Canada’s involvement in US-led war drive against China: An election non-issue

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The *Globe and Mail* recently reported that the Canadian and US Defence Departments are developing a strategic “action plan” to reduce the two countries’ dependence on China for 17 “rare earths” and other critical minerals. The plan, which targets items used in missile systems, electric vehicles, computer screens, lasers, and other high-tech devices, provides further stark confirmation of how far advanced are the preparations in Washington and Ottawa for all-out trade war and military conflict with China.

Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau revealed that discussions on this initiative have taken place at the highest levels of the state. Responding to a *Globe* reporter’s question at a September 30 press conference, Trudeau said that in late June he had personally raised with US President Donald Trump the need for Canadian-US strategic cooperation on securing rare earths and other metals of major military and economic significance.

“I brought up this, at the top of my conversation in my last meeting with Donald Trump,” Trudeau said, adding that he had “highlighted that Canada has many of the rare-earth minerals that are so necessary for modern technologies.”

The action plan is being worked on by senior officials from at least eight government departments and agencies and their US counterparts, including the Prime Minister’s Office, the Defence Department, Global Affairs Canada, the Finance Ministry and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).

The prime minster has confirmed that the action plan will be presented to Canada’s incoming government following the October 21 federal election.

According to the *Globe*, the plan will outline proposals for “defence funding for projects that use the minerals, strategic investments in North American processing facilities, and more research and development in extraction.” In addition to the rare earths, the plan will make a proposal as to how North America’s imperialist powers can secure supplies of other minerals and metals, including uranium, lithium, cesium and cobalt.

This ominous development is yet another signpost that Washington and Wall Street, with the connivance and collaboration of Canada’s ruling elite and its military-intelligence apparatus, are actively preparing for a catastrophic war with China—which the Pentagon has publicly identified as the US’s most formidable strategic rival. The past year has witnessed a massive escalation of an all-rounded US economic, military-strategic and diplomatic offensive against China, from trade-war measures and a concerted campaign to exclude Huawei from the 5-G networks of all NATO states, to the announcement that the US will soon deploy previously prohibited, nuclear-capable medium range missiles against China.

With Canada’s support, the Trump administration withdrew the US from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in August, with the primary purpose of developing and deploying such weapons against China.

Strikingly, Canada’s role in the US war drive against China, or indeed any substantive discussion of the Liberal government’s plans to spend tens of billions on new fleets of warships and warplanes and Canadian imperialism’s increasingly aggressive role on the world stage has been entirely absent from the election campaign.

There is tacit all-party agreement, ranging from the far-right People’s Party of Canada to the social-democratic NDP, to black out discussion of Canada’s rearmament and involvement in US military-strategic offensives.

In respect to China, the only small breach of this agreement has come from the Conservative Party, which is calling for Canada to cooperate even more closely with Washington against China.

The all-party silence on the danger of militarism and war stands in glaring contradiction to the reality of an accelerating global capitalist breakdown. Canadians are going to the polls Monday amid mounting tensions between the world’s great powers. Even bourgeois commentators acknowledge that inter-imperialist rivalries and the threat of war have reached their highest point since World War II.

Under Harper’s Tories and Trudeau’s Liberals, Canada has fully integrated itself into US imperialism’s aggressive

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economic and military drive against China. From a secret 2013 military agreement laying out terms for cooperation between the US and Canadian Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific, to last year's conclusion of a revised North American Free Trade Agreement consolidating a North American trade bloc directed against China's economic rise, Canadian imperialism has marched in lock step with Washington. This was underscored last December, when Canadian authorities effectively kidnapped Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, at the behest of Trump, on bogus charges of doing business with Iran.

The close coordination of Canadian and US policies in the drive to war with China is part of Canada's active participation in a series of US-led military-strategic offensives around the world. Canadian troops are deployed alongside American forces at joint command centres in the Middle East, overseeing operations in Syria and Iraq. Canada is thus one of the frontline states in what could rapidly escalate into a region-wide war involving all of the major powers, as has recently been demonstrated by the tensions provoked by Turkey's invasion of Syria.

Canadian troops also stand alongside their US counterparts in Eastern Europe to encircle Russia. Canadian and US forces are actively training Ukrainian military units to, in Trudeau's own words, "liberate" Ukrainian territory from Russia. And Canadian soldiers command one of NATO's four rapid reaction battalions in the Baltic and Poland along Russia's western border. The battalions are the forward posts of a massive military build-up by the US-led alliance aimed at waging war with Moscow.

The fact that none of these issues are being discussed in the current campaign shows that all of the parties, including the Greens and NDP, fully support Canadian imperialist violence around the world.

Moreover, all sections of the political establishment recognize that publicly discussing the pro-war plans they have all already agreed to implement after October 21 would provoke widespread popular opposition. These include hiking military spending by more than 70 percent by 2026, procuring new battleships, warplanes and drones, and modernizing the Canada-US North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD) alliance. The latter initiative is intimately bound up with a push by a powerful faction of the ruling elite for Canada to join Washington's ballistic missile defence shield, the ultimate goal of which is to make a nuclear war "winnable."

The NDP complains in its election program about "cuts" to military spending and the "mismanagement" of battleship and warplane procurements, stressing that it will ensure these key rearmament projects are delivered on time. The party goes on to decry the lack of a "strategic mandate" for the armed forces. This is in keeping with the NDP's support for every overseas Canadian military intervention since the NATO onslaught against Yugoslavia in 1999.

The Greens are equally militaristic. In their platform, they assert that since the end of the Cold War the global security situation has never been so "precarious." In response, the Greens demand a "general purpose, combat-capable" Canadian armed forces supported by "stable funding" to deal with "domestic emergencies, continental defence and international operations."

Both the Greens' and NDP's platforms attempt to dress up their support for Canadian imperialist aggression and war in pseudo-progressive garb with references to "peacekeeping" and the "duty to protect," better known as the responsibility to protect. Such "human rights" imperialism has been used to justify virtually every war of aggression in recent years, from the bombardment of Libya in 2011 to the ongoing intervention in Iraq, Syria and the wider Middle East. Far from protecting anyone, these US-initiated or instigated conflicts have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and laid waste to entire societies.

Opposing the bourgeoisie's reckless and ruinous war drive demands an irreconcilable break by the working class from all of the pro-war parties, including the ruling elite's ostensible "left" parties, the Greens and NDP. Workers in Canada must unite with workers around the world in a powerful antiwar movement to put an end to imperialist violence, and turn to a socialist perspective to fight for the overthrow of capitalism, which is threatening to drag humanity, as it did twice before in the last century, into a global conflagration.

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