

By Raymond Lotta

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It is truly amazing how some progressives and self-described radicals pull the wool over their own eyes when it comes to Donald Trump's foreign policy. They blithely buy into and peddle the dangerous myth that, for all his ravings and unpredictability, Trump is an "antiwar" isolationist who wants to shrink the U.S. global military footprint and is ill-disposed to getting bogged down in endless wars. Describe him as you will... but a war monger he is not, they say. Wrong, deadly wrong.

In fact, Donald Trump has matched bellicose rhetoric with acts of provocation against designated adversaries that could have led, and could still lead, to war—Iran is prime example. The U.S. military under Trump has been guided by and is operating according to a new National Security Strategy enunciated in 2018 that is nothing less than a dark vision for U.S.-China conflict. ¹ From day one of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Trump has pounced on it to whip up racist anti-China hysteria and escalate economic warfare with China. And Trump's insane euphoria for nuclear weapons has a more calculated counterpart in a major build-up of America's nuclear war waging capacity.

"America first" is not an agenda of "anti-globalist" retrenchment. At its foreign policy core, "America First" is an aggressive, unilateralist ("we go our own way, fuck the strictures of traditional imperialist alliances and diplomacy") imperial project . It is a project infused with an ideology of fascistic, white Christian civilizational superiority.

Let us count the ways of Trump the war monger.

Exhibit #1: U.S. military spending, nukes, and drones

The so-called "antiwar" Trump has presided over massive levels of military spending. Outlays

for the 2020 fiscal year were at near-record levels (adjusted for inflation), and the military budget Trump submitted earlier this year was the largest since World War 2 (in comparable dollars). [2](#)

The biggest single-category increases called for involve nuclear weapons, including expanded weapons-production facilities. *Take note: The administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review lowered the threshold for the U.S. to drop a nuclear bomb on an "enemy"* (this includes U.S. responses to non-nuclear attacks and threats).

[3](#)

And in February 2020, the U.S. put its first (and newly developed) low-yield nuclear weapons on submarines at sea.

Here's a pop quiz for the "Trump for peace" connoisseurs. When it comes to Barack Obama's drone wars (one of the monstrous war crimes of that administration), Donald Trump has: a) ended them; b) continued them; c) escalated them. The answer is c. *The Trump/Pence regime not only surpassed the volume of drone strikes under Obama in its first two years... it made drone wars in countries like Somalia, Yemen, and Pakistan more secretive than ever.*

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Exhibit #2: The end of arms control as the imperialist powers have known it

Donald Trump has pulled the U.S. out of three nuclear weapons-related treaties. He took the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018; in 2019 he exited from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty; and in late May of this year he withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed observation flights over Russia and Alaska.

[5](#)

Trump does not want the U.S. to "tie its hands down" in nuclear weapons production, stationing, and deployment, especially in conducting its rivalry with China.

Exhibit #3: Iran in Trump's murderous crosshairs... unstinting military support for Israel and Saudi Arabia

It was Trump, not Iran, who broke the agreement the two countries and other world powers signed in 2015 limiting Iran's nuclear program. The agreement had lifted economic sanctions

(measures that prevent a country from buying and selling goods on the world market, getting loans, etc.). Since tearing up the agreement, the U.S. has imposed even harsher sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy. When the pandemic hit earlier this year, Trump doubled down—preventing medical supplies from coming into Iran. This has exacerbated an already devastating public health crisis in Iran. A revcom.us article rightly described this as “medical terrorism.” [6](#)

Since the spring of 2019, the Trump/Pence regime has built up the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf and stepped up threats against Iran. This took a leap in January 2020 with the U.S.'s illegal assassination of Iranian general Soleimani at Iraq's Baghdad International Airport, bringing the Middle East to the precipice of a major new military conflict. If this is not war-mongering, than what is it?

Trump has brought U.S. support for Israel and its war on the Palestinian people to new heights. He has increased U.S. military aid, recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and worked to shield the Israel Defense Forces from international criminal prosecution for war crimes. He sent U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia as part of the confrontation with Iran and stepped up arms sales. And there's been no pulling back from U.S. imperialism's support for Saudi Arabia's savage air war in Yemen that started in 2015. The U.S. continues to share intelligence and sophisticated weapons, as the Saudis target Yemeni schools and hospitals.

Exhibit #4: The accelerating war drive against China

In 2018, the Trump Pentagon issued a National Security Strategy report declaring that “great power competition,” not the “war on terror,” is now America's main security priority. Russia and China, especially China, were identified as the chief rivals to America's dominant position in the world. The report breaks from the past in emphasizing the usability of nuclear weapons: “the fear of [nuclear] escalation will not deter the United States from defending our vital interests.”

The “pivot to Asia” began under Obama. But it has gone to a whole new level under Trump. The assessment has been widely broadcast: China's growing economic might (illicitly and unfairly obtained) is not only challenging America's global economic dominance but also translating into threatening military capability and reach. The take home message is none too ambiguous: We, America, are the main rulers and exploiters of the world, and China must be stopped. *

U.S. imperialism is facing new necessity in the world. Intensifying rivalry with China presents new challenges to America's hegemonic position in the world. This is the main factor behind U.S. efforts to reach an accord with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and to draw down forces elsewhere. Trump is not on a peace, or “bring the troops home” jag. His Pentagon is “repositioning” forces around the world, especially to confront China. A different kind of warfare from the past—what’s called “high-intensity warfare” in the air, sea, ground, space, and cyberspace—is being planned for.

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And, ominously, preparations are well underway, including on China’s side.

Trump has encouraged and cheered on India in its military clashes with China, and is putting pressure on countries like Australia and Japan to firm up partnerships with the U.S. against China. U.S. and Chinese warships regularly encounter each other in the East and South China Sea. Flashpoints for military conflict are multiplying.

So if Donald Trump is not a “war monger,” then what is he?

* China is not a socialist country today. It is now an imperialist rival to the U.S. See Raymond Lotta, “[Four Months Into the Global COVID-19 Health and Economic Crisis... Notes on the Utter Cruelty and Obscene Irrationality of Capitalism-Imperialism](#)” at revcom.us. [[back](#)]

NOTES

1. See the Summary of the 2018 National Security Strategy, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

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2. See Fred Kaplan, “[Trump’s Gargantuan Military Is Full of It](#),” *Slate*, February 12, 2020. [[bac](#)

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3. See, <https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2018-02/new-us-nuclear-strategy-flawed-dangerous-heres-why> [[back](#)]

4. S.E. Cupp, “ [Under Donald Trump, drone strikes far exceed Obama’s numbers](#) ,” Chicago Sun-Times, May 8, 2019.

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5. Julian Borger, “ [Trump to pull US out of third arms control deal](#) ,” *The Guardian*, 21 May, 2020. [[back](#)]

6. “ [Medical Terrorism—American Style: U.S. Sanctions and Military Threats Escalate Iran's COVID-19 Death Toll and Threaten the World](#) ,” *revcom.us*, April 6, 2020 [[back](#)]

7. Michael Klare, “ [The US Military Is Preparing for a New War](#) ,” *The Nation*, June 1, 2019.