

White House considers expelling Chinese graduate students and researchers

By Shuvu Batta
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On Thursday, based on reports given by US state officials, the *New York Times* broke news that the Trump administration plans to expel some three to five thousand Chinese graduate students and researchers. The same day, Republican Senators Tom Cotton and Marsha Blackburn introduced a bill in Congress that would ban all visas for Chinese nationals admitted for study in science and mathematics.

Officials acknowledged that the plans to expel these individuals are not based on any direct evidence of espionage or trade theft, but rather on “suspicions.” The suspicions are drawn out from the student or researcher’s prior history as a student in one of the many universities sponsored by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of China.

Beating the drums for war, Senator Cotton said last month: “If Chinese students want to come here and study Shakespeare and the *Federalist Papers*, that’s what they need to learn from America; they don’t need to learn quantum computing and artificial intelligence from America... those Chinese students, go back to China to compete for our jobs, to take our business, and ultimately to steal our property and design weapons and other devices that can be used against the American people.”

Cotton, alongside the rest of the US ruling class, is demonizing the whole of the 360,000 Chinese student population in the country, essentially branding them as agents of the Chinese State. They are trying to divert domestic social opposition against the state towards China, by using phrases such as “our property” and “our weapons” while 40 million people are unemployed, US billionaires gain over \$400 billion in wealth, and cities begin to riot.

Universities have emerged as a critical battleground in this process. The plan to expel students follows

recent attacks on scientists of Chinese descent in the country, who have been arrested on charges of “economic espionage.” Nine leading universities, including Harvard, Yale, and Georgetown are currently under investigation for connections to China’s “Thousand Talents Program,” a recruiting program for leading international experts in scientific research.

According to a study by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, partially funded by the Australian Ministry of Defense, “since 2007, the PLA has sponsored more than 2,500 military scientists and engineers to study abroad and has developed relationships with researchers and institutions across the globe.” The collaboration is highest in the Five Eyes countries (military and intelligence alliance dominated by the US) and then Germany/Singapore. The study recommended that policymakers and officials put increased pressure on universities while building strong ties to the military apparatus, to secure research and protect against “economic espionage.”

Over the past few decades, China has managed to transform its military with many of the latest advances in science into a force capable of adequately resisting and even defeating the United States. According to leading Pentagon Official David Ochmanek, “In our games [computer simulations], when we fight Russia and China,” with blue representing the United States, “blue gets its ass handed to it.” The attack on Chinese scientists and students, in addition to diverting social tension, is also a crude attempt to block the development of China’s military as it stands in the way of US imperialism’s ambition to gain domination of the Asia-Pacific.

However, the US’s attacks against Chinese scientists and students risk undermining their own technological and scientific level.

According to the National Science Foundation, compared to 69 percent of Europeans, over 90 percent of Chinese STEM students have remained in the US after a decade. More Chinese scientists move to the United States than vice versa. An analysis by Jenny J. Lee and John P. Haupt of the University of Arizona found that if papers by Chinese coauthors were left out, the number of science and engineering publications by US-based scientists would have declined about 2 percent from 2014 to 2018.

In response to Thursday's news, a Bloomberg Opinion piece asked the question "Although the vast majority of scientific articles by Chinese researchers are published in their own language, the best researchers publish in English. That makes their work easily accessible to Americans in their native tongue, an enormous advantage. Would the U.S. really be better off if its scientists had to learn Chinese?"

Since the start of 2020, despite growing military and trade tensions, collaboration between American and Chinese researchers has increased, primarily due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Researchers have exchanged crucial details about the virus, but the developing attacks on China will lead to a disintegration of such efforts and will ultimately undermine the development of a vaccine. Rather than international collaboration, US imperialism and its allies have instead escalated national divisions and rivalries.

Canada has moved forward with the extradition trial of a top executive of Huawei, a Chinese company that is leading the 5G industry. Australia has expanded the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, giving it the authority to interrogate those suspected of "espionage and politically motivated violence." Under the direction of Washington, India has escalated border tensions with China, risking the outbreak of war. In opposition to China, the United Kingdom is considering extending visa rights to 300,000 Hong Kong residents, which follows the US announcement of increased anti-China sanctions.

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