

Canada deepens support for US-led anti-China offensive

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Tensions between Canada and China are growing sharper, as Ottawa swings ever more openly behind US imperialism's aggressive diplomatic, economic and military-strategic offensive against Beijing.

The federal government of Justin Trudeau directly intervened last month to prevent the takeover of gold miner TMAC Resources Inc. by China's state-owned Shandong Gold Mining Co. Ltd. While the Canadian government refused to explain its rejection of the C\$230 million transaction, a senior government official told the *Globe and Mail* it was motivated by "national security" concerns. Another source said Washington, which has responded to the capitalist breakdown precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic by doubling down on its efforts to militarily and economically counter China, had pressed Trudeau to block the deal. In 2018, the Trudeau government similarly cited national security concerns to block the \$1.5-billion buyout of the construction and engineering firm Aecon Group Ltd. by a Chinese state-controlled firm.

The underlying claim that the acquisition of the Doris gold mine could serve as a means for the Chinese regime to conduct spying operations is rather absurd, considering that TMAC's mine is located in Hope Bay, Nunavut, an inlet on the Northwest Passage more than 100 kilometers from the closest North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) radar station.

Trudeau's decision is part of the tougher stance his Liberal government has adopted in recent years against China, under pressure from Washington, the most right-wing sections of the Canadian ruling class, and the corporate-controlled media. The leader of the official opposition Conservative Party, Erin O'Toole, is leading an hysterical campaign against China, repeatedly invoking the "threat to national security" posed by the presence of Chinese companies in Canada.

O'Toole's criticisms notwithstanding, Canada under Trudeau has been increasingly involved in the vast US-led campaign against China that was initiated under Obama in 2011 with his Pivot to Asia, and intensified over the last four years under the Trump administration. Trudeau has also made clear that he is eager to work closely with a Democratic administration led by Joe Biden, who has pledged to intensify aggression against both Russia and China. Should Biden successfully enter the White

House next Wednesday, one of his first foreign policy priorities will be the creation of a "coalition of democracies" against China. This proposal, which the Trudeau government is enthusiastic to join, is aimed at giving a phony "human rights" veneer to Washington's bullying and threatening of Beijing. It involves the embrace of such paragons of democratic rights as the Hindu supremacist Narendra Modi of India, and Australia's Scott Morrison, who has refused to denounce the January 6 Trump-incited and orchestrated coup attempt in Washington.

The US' provocative campaign against China includes growing trade-war measures such as the push to exclude Huawei from the 5G networks of NATO states, as well as the announced deployment of nuclear-capable medium-range missiles targeting Beijing. For both economic and strategic reasons, Washington is determined to block China emerging as a dominant player in high-tech industries.

Canada—unlike its Five-Eyes partners, the US, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand—has not yet officially barred local companies from using Chinese giant telecom firm Huawei's components in their 5G networks. However, in expectation of such a move, Bell, Telus and all the other major Canadian telecommunications companies have already taken the step of excluding Huawei, whose technology is in certain respects more developed than that of its US and European competitors, from their networks.

The offensive against Huawei is directly connected to the political aggression against China. In 2018, at the behest of the Trump administration, Canadian authorities arrested Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, on bogus charges of breaking US sanctions against Iran. China retaliated to what was in fact a political kidnapping by detaining two Canadian citizens, Michael Kovrig, a former diplomat, and Michael Spavor, an entrepreneur operating in North Korea. Two years on, Trudeau is more forthright than ever in defending Meng's seizure. He has repeatedly spurned calls for Canada to end the extradition proceedings in exchange for the return of Spavor and Kovrig.

To pressure Ottawa to adopt an even more hardline stance towards Beijing, the Trump administration has attacked Dominic Barton, Canada's current ambassador to China, for his alleged close relationship with the regime of president Xi

Jinping. Before his current role, Barton was for nine years global managing partner for New York-based consulting firm McKinsey and Co. Senator Marco Rubio, a close associate and supporter of Trump, has denounced Barton for acting against US “economic and national security interests” by helping China advance its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) when he worked for McKinsey. The BRI, a mega Chinese-led infrastructure program that seeks to expand commerce through Eurasia and beyond, is viewed by Washington with deep hostility.

Trudeau chose Barton, a former advisor to the state-controlled China Development Bank, as his government’s envoy to Beijing in 2019 in an attempt to prevent a total collapse of bilateral ties. When he took power in 2015, Trudeau had raised the prospect of a free trade deal with Beijing, a proposal which enjoyed support among a faction of big business due to the potential to access new markets and profits in China and through the BRI. China is Canada’s second most important bilateral commercial partner after the US (or third if the 27 European Union member states are counted as a whole). However, under conditions of the rapid intensification of the US-China conflict, and due to the Canadian bourgeoisie’s dependence on access to the US market and reliance on its decades-long military-strategic partnership with Washington to advance its global imperialist ambitions, the free trade proposal rapidly unravelled. As part of the revised NAFTA or Canada-US-Mexico trade agreement, the US extracted from its partners the right to review any free trade deal they might sign with China in advance, and to abrogate the North America trade pact if such a deal was implemented against their wishes.

Canada is fully integrated in US imperialism’s three main military-strategic offensives: in the Middle East, in Eastern Europe against Russia and in the Asia-Pacific against China. To step up its role in these US-led offensives, the Liberals announced a 70 percent increase in military spending in 2017 as part of its new national defence policy. Significantly, that defence policy also identified China, together with Russia and Islamist terrorism, as a “global threat” to Canada.

Powerful sections of the military-security establishment, which is so closely tied to the United States that high-level military talks were held in 2013 on the possibility of merging the Canadian and US militaries, want Ottawa to go even further. In a *Globe and Mail* interview published this week, Gen. Jonathan Vance, the outgoing Chief of Defence Staff, called for Canada to adopt a “grand strategy” for dealing with China. The clear implication of this remark was that while Trudeau has accommodated himself to the bipartisan US-led offensive against Beijing, Canadian imperialism has yet to do what is required in terms of military rearmament and geostrategic planning to wage war.

Vance is not alone. Leading Defence Department and military officials have been complaining for months that Canada’s defence and foreign policies are out of date. Canada is already

committed to spending untold billions of dollars on modernizing NORAD, the bilateral US-Canada military alliance that defends the North American continent against their geopolitical rivals, above all Russia and China. Many are arguing that a critical element of this modernization must be Canada’s joining Washington’s ballistic missile defence shield, the main goal of which is to wage a “winnable” nuclear war.

The *Globe* recently revealed that in 2019, Vance, at Washington’s urging, took the “unilateral” decision to cancel winter military exercises between the Canadian Armed Forces and China’s People’s Liberation Army. The secret documents show that government officials from Global Affairs Canada rebuked Vance due to their concern that this would be seen as an act of retaliation for the arrest of the Kovrig and Spavor, and could exacerbate tensions with Beijing. More significant, however, is a passage in the document that includes deliberations about how China might react if Canada took the provocative decision to send a warship through the Taiwan Strait. This it subsequently did, first in September of 2019 and then again in October of last year.

In its anti-China campaign, the Trudeau government has the full support of the union-backed New Democratic Party (NDP). Last November, this ostensibly “left” organization presented a motion supported by all parties of Parliament congratulating Joe Biden for his electoral victory and inviting the future president to visit Canada and address a joint session of the House of Commons and Senate. Some days later, the NDP supported a Conservative motion calling for action against Chinese “foreign interference” and urging the Trudeau government to make a quick decision on whether Chinese-based Huawei should be banned from Canada’s 5G networks.

For their part, the Conservatives are pushing for an even more confrontational policy towards China. This includes mimicking Trump, both by trying to maliciously scapegoat China for the pandemic, and by calling for “Canada First” measures to protect “Canadian jobs” from Chinese competition. In a piece last month for the rabidly right-wing *National Post*, O’Toole asserted that “standing up to China” is critical “for the safety of Canadians, both here and abroad.”



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