

Biden covers up plans for US shooting war against Russia in State of the Union address

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President Joe Biden's State of the Union address was an exercise in deceit. Its central aim was to conceal from the American people plans for an immense escalation, including the deployment of troops, in the ever more direct military conflict with Russian forces as the US-instigated war in Ukraine enters its second bloody year.

The annual speech to a joint session of Congress was preceded by a feverish intensification of the war. Over the past several weeks, at the urging of Washington, multiple European powers have begun to send main battle tanks to Ukraine, the US has announced the dispatch of long-range precision missiles capable of striking deep into Russia territory and plans have been unveiled to send advanced NATO fighter jets to the regime in Kiev.

Within hours of Biden's Tuesday night speech, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Britain and the European Union powers to demand the immediate dispatch of fighter jets, and the British government announced plans to train Ukrainian pilots in the UK.

In last year's State of the Union speech, held just days after Russian President Vladimir Putin's reactionary and disastrous invasion of Ukraine, deliberately provoked by Washington, Biden focused almost exclusively on the war, hailing the bipartisan unity it had generated barely a year after the siege of Congress by Donald Trump's fascist insurrectionists.

Yet in Tuesday's address, there was hardly a mention of the war in Ukraine—a war that has brought the world to the brink of a nuclear exchange, or “Armageddon,” as Biden himself called it last fall. In a speech that dragged on for nearly 90 minutes, he devoted only 200 out of 7,000 words to the war, which is the central focus of his administration.

How is this astonishing fact to be explained?

First, Biden knows that the war is unpopular among the broad mass of the American working class.

Second, his government is in the process of working out its response to the rapid deterioration of Ukraine's military position. This will require the deployment of NATO forces to Ukraine, including American contractors and troops, but

Biden is not yet ready to reveal it. More time is needed to ratchet up the ongoing media propaganda campaign and generate an even higher level of anti-Russia hysteria.

David Sanger, a top *New York Times* foreign policy analyst with close ties to US intelligence, honed in on the extraordinary downplaying of the war in Ukraine in a commentary published after the State of the Union. He wrote:

Simultaneously managing an aggressive Russia and a risk-taking China may prove the greatest challenge of his [Biden's] next two years. And they will increasingly occupy his attention, especially now that Republican control of the House all but terminates his domestic legislative agenda.

So it was especially striking that in the president's State of the Union address on Tuesday night, he chose to spend relatively little time on America's global role, focusing instead on his “Made in America” effort to bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States, even at the price of angering America's closest allies and top trade partners.

Pointing to the unpopularity of the war and the further austerity its escalation will require, Sanger wrote that Biden, who is preparing to run for a second term, “knows that America's re-engagement in the world is both expensive and, at the opening of an election cycle, a tough political sell. Containing Russia and competing with China may be the work of decades, but it will add tens or hundreds of billions of dollars to an already stressed budget.”

Times columnist Thomas Friedman, a weather vane for the discussions taking place in the state and intelligence agencies, pointed to the far-reaching plans for the coming months in a column published on February 5, “Year Two of the Ukraine War is Going to Get Scary.”

In Friedman's account, the first year of the war was

“relatively easy” for “America and its allies,” requiring only sending “arms, aid and intelligence.” However, he wrote, “I don’t think year two is going to be so easy”—that is, the direct intervention of US forces will be required.

Friedman, who initiated the phrase “the cure can’t be worse than the problem itself” to justify the abandonment of all restrictions on the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, is now advancing the position that the consequences of NATO’s defeat in Ukraine are worse than the danger of thermonuclear war.

The plans to massively escalate in Ukraine coincide with the buildup toward military conflict with nuclear-armed China, exemplified in the anti-China hysteria whipped up over the so-called “spy balloon.” In his speech, Biden implied that the American attack on the research balloon, the first time the US shot down a Chinese aircraft since the Korean war, could presage further military action. “As we made clear last week, if China threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country. And we did,” Biden said.

These preparations are key to understanding Biden’s demonstrative appeals for unity with the increasingly fascistic Republicans.

He began his speech by congratulating newly elected Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who was elected Speaker and retains his position at the pleasure of the openly fascistic House Freedom Caucus. He cited the bipartisan legislative “achievements” of his first two years and appealed for more of the same going forward—proposing an array of populist measures that have, as he well knows, no chance of being passed by Congress. Just last week the House—with the votes of a majority of Democrats—passed a resolution condemning socialism and implicitly attacking Social Security, Medicare and other entitlement programs.

American imperialism and its leading war party—the Democrats—are focused on maintaining a sufficient degree of unity with the Republicans to prosecute their war agenda against Russia and China, and the savage austerity it will entail domestically, in the face of rising opposition within the working class, declining support for the war and a growing rebellion against the pro-imperialist, pro-war and pro-capitalist trade union apparatuses.

Hence, on the one hand, Biden’s promotion of the “Pro Act,” aimed at strengthening the grip of the union bureaucracies on the working class, and, on the other, his silence on one piece of bipartisan legislation passed in his first two years—the law outlawing a strike by rail workers and imposing a company-dictated contract that had been voted down by tens of thousands of rank-and-file workers.

This also accounts for the rabidly nationalist, “America First” character of Biden’s remarks. Biden’s agenda of economic warfare—directed not only against Russia and

China, but also against Wall Street’s NATO and Asian allies—his promotion of “Made in America,” “Buy American” and “The supply chain begins here” is critical to the foreign policy of military aggression and the domestic policy of class war.

Biden’s attempt to create an image of a thriving America and a resilient democracy was based on outright lies. He boasted of ending all public health measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, even as he acknowledged that the virus has killed over 1 million Americans. The supposed “victory” over COVID-19, which continues to kill some 500 people in the US every day according to vastly underestimated official figures, not to mention the untold ravages of Long COVID, is to be crowned by the expiration of the national health emergency in May.

Even as he tried to portray a society roaring back to prosperity, he cited facts that demonstrate the exact opposite: tens of thousands of deaths from drug overdoses, mass shootings, police killings, entire cities devastated by factory closures, price-gouging by drug companies and energy giants, decaying infrastructure, colossal levels of social inequality. At one point, in his pseudo-populist mode, he noted that there were 1,000 billionaires in the US, and then admitted that their ranks had increased from 600 since he took office.

As for democracy, the fact that the people are denied any say on the life-and-death issue of war demonstrates that there is no real democracy in the United States. The State of the Union address itself, which saw Republican lawmakers heckling and cursing Biden and calling him a liar, illustrated the disintegration of bourgeois democratic institutions and the growth of fascist parties and forces that are a common feature of the mortal crisis of capitalism internationally.

Biden’s deplorable speech, with its lies, platitudes, evasions and omissions, testifies to the degraded state of the American political system and the disastrous real “State of the Union.” It is one more demonstration of the need for the working class to take the road of mass, independent political struggle to end war, exploitation and repression by putting an end to capitalism and establishing socialism.



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