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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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11.06.2021

US military declares China “number one” challenge as Biden rallies Europe for “cold war”

Over the past week, the United States has massively expanded its conflict with China through a series of military, economic, diplomatic and propaganda initiatives aimed at strangling China's economic development, demonizing it in the eyes of the world's population and preparing for military conflict.

On Wednesday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin issued a directive declaring China to be the “number one” focus of the US military. Austin's statement echoed the words of former acting US Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan, who stressed last year that the focus of the US military must be “China, China, China.”



President Joe Biden speaks to American service members at RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk, England, Wednesday, June 9, 2021. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

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Austin's statements followed the passage Tuesday in the Senate of what senators referred to as the "China competitiveness bill," a massive \$250 billion package of corporate subsidies and sanctions that the *New York Times* termed "the most significant government intervention in industrial policy in decades."

The spending package includes tens of millions of dollars in subsidies to major technology corporations for relocating semiconductor production to the United States—which would be critical in the event that China ends trade with the United States in a military conflict. Semiconductors power not only all modern consumer devices, but are critical to the production and operation of advanced weapon systems.

The bill bans US officials from attending the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and falsely declares that China is committing genocide against its Muslim population.

It directs the US government to impose sanctions against Chinese companies that it claims are violating the intellectual property rights of US firms, and creates a framework for the US and its allies to prevent the export of Chinese goods that the US claims violate its intellectual property rights.

As the *South China Morning Post* commented, the bill is "the most formal recognition yet that Washington's deep distrust of Beijing was not merely a feature of the Trump administration ... but reflects a consensus spanning the congressional political spectrum ... that the US must urgently work to out-compete China or lose its status as the world's most powerful nation."

Senator Todd Young, a Republican from Indiana, said: "Today we declare our intention to win this century, and those that follow it as well."

Republican John Cornyn added: "For everything from national security to economic policy, there's a clear and urgent need to reorient the way our country views and responds to the challenge from China."

US President Joe Biden hailed the passage of the bill, declaring: "We are in a competition to win the 21st century, and the starting gun has gone off."

In response, China is expected to pass its own “anti-sanctions bill,” which would provide a framework for Chinese companies to seek damages for sanctions by the United States and Europe. This will be the first major move by China to retaliate against US sanctions, which used as a pretext China’s actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

The bill follows a June 3 administrative order by the Biden administration blacklisting 59 Chinese companies deemed to have military ties.

According to the *Global Times*, the Biden administration will this week initiate trade talks with the island of Taiwan following the visit by three senators to the island over the weekend. Both measures are aimed at chipping away the US’s “One China” policy that had been operative since the 1970s.

The passage of the bill set the stage for Biden’s trip to Europe for G7, EU-US and NATO summits, where, in the words of the *Guardian*, Biden will seek to “recruit allies for the next cold war.”

Biden will attend the G7 summit in the UK Friday, then head to Belgium for the NATO summit the following week then to Geneva to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In an insightful comment by Rafael Behr, the *Guardian* bluntly spelled out the issues at stake.

“Washington sees Moscow as a declining force that compensates for its shrunken influence by lashing out where it can... Putin is seen as an irritant, not a rival. That is in marked contrast to the view of China—an actual superpower and the eastern pole that Biden has in mind when he talks about reviving an alliance of western democracies.”

Behr notes that while the European governments may have hoped that after the Trump administration, the White House would “set the clock back to a calmer, less combative epoch,” in reality “Biden is coming to tell Europe to get its act together in the coming race for global supremacy with Beijing.”

For its part, the *Financial Times* observed: “Ever since he entered the White House in January, Joe Biden has articulated one foreign policy goal above others—to work with allies to restrain China.”

Biden hopes to “persuade his counterparts to rebuke China over its persecution of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, its economic coercion of countries such as Australia, and its aggressive military activity in the South and East China Seas.”

As the US sanctions demonstrate, it is the US and its allies that are applying “economic coercion” against Beijing, as well as aggressively boosting their military exercises and capabilities close to China.

The final component of Washington’s full-court press against China is the acceptance by the US press that claims by the extreme right that the COVID-19 pandemic may have been released from the Wuhan Institute of Virology are “credible,” encouraging the fascist right to demand an even more aggressive stance against China.

Speaking last week, former US President Donald Trump demanded 100 percent sanctions on Chinese imports, and demanded that China pay reparations to the United States for having allegedly created the pandemic.

This campaign is aimed at creating the ideological basis for the US threats against China, manufacturing the belief that the United States has been “attacked,” and driving the type of xenophobia and nationalism necessary for a military conflict.

It goes without saying that all of these developments are immensely dangerous. American society is being reorganized for “great power conflict,” a type of economic and military competition that twice in the 20th century spilled over into world war.

World Socialist 10.06.2021