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As Ukraine offensive collapses, US tries to drum up support for war at G20

Three months ago, the US and NATO leaders met in Vilnius, Lithuania, to proclaim the next stage in what they hoped would be a strategic defeat for Russia in Ukraine.

At the time, the imperialist powers and their media propagandists seemed to have deluded themselves into believing that Ukraine's "offensive," which had commenced just days before, would deliver a decisive blow to Russian forces.



President Joe Biden watches a group of dancers with Vani Sarraju Rao, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, right, and Vijay Kumar Singh, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways & Minister of State for Civil Aviation, as he arrives at Indira Gandhi International Airport to attend the G20 summit, Friday, Sept. 8, 2023, in New Delhi. [AP Photo/Evan Vucci]

Three months later, Ukraine's offensive has produced a debacle, failing to achieve its aims while resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian troops and hundreds of US and NATO armored vehicles.

This is the context in which US President Joe Biden travels to the G20 summit in New Delhi, India, in an effort to bolster international support for the proxy war with Russia in Ukraine and deepening the military and economic offensive against China.

American imperialism is determined to pursue its conflict with Russia to complete victory. Earlier this week, Secretary of State Antony Blinken traveled to Kiev to pledge to continue the war "for as long as it takes." One recent *Financial Times* op-ed referred to any negotiations as a "moral defeat," while other reports speak of the "fear of peace talks."

In the media, there is talk of the war extending until 2024 or 2025. Given the current rate of losses, Ukraine would simply run out of forces by then, leading to the inevitable conclusion that such a war would have to be fought with US and NATO troops.

In every country represented at the G20, however, the war is increasingly unpopular, creating dilemmas for the US's allies. In a draft communique circulated Friday, 75 paragraphs were completed while one, focusing on the war in Ukraine, was left blank. It is entirely possible that the G20 will, for the first time, fail to issue a joint statement.

The war in Ukraine is not the only crisis confronting the United States and the Biden administration. Biden's counterparts will no doubt inquire about the political stability of the American state apparatus. Trump, the leading candidate for the Republican Party, is under indictment for charges related to the attempted fascistic coup two-and-a-half years ago, and Biden himself may be implicated in investigations related to the corrupt dealings of his son in Ukraine.

Reflecting the nervousness within the ruling class over Biden's own position, the *New York Times* wrote on Friday, "This year, Mr. Biden faces heightened concerns around his age—he will turn 81 in November—as he campaigns for a second term. A poll released by CNN on Thursday showed that his approval ratings remain low. A special counsel has indicated that he planned to indict the president's son Hunter on a gun charge by the end of the month."

It is of more than symbolic significance that, in making the journey to New Delhi, Biden left the sickbed of his wife, Jill Biden, who has once again contracted COVID-19 amid yet another surge of the pandemic, despite the White House's efforts to proclaim the pandemic over by covering it up. Biden's aides no doubt fear that the octogenarian president will test positive during the trip.

There are mounting signs of economic crisis and breakdown in the center of world finance. Last month, Fitch downgraded the US credit rating, amid growing concerns about the viability of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. Testimony presented to the US Congress earlier this year warned, "For the first time since the collapse of the Bretton Woods gold standard, we are seeing a systemic limit on the dollar-centered economic order and US foreign policy."

Each of these crises intersect with and are compounded by the growth of the class struggle, now centered on the looming strike deadline for hundreds of thousands of autoworkers next week. The Biden administration is seeking desperately to contain the situation, with the assistance of the trade union apparatus.

The response of the American ruling class to the deepening crisis of its global hegemony is to intensify its efforts to maintain its domination through military force.

The summit was preceded by a propaganda campaign in major US newspapers, targeting China. "China's model is failing. The world should pay attention," declared the *Washington Post* editorial board. "Economically ailing China suffers from an incurable case of Leninism," George Will proclaimed, in an op-ed in the same newspaper. The *Financial Times* wrote Friday of a war game targeting China planned for Monday, sponsored by the Democrats and Republicans in the House, and involving leading Wall Street executives.

Notably, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced he would not be attending the G20 summit, the first time a Chinese leader has done so since 2008. Russian President Vladimir Putin has not attended a G20 summit since 2020. Why would they participate in a forum that is openly framed as an effort by the imperialist powers to cobble together a global coalition to militarily crush and economically subjugate Russia and China?

The G20 was formed in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and solidified into what the US called the "permanent council for international economic cooperation" following the 2008 financial crisis. Excerpts from this year's G20 draft communique point to threats to the world economy from "cascading crises," where slow growth and high inflation are exacerbated by the emergence of protectionism and trade wars.

But the undeniable reality is that the world's main architect of the rise of protectionism, trade war and military conflict is the United States.

American imperialism responded to the dissolution of the USSR with a vast global military offensive, including the Gulf War, the bombing of Yugoslavia, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the bombings of Libya and Syria. Each of these wars, which led

to the deaths of hundreds of thousands, has only deepened and intensified the crisis of US global hegemony.

Over the ensuing decade and a half, the US transformed the “war on terror” into “great power conflict,” instigating the Maidan coup of 2014 that erupted into the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The Obama, Trump and Biden administrations pursued aggressive protectionist measures as part of a trade war with China that threatens to escalate into military conflict.

Trotsky remarked in 1928, “In the period of crisis the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of boom.” This is the dynamic that is playing out at the G20 summit.

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