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## US think tank outlines master plan for war with China

Peter Symonds

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A new Center for International and Strategic Studies (CSIS) report released last week is a chilling warning of the accelerating preparations of the United States for war with China—a conflict that would likely plunge the world into a nuclear catastrophe.

The report, which was commissioned by the US Defence Department, represents above all the voice of the vast American military establishment, which regards China as the chief threat to untrammelled US strategic dominance in Asia. The document calls for a huge military expansion in the Asia Pacific not only by the United States, but also by all of its allies and strategic partners in the region. The report makes clear that every country in the region, large and small, is to be drawn into the maelstrom.

The CSIS published a similar study in 2012 laying out the military buildup associated with the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia," including the positioning of 60 percent of the Pentagon's air and naval assets in the region by 2020. Since then, the US has proceeded to restructure its military bases in Japan and South Korea, expand facilities on Guam, establish new basing arrangements in Australia and the Philippines, and strengthen ties with virtually every country in Asia.

The military preparations have gone hand-in-hand with a relentless diplomatic offensive to justify the stationing of more than half of US military might on China's doorstep. In the process, Washington has recklessly inflamed flashpoints throughout the region, focusing in particular on maritime disputes between Beijing and its neighbors. In his latest foray into Asia, US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday prevailed on the prime minister of Laos, currently chair of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), to ensure a unified response to so-called Chinese "expansionism" in the South China Sea.

Despite the US military, diplomatic and political offensive, the CSIS report warns that China has increased its "tolerance for risk." In other words, Beijing has failed to buckle to US demands.

The CSIS cites China's expansion of "anti-access" weaponry to counter an annihilating American attack on the Chinese mainland as the pretext for escalating Washington's own military preparations. The think tank emphatically rules out any US retreat from the Western Pacific, criticises the Obama administration's defence spending cuts, and proposes trillions of dollars in new outlays to expand the American military presence in Asia and develop new weapons systems. "At the current rate of US capability development," it warns, "the balance of military power in the region is shifting against the United States."

The claim that the US will be outgunned by China without further massive military spending is not only absurd, but expresses the insane logic of American militarism. The US defence budget already dwarfs that of any of its potential rivals, including China.

American military spending last year was greater than the combined total of the next seven largest powers. The Pentagon has by far the largest and most sophisticated fleet of aircraft carriers; its latest generation fighters and bombers are "forward deployed" in bases ringing the Chinese mainland; its nuclear arsenal could obliterate China's military and industrial capacity many times over. Yet, the Chinese "threat" is the pretext for demands for greater military spending.

Driven by the worsening crisis of global capitalism, Washington's objective is nothing less than world domination—an impossible task that can end only in disaster. In the flush of capitalist triumphalism following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance elaborated a new overall strategy that required that "we endeavour to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power."

As the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) explained at the time, the final betrayal of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy did not represent the failure of socialism or the triumph of the market, but foreshadowed the breakdown of the world capitalist order. The response of US imperialism to its historic decline has been, at every stage, to exploit its residual military might, resulting in an unending series of wars in a desperate and reckless drive to establish global hegemony.

Obama initiated the "pivot to Asia" from mid-2009 in response to the eruption of the 2008 global financial crisis and mounting criticism in American ruling circles that the Bush administration

had failed to counter the consequences of China's economic rise and instead mired the American military in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the world economic slump worsens, the US is engaged not only in an accelerating arms race in Asia, but a new war in the Middle East and a military build-up in Eastern Europe against Russia.

The US war drive is not simply the product of deranged individuals, but of the fundamental contradictions of the moribund capitalist order—between world economy and the outmoded nation state system on the one hand, and socialised production and the private ownership of the means of production on the other. The US, like its imperialist rivals, seeks to overcome these contradictions by expanding its control of global resources, markets and labour power.

World politics in 2016 bears an eerie resemblance to the periods that led to the eruption of the first two world wars. In “War and the Fourth International,” written in 1934, Leon Trotsky warned five years before the second global conflagration: “All governments fear war. But none of the governments has any freedom of choice. Without a proletarian revolution, a new world war is inevitable.”

In a remarkable insight that is even truer today, Trotsky wrote: “US capitalism is up against the same problem that pushed Germany in 1914 on the path to war. The world is divided? It must be redivided. For Germany it was a question of ‘organising Europe.’ The United States must ‘organise’ the world. History is bringing humanity face to face with the volcanic eruption of American imperialism.”

The relentless drive to war is inextricably bound up with the same processes that are propelling the working class into struggle against the profit system. The trillions of dollars to be squandered on armaments by the US and its allies in preparation for war with China will be paid for through the destruction of social services, the gutting of essential infrastructure, and the further impoverishment of working people.

The response to Washington's mounting threats on the part of the Chinese Communist Party leadership, which represents the interests of a tiny super-wealthy layer that has enriched itself through capitalist restoration, is to engage in a futile arms race and whip up reactionary nationalist sentiment, which only divides Chinese workers from their counterparts in Asia, the United States and around the world.

The threat of global war can be answered only by rejecting all forms of nationalism and chauvinism and building a conscious and unified anti-war movement of the international working class to put an end to capitalism and fashion a world socialist economy. That is the revolutionary perspective for which the International Committee of the Fourth International fights.