

Without real leadership, war within six months?



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Lead Editorial

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Who could have imagined six months ago how our lives would have been affected by a virus? Well, try for a moment to imagine what our lives might look like if a world war between global thermonuclear powers was sparked. If the stock of advisors from governments and think tanks currently guiding US, UK and Australian foreign policy are left to their devices, this could become reality within the next six months!

US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper declared success on 7 July in implementing the new National Defence Strategy which declares that “China, then Russia, constitute our top strategic competitors”. The same day Esper met (virtually) with the Australian and Japanese Defence Ministers Linda Reynolds and Taro Kono, to shore up part of the mission plan— “to strengthen allies and build partners”.

The same day, FBI Director Christopher Wray declared that “China is engaged in a whole-of-state effort to become the world’s only superpower by any means necessary”. This is deliberately untrue, and in fact the neoconservatives who control Washington claim that being a superpower is the sole “right” of the USA, having declared after the fall of the Soviet Union the [Wolfowitz Doctrine](#), that their “first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival”.

In a 24 June speech US National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien laid out elements of China’s supposed plan to re-make the world in its own image, even while stating that America “understands that lasting peace comes through strength. We are the strongest nation on earth, and we will not bend to the CCP”. All but ruling out the prospect of diplomacy, he concluded: “We want good relationships with China, but we do not want relations on the terms currently on offer from Beijing.”

On 14 July, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs David Stilwell announced that the USA could sanction Chinese officials for actions in the South China Sea, taking the side of the other parties in the disputed island region. The USA is increasing the intensity of spy flights along China’s coast and running exercises with two aircraft carriers in the region.

This followed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s 13 July declaration that the USA will “not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire”. Yet when the UK, post-Brexit, initiated its “[Global Britain](#)” program, otherwise dubbed “Empire 2.0”, described by the head of the British Royal Navy Admiral Sir Philip Jones as “nothing less than a new era of British maritime power” (*globally*), nothing is said.

Speaking to Sky News on 16 July, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s Peter Jennings warned of a possible military exchange in Asia such as the shooting down of an aircraft or sinking of a ship, foreshadowing conflict “in the second half of this year and heading into 2021”.

On the other hand, Russian leaders continue to push for a special summit of the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council—the USA, UK, Russia, France and China— to de-escalate tensions, which Russian President Vladimir Putin first called for in January. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, on 10 July, warned that “nuclear risks have recently increased substantially, that the security situation, international strategic stability are openly deteriorating”. Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi on 9 July said that USChina relations have never been so bad since they were established in 1979: “Out of ideological prejudice, some people in the USA are making every effort to render China an opponent or even an enemy.”

The role of the Citizens Party and collaborators in shaping public policy in a unique, multifaceted way—to avoid war through dialogue and economic cooperation, and shape banking mandates and industrial policy to foster real economic growth—is crucial. It is time for a calm hand and the courage to speak the truth.

In this week's issue:

- Bail-in cover-up unravels
- Environmentalist apologises for climate alarmism
- It's no time for China to ditch Glass-Steagall!
- Unmask Wall Street! Build infrastructure!
- China-Iran cooperation framework will advance Eurasian development
- South Korea shows policy required to avoid COVID lockdowns
- British 'Russiagate' fraudsters peddle new dodgy dossier on Huawei
- Australia sabotaged China trade based on US media lies
- Russiagate hoax has unravelled
- Banking authorities are on the run!
- Parties support Bradfield Scheme to revive economy
- ALMANAC: The principle of development—of mind and economy

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