

Biden advances anti-China agenda at G7 summit, takes Johnson to task over Brexit

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10 June 2021

This weekend's G7 summit in the UK will be dominated by US President Joe Biden's efforts to consolidate an anti-China axis.

In a piece for the *Washington Post* published last Saturday, Biden stated that his mission is to ensure that the US and its allies "not China or anyone else write the 21st century rules around trade and technology." His comments echo his speech to Congress this April when he said, to a standing ovation, "We're in competition with China and other countries to win the 21st century." On Tuesday, the US Senate passed a \$250 billion "China competitiveness bill" in preparation for escalating trade and military conflict.

Securing the support of the European powers is key to this strategy. In an opinion piece for *Bloomberg*, former NATO chief and US Navy admiral James Stavridis explained, "Only Europe has the population, geography, values and—above all—economic heft to meet the needs of the U.S. in achieving a credible counterweight in this emerging cold-war pas de deux..."

"Only in Europe can the U.S. find the confluence of values, economics, military capability and technology on the scale necessary to stand up to the Chinese threat."

Biden, a 50-year political veteran, is refining Trump's frenetic, transactional anti-China policy into a long-term strategy, drawing allies into a new "cold war" which will be framed, as before, as a struggle for freedom against authoritarianism.

In his first speech as president in the UK, to the US airbase at RAF Mildenhall, Biden declared, "We are going to make it clear that the US is back, and democracies of the world are standing together... That we're committed to leading with strength."

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has invited Australia, South Korea and India to the summit to further this agenda, prefiguring proposals for an expanded "D-10" group of ten "market democracies".

Political commentators have made much of the distance between the US and Europe over China. The European powers have their own economic and strategic interests which they will not willingly sacrifice purely for the benefit of American imperialism. China overtook the US as the EU's largest trading partner last year and is the UK's largest import market and Germany's largest export market.

But the trajectory towards a more militant anti-China stance is clear. France, Germany and the UK have sent warships to participate in US provocations in the South China Sea. The EU has put on hold a major investment deal with China after an exchange of sanctions over the Uyghur question.

The G7 summit will build on these foundations. Its leaked draft communiqué not only commits signatories to action against Beijing over its treatment of the Uyghurs. It centres on calls for a new World Health Organisation investigation into the origins of Covid-19, promoting the noxious lie that the virus originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Yesterday, the EU signalled its support for this toxic war propaganda, with European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen stating, "Investigators need complete access to whatever is necessary to really find the source of this pandemic."

Biden will also push for a G7-led infrastructure investment plan to block China's Belt and Road initiative. At the US-EU summit next week, Biden and his European counterparts will discuss plans for a US-EU Trade and Technology Council "to boost co-ordination on 5G, semiconductors, supply chains, export controls and technology rules and standards," according to the *Financial Times*. This will establish a framework for members to pursue their opposed economic ambitions while still jointly opposing China.

The UK and the US have announced a related "Atlantic

charter” setting out eight areas of cooperation, including collective security, defending democracy, dealing with cyber attacks and strengthening a fair trading system. A British official told the FT, “It’s not unreasonable to see a read-across to China.”

These agreements are underpinned by bellicose militarism. In his speech to US troops stationed in the UK, Biden told them, “You are the solid steel spine of America around which alliances are built and strengthened.” He added that the United States’ “one truly sacred obligation” was to “prepare and equip” its armed forces.

On Monday, Biden will attend the NATO summit in Brussels to make good this obligation and develop the alliance’s war plans against China. At a meeting with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin Monday, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said the organisation was “stepping up our response to growing global competition,” accusing Russia and China of “leading an authoritarian pushback against the rules-based international order.”

While threats against Russia have been sidelined to an extent, so Biden can focus on building the anti-China alliance, the president reminded Moscow of its place on US imperialism’s agenda. To cheers and applause, he said in his Mildenhall speech that he would be meeting with Russian president Vladimir Putin next Wednesday “to let him know what I want him to know... The US will respond in a robust and meaningful way when the Russian government engages in harmful activities.”

The draft G7 communiqué calls on Russia to tackle cybercrime groups within its borders.

Johnson’s hopes to use Britain’s hosting of the summit as a means of reasserting the UK’s position on the world stage after Brexit were dashed before the event even began. Whereas Trump embraced Brexit, based on his “America First” agenda of breaking up the European Union (EU), Biden considers the “special relationship” between the US and Britain useful only if Britain can carry out US diktats in Europe.

Even before Biden landed, he and his leading officials lambasted Britain for its ongoing rupture with the EU over the Northern Ireland border. At a press briefing to the BBC aboard Air Force One, US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said, “Any steps that imperil or undermine the Good Friday agreement will not be welcomed by the US.”

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement, negotiated by Tony Blair’s Labour government along with Bill Clinton’s Democratic Party administration, ended a three-decades-

long armed conflict in Northern Ireland to create a more stable economic environment for corporate investment in the North.

Sullivan added, “The president was not issuing threats or ultimatum [!],” but “The agreement must be protected.”

Sullivan’s comments followed a meeting between the US charge d’affaires Yael Lempert and UK Brexit negotiator Lord Frost, during which Lempert demanded a negotiated settlement with the EU. According to the *Times*, “Yael Lempert, America’s most senior diplomat in Britain, told [UK Brexit negotiator] Lord Frost... that the government was ‘inflaming’ tensions in Ireland and Europe with its opposition to checks at ports in the province.”

Lempert was instructed to issue London a demarche, a formal diplomatic reprimand which is hardly ever resorted to between declared allies. The *Times* reported that at a June 3 meeting, “Frost was told of Biden’s ‘great concern’ over his stance in a tense encounter at which Lempert was said to have ‘slowly and gravely read her instructions [from Washington] aloud’.”

The interventions by the Biden administration were timed to bolster the EU as it seeks concessions from Britain in the fractious talks over Northern Ireland.

Brussels has pledged to retaliate with trade sanctions if Johnson unilaterally suspends parts of the Northern Ireland protocol, which obviates the need for a hard border on the island of Ireland. On June 30, the EU plans to ban chilled meats being exported from Britain over the Irish Sea into Northern Ireland. Britain has threatened to unilaterally extend the grace period—that had been granted for businesses to adapt to new rules—that require checks on the export of the chilled meat exports.

The two sides failed to reach agreement in two meetings held Wednesday. Vice president of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič, said, “If the UK were to take further unilateral action in the coming weeks, the EU will not be shy in reacting swiftly, firmly and resolutely to ensure that the UK abides by its international law obligations.”



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