support it. They also questioned the magnitude of the expenditures but not the overall purpose.

Document written by civilian sector

This document is the product of the civilian leadership in the Pentagon and not the military camarilla, as one might assume. It is, according to the New York Times, written by Paul D. Wolfowitz, who is described as the Pentagon's Under Secretary for Policy. Wolfowitz also represents the Pentagon on the Deputies Committee (deputies to the secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury, etc.) which formulates policy in an interagency process dominated by the State and Defense departments.

It is impossible to properly decipher exactly what is meant by this. Suffice it to say that they are civilians and not the military staff.

These civilians are mostly the representatives of the military-industrial technological complex — the military contractors and the banks that support them.

It is often assumed in literature written by bourgeois liberal critics that the military is autonomous, more often dictating policy to the industrialists and the government than the other way around.

Of course, there have been times when the military did assume an independent role or tried to in times of great international crises, as General Douglas MacArthur did during the Korean War. He was fired by President Harry Truman for advocating the invasion of China.

The reaction to this Pentagon document is more reminiscent, however, of President Jimmy Carter's dismissal of Gen. John Singlaub after he criticized plans to withdraw U.S. troops from Korea, or of Bush's retirement of Air Force Gen. Paul Dugan last year after he disclosed the plans to bomb Iraq. In both cases, the reprimand was because these officers acted out of turn, making public what the capitalist government wanted kept secret. But the policy pursued thereafter was exactly in step with what these top brass had advocated.

Overall, the military is an instrument of class rule. Nowhere is that better demonstrated than in this document written by the civilians in the Pentagon — copies of which were sent to the military chiefs and to the White House.

It is clear from this document that it is the industrial half of the military-industrial complex that is speaking here. It is they who are most in need of expanding the military establishment and continuing to build weapons of mass destruction in the face of a looming economic debacle. But this doesn't mean that the military is indifferent or opposed to it. Far from it.

However, to build more nuclear weapons at this time, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is superfluous. The nuclear weapons program has cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Now that the military struggle with the USSR is over, the entire military-industrial technological apparatus faces a diminished exchange value or market value. It shrinks

particularly in relation to the industrial-technological apparatus of the Japanese and Germans, most of all because they have no military baggage.

This will be reflected in the daily currency wars between these capitalist countries. The exchange value of military items, in terms of world currencies, has sunk sharply. But their capitalist production continues to mount.

Criticism skirts issue

Such criticism of this document as has appeared to date doesn't go to the essence of the matter. It is narrow, very mild and would scarcely raise an eyebrow in the military-industrial complex.

Leslie Gelb, in his column in the New York Times (March 9, 1992), pretends to criticize the Pentagon plan but in fact goes along with the whole program. The only fault Gelb finds is that the document makes no mention of Israel! He is appalled by this without really analyzing why Israel does not appear under the umbrella of U.S. protection.

The U.S. genocidal war against Iraq demonstrated one thing; with the absence of the USSR as a protagonist against U.S. imperialism (the Gorbachev regime collaborated with the U.S.), the Pentagon did not need Israel very much. Israel has really served as a supergiant military base for U.S. military operations.

However, when the Pentagon assembled a vast armada in the Mediterranean and the Gulf area, it made Israeli military support superfluous.

Furthermore, the U.S. also demonstrated its military prowess when it airlifted in tens of thousands of soldiers and their military gear, allowed them to directly attack Iraq.

The new Pentagon strategy, which reflects the new position of the U.S. since the collapse of the USSR, diminishes the significance of Israel. This is especially true in light of the fact that the U.S. cowed and subjugated countries in the Middle East, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia and even Syria, Iran and others. The Israelis can now play a role only in minor skirmishes that the U.S. encourages.

The fact that the U.S. told Israel it would not guarantee a \$10 billion loan (a piddling sum when you consider the many billions used to build up the Israeli military machine), so that now Israel is on the verge of withdrawing its request for the loan, reveals an altogether different situation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, it does not at this particular historical conjuncture necessarily help the Palestinians in their struggle. But that will come as surely as the rising sun.

Monstrous growth of Pentagon

Before World War II, the U.S. War Office occupied a modest building in the heart of Washington, D.C. It soon felt compelled to change its name from War Office to Defense Department — an attempt to take into account the antiwar sentiment of the masses, while at the same time retaining the essence of its function.

It then went on to build the largest office building in the world — the Pentagon — where it resides to this date. While utilizing pacifist phrases, it was at the same time preparing for war. What need was there to go from a modest structure in downtown D.C. to a metropolis packed into one building?

It was necessary because of the vast increase in the military-industrial technological complex. War has become a function of the capitalist state on such an enormous scale that it virtually threatens to swallow up all of society.

How is it possible that in the midst of what is admittedly the worst capitalist crisis since the early 1930s, with almost 10 million people unemployed, the Pentagon planners betray such utter disregard for the needs of the masses of people, let alone their aspirations for a better life?

One tends to ponder this when one reads that the Pentagon is demanding \$1.2 trillion over five years to promote the program outlined in this infamous document.

That's \$1,200,000,000,000. [more than \$2.4 trillion in 2022]

For the ordinary worker a million is a lot. A billion is phenomenal.

A trillion — which is a thousand billion — is out of sight!

Compare this to the paltry demands made by authentic popular organizations, which are resisted down to the last penny.

It is impossible for this to go on for any length of time. Sooner or later there will be a reckoning. What the military leaders, the industrialists, the bankers, the politicians propose, the masses will ultimately dispose.

It's still premature to speculate whether the publication of this document represents a split in the ruling class, regarding the economic prospects of the military-industrial complex. Its economic and political weight has been so great up until now that it may be in for a readjustment at a time when it is demanding greater, not less, financial support. It is inevitable that some fissures will arise in the course of the struggle.

The working-class movement must have an independent position in this and not be beguiled by fraudulent promises of a peaceful conversion of the capitalist economy, as happened right after the Vietnam War.

Workers World 13.04.2022