

Biden's "State of the Union": Confronting internal crisis, the American ruling class turns to war

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US President Joe Biden delivered his annual "State of the Union" address on Tuesday evening. His speech, as could be expected, was full of lies and self-delusion, punctuated by standing applause from the assembled members of Congress.

Biden's State of the Union was the first to begin with foreign policy since George W. Bush's "axis of evil" speech in 2002, 20 years ago. Bush spoke in the aftermath of the US invasion of Afghanistan and in the run-up to the war against Iraq. Biden spoke in the midst of an escalating campaign against Russia over Ukraine.

What emerges from the speech above all else is that the drive for war against Russia, along with the extreme bellicosity coming out of the Biden administration and the media, is motivated more than anything else by the social and political crisis within the United States.

"Last year, COVID-19 kept us apart," Biden began his remarks. "This year, we are finally together again. Tonight, we meet as Democrats, Republicans and Independents. But most importantly, as Americans."

He concluded his speech with an impromptu statement, not included in the official transcript put out by the White House: "Go get him."

One cannot help but ask, if it were not for the crisis in Ukraine, how would Biden have begun his speech? Perhaps by asking for a moment of silence to honor the memory of one million Americans who have died from COVID-19? The pandemic, which has dominated the lives of the entire world's population over the past two years, was relegated to a minor issue.

Under conditions in which the conflict in Ukraine threatens to develop into a direct war between the US-NATO and Russia, Biden's speech seemed designed to pour gasoline on the flames. While Biden asserted that

"our forces are not engaged and will not engage in conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine," he gloated over the massive impact of US and European sanctions on the Russian economy. He pledged that "the United States and our Allies will defend every inch of territory of NATO countries with the full force of our collective power," noting that he has "mobilized American ground forces, air squadrons and ship deployments to protect NATO countries including Poland, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia."

While declaring, "To all Americans, I will be honest with you, as I've always promised," Biden did not acknowledge the fact that the war has the potential to escalate into a confrontation between nuclear-armed powers, with catastrophic consequences for the entire world. When he spoke of "diplomacy," it was in relation only to the still uncertain efforts to unite NATO powers in a confrontation with Russia.

And the congressmen of both parties stood up to cheer. In his speech, Biden sought to prove that a house divided can stand, repeatedly, to applaud warmongering in the interests of American imperialism.

When he finally turned to the pandemic, Biden declared, "For more than two years, COVID-19 has impacted every decision in our lives and the life of the nation." This, however, is over: "Tonight I can say we are moving forward safely, back to more normal routines... Thanks to the progress we have made this past year, COVID-19 need no longer control our lives."

Biden presented a "four-point plan" to deal with the pandemic going forward, centered on the reopening of everything. He praised the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announcement last week that it was changing its guidelines to recommend that most people

can gather indoors without masks, a decision that was clearly timed for Biden's speech.

The day before the State of the Union address, the House of Representatives ended its mask rule, allowing the assembled representatives, senators and other government and military officials to remove their masks while waving their Ukrainian flags.

The past year of "progress" has been a year of mass death from a preventable illness in the United States. Since Biden took office on January 20, 2021, more than 535,000 Americans have died from COVID-19, more than the total number of US soldiers killed in World War I and World War II, combined.

Despite Biden's declaration of a "return to normalcy," every day more than 2,000 Americans are dying from COVID-19. By the end of this month, the official death toll since the start of the pandemic will surpass one million, the majority under the Biden administration. Biden also made no mention of the devastating effects of Long COVID, affecting millions, which the entire political establishment and media have ignored throughout.

The catastrophic impact of the pandemic is the result of the criminal decision, spearheaded by his predecessor but with bipartisan support, to subordinate lives to corporate profit. All of this is to be relegated to the past. "We can't change how divided we've been," Biden proclaimed. "But we can change how we move forward—on COVID-19 and other issues we must face together."

To this end, Biden proclaimed a "Unity Agenda for the Nation," pledging to end the opioid epidemic and the mental health crisis, provide support for veterans devastated by endless war, and "end cancer as we know it."

And Democrats and Republicans--united together in chanting "USA! USA! USA!"--will bring heaven on earth and establish peace and prosperity for all time...

The fact that the previous president, with the support of many of those assembled in the joint session of Congress, instigated a fascistic coup to overturn the 2020 election and prevent Biden from coming to power, is to be forgotten. Last month, Biden mused on whether the institutions of American democracy would survive the next decade. Last night, he proclaimed, "The State of the Union is strong... We are stronger today than we were a year ago, and we will be stronger

a year from now than we are today."

None of this can cover over the fact that the American ruling class confronts a staggering domestic crisis. This is not the first time that a ruling elite, in the face of intractable internal problems, has sought to create a false "unity" on the basis of militarism abroad.

But war with Russia does not have popular support. The pandemic and the nearly one million people who have died cannot be swept away. The fact that the ruling oligarchy has built up unprecedented fortunes amidst mass death has not gone unnoticed. The increasingly desperate conditions facing the vast majority of the population, fueled by surging inflation, are creating the conditions for an enormous growth of the class struggle.

Biden's "unity" speech will be remembered more than anything else for expressing the delusions of a ruling elite on the edge of an abyss. While the ruling class confronts reality with fear and militarism, the working class, recognizing the revolutionary potential that the crisis itself produces, must respond through its own independent intervention in the worldwide struggle for socialism.



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