

US “Grand Strategy” for War Against China Laid Out

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The advanced stage of discussions in US foreign policy circles over the pursuit of an ever-more aggressive policy toward China has been revealed by the recent release of a chilling report under the auspices of the influential Council on Foreign Relations.

Entitled “Revising US Grand Strategy Toward China,” the report is nothing less than an agenda for war. It is authored by Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, both of whom have close connections to the US State Department and various American foreign policy think tanks.

The report cites a publication produced during World War II defining “grand strategy” as one that “so integrates the policies and armaments of a nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.” This is not merely a concept of war but “an inherent element of statecraft at all times.”

The report’s central theme is that US global dominance is threatened by the rise of China and this process must be reversed by economic, diplomatic and military means.

Significantly, at the beginning of the report, its authors cite the Pentagon’s Defence Planning Guidance document of 1992, produced in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which insisted that US strategy had to “refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor.”

While asserting that China has a “grand strategy” for regional and ultimately global domination, the authors make clear they regard the threat to the US position as arising from China’s economic growth within the present international order.

This analysis recalls that advanced at the beginning of 1907 by the senior British Foreign Office official Eyre Crowe about the impact on Britain of the rise of Germany. Crowe concluded that, whatever the intentions of its leaders, Germany’s economic expansion, in and of itself, constituted a threat to the British Empire. Seven years later, the two major powers were at war.

China is not an imperialist power as Germany was, but its very economic rise is undermining the US position.

According to the report: “Because the American effort to ‘integrate’ China into the liberal international order has now generated new threats to US primacy in Asia—and could eventually result in a consequential challenge to American power globally—Washington needs a grand strategy toward China that centres on balancing the rise of Chinese power

rather than continuing to assist its ascendancy.”

A repeat of the Cold War policy based on “containment” is not possible because that was grounded on the autarkic policies of the Soviet Union, whereas China’s economic growth is bound up with economic globalisation and China’s integration into world markets.

In its own way, this assertion is a direct confirmation of the Marxist analysis that the origins of war lie in the very modus operandi of the capitalist system itself. China has operated within the framework of the global market, established not least by the United States, but this integration has itself undermined US primacy.

In the report’s words: “US support for China’s entry into the global trading system has thus created the awkward situation in which Washington has contributed towards hastening Beijing’s economic growth and, by extension, accelerated its rise as a geopolitical rival.”

Accordingly, in advancing the core elements of an American “grand strategy,” the authors place considerable importance on economic issues. As part of a plan to “vitalize” the economy, the US should:

“construct a new set of trading relationships in Asia that exclude China, fashion effective tools to deal with China’s pervasive use of geo-economic tools in Asia and beyond, and, in partnership with US allies and like-minded partners, create a new technology-control mechanism vis-a-vis China.”

The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which currently excludes China and for which Obama is now seeking fast-track authority from the US Congress to negotiate, is regarded as essential. Failure to deliver it would “seriously weaken” the US grand strategy.

The report’s focus on the underlying economic issues by no means implies any downgrading of military means. On the contrary, the authors spell out detailed measures, both in terms of US policy and those it must secure from its allies in the region.

The relationship with Japan is regarded as occupying first place. The report’s proposals include an expansion of the US-Japan security relationship to encompass all of Asia, the upgrading of the Japanese military, aligning Japan with concepts such as Air-Sea battle—a massive attack on military facilities in mainland China—and intensifying Japanese cooperation with ballistic missile defence (BMD). Anti-missile systems are seen as vital for a first-strike strategy, which aims to render inoperable any retaliation.

With regard to South Korea, the report calls for increased BMD capacity, as well as a comprehensive strategy, developed with Japan, to bring about “regime change” in North Korea.

Australia is described as the “southern anchor” of US relationships in the Pacific. The report calls for the use of the Stirling naval base in Western Australia to support “US naval force structure in the region.” The US and Australia should deploy surveillance and unmanned aerial vehicles on Australia’s Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean and “the two countries should work together to more rapidly identify potential Australian contributions to ballistic missile defence.”

And the list goes on. Indian nuclear weapons must be seen as an “asset” in the current

balance of power, and US-India military co-operation should increase. Indonesia's role in joint military exercises must be expanded, naval exercises with Vietnam stepped up and the Philippines must develop a full range of defence capabilities.

On the political front, the report calls for the reinforcement of trusted strategic relationships and partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific region that include traditional US alliances but go beyond them. It advocates strengthening Asian states' "ability to cope with China independently" and building new forms of intra-Asian co-operation—clearly directed to counter China—that do not always involve the US but are systematically supported by it.

After detailing these anti-China measures on the economic, military and political fronts, the report states that the US must energise "high-level diplomacy" with China to "mitigate the inherently profound tensions" and to "reassure US allies and friends in Asia and beyond that its objective is to avoid a confrontation with China."

The source of this blatant contradiction lies in a no less significant component of the US war drive—the offensive on the ideological front. The purpose of the "high-level diplomacy" and even possible joint ventures with China on some issues, is to manufacture the propaganda lie that the cause of war is the fault of America's enemy—in this case Chinese assertiveness and aggression. That lie has been central to the launching of US military activity ever since it became an imperialist power at the end of the 19th century.

In reality, the report itself specifically rules out any accommodation with China. In their conclusion, the authors state:

"[T]here is no real prospect of building fundamental trust, 'peaceful coexistence,' 'mutual understanding,' a strategic partnership, or a 'new type of major country relations' between the United States and China."

The release of this report and its clear elaboration of the US war drive underscore the necessity for the development of a socialist strategy against war by the international working class. This will be at the centre of tomorrow's May Day Online International Rally called by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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