

Biden's Canada visit aimed at girding North American imperialist alliance for war with Russia and China

Roger Jordan
22 March 2023

Joe Biden will make his first official visit to Canada as US President this Thursday and Friday. The publicly announced agenda of issues Biden is to discuss with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau underscores that North America's twin imperialist powers are recklessly rushing towards world war, under conditions of an unprecedented global capitalist crisis that is also fueling a global working class upsurge of revolutionary dimensions.

The NATO allies will review the evolution of the US-led war against Russia in Ukraine, which has rapidly intensified during the first three months of 2023. As the far-right regime in Kiev faces an increasing crisis on the battlefield, the imperialist powers have pledged to supply ever-more powerful weaponry, including main battle tanks and soon fighter jets, threatening to turn the conflict into a direct shooting war with Moscow. Since February 2022, Canada has supplied well over \$1 billion in military support to Ukraine, including eight battle tanks, an air defence system, armoured vehicles, and vast quantities of ammunition. It has also deployed Special Forces to Ukraine, although their number and function is a closely guarded secret, and stepped up Operation Unifier, the mission it launched in cooperation with the US and British militaries to reorganize and train the Ukraine armed forces in 2015.

Earlier this month, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly made clear that Ottawa supports US imperialism's goal of subjugating Russia to the status of a semi-colony when she declared that Canada seeks "regime change" in Moscow. With their continuous escalation of the conflict and repeated assertions that there can be no end to the conflict short of a Ukraine- (in reality, NATO-) dictated "peace," the imperialist powers are risking a nuclear exchange that would threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Biden and Trudeau will also discuss deepening their collaboration in the aggressive incitement of military tensions and economic warfare with China, under conditions in which leading US military figures have warned that a war with Beijing could begin as soon as 2025. One of the most important tasks falling to Canada in these war preparations is the modernization of the bilateral North American aerospace and maritime defence command (NORAD), which is seen by military planners and security policy experts as essential to keeping China out of the Arctic and waging a "winnable" nuclear war. Demands for

accelerating NORAD's modernization were drastically ratcheted up after US warplanes shot down a Chinese weather balloon and a series of other unidentified objects, two of them over Canada, last month.

The pair will review American and Canadian cooperation on "friendshoring" production chains and securing access to raw materials deemed essential for advanced weaponry and dominance in key areas of future economic development, such as green energy and computer technologies. During the Trump administration, the Trudeau government launched the Critical Minerals Action Plan with Washington to ensure joint access to 17 rare earths identified to be of geostrategic and economic significance. A more detailed plan, involving almost three dozen strategic minerals, was agreed at Biden and Trudeau's first bilateral heads of government meeting, held via video-conference in February 2021.

While strong unity between the two governments is expected on the war with Russia and looming conflict with China, Biden will almost certainly take Canada to task for its military spending, which currently falls well short of the NATO target of 2 percent of GDP per year. US ambassador to Canada David Cohen complained in an interview Sunday with CBC that Ottawa's 20-year time-frame for its contribution to the modernization of NORAD was too slow. Canadian government officials have countered by citing their recently announced commitment to purchase 88 F-35 fighter jets and plans to spend some \$4 billion on NORAD modernization by 2027.

Biden will also press the Trudeau government to lead a military intervention in Haiti, where social and economic life has all but collapsed amid rampant gang violence and decades of imperialist plunder. Conscious of the deep-going opposition among the Haitian masses to yet another neo-colonial foreign military mission, the Trudeau government has been reluctant to assume responsibility for fronting one, preferring instead to arm the Haitian national police and impose sanctions on some of the country's oligarchs. Earlier this month, Chief of the Defence Staff Wayne Eyre claimed that Canada lacked the military resources to lead an intervention in Haiti, under conditions where it is simultaneously expanding its presence in Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

The US President's visit coincides with a ferocious anti-China campaign fueled by high-level intelligence leaks and spearheaded

by the corporate-controlled media, and the opposition Conservative, Bloc Québécois and New Democratic parties. For well over a month, there has been virtually no other story on the front pages of the major newspapers but lurid claims of alleged Chinese interference in Canadian federal elections and other areas of public life. Trudeau has been denounced as semi-treasonous by the far-right leader of the official opposition Conservatives, Pierre Poilievre, for supposedly covering up Chinese interference for electoral gain.

The purpose of the campaign is to demonize China in order to whip up popular support for rearmament and war, and compel the Trudeau government to take an even more explicitly hard-line approach towards the People's Republic. Calls are continuing for the government to convene a public inquiry into the allegations, even though the RCMP has admitted that there is not sufficient evidence for it to have launched even a single criminal investigation into the alleged interference.

One of the main complaints on the China front comes from a faction of the ruling elite that is dissatisfied with the Trudeau government's progress in purchasing new weapons systems and joining international strategic, military and trade alliances aimed at countering Beijing in the Indo-Pacific. A recent Canadian Press article contained numerous comments from military figures and foreign policy experts bemoaning the absence of a plan to procure a new fleet of submarines. The Trudeau government has also come under attack for its failure to involve Canada in the AUKUS pact struck between Australia, Britain, and the US to target China in September 2021. As Vice-Admiral Bob Auchterlonie, commander of Canada's Joint Operations Command, put it in January, "The issue is when you start talking about advanced technology in terms of the artificial-intelligence domain, machine learning, quantum, all of these things that really matter moving forward. Those are conversations we need to be in on. And the issue is: Why are we not included in this? Is it resistance to get involved? Is it policy restrictions that we have? Or are we just not going to invest? That's the question. So it is a significant concern."

Following on from Trump, the Biden administration is relentlessly escalating tensions with China. It has tripled the US troop presence in Taiwan since the beginning of the year and overturned the decades-long "one China" policy by vowing to defend "democratic" Taiwan. The US government is also now touting the thoroughly discredited, incendiary "lab leak" conspiracy theory of the origins of COVID-19, which blames the Wuhan Institute of Virology for triggering the global pandemic that has killed over 20 million people.

In tandem with Washington, the Trudeau government has adopted an ever more aggressive stance against China in recent months. It has banned Chinese investment in key strategic economic sectors, excluded Huawei from Canada's 5G network, and issued an Indo-Pacific strategy that it boasts was drafted in close consultation with the White House.

Washington's reckless policies in the war with Russia and its headlong rush toward a military conflagration with China arise out of the global capitalist crisis, of which the historic decline of American imperialism is a major expression. Three decades of uninterrupted US-led wars in the Middle East and Central Asia,

most of them backed to the hilt by Canada, have failed to halt the relative decline of American imperialism's economic and geopolitical hegemony. Under conditions in which a rapidly worsening social crisis across the continent and internationally is thrusting millions of workers into mass struggles, American and Canadian imperialism are seeking to turn these social tensions outwards by ramping up militarism and war around the world.

This explosion of militarism goes hand in hand with the promotion of economic protectionism through the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Negotiated as a replacement to NAFTA under the Trump administration, USMCA was recently described by Canadian Auto Parts Manufacturer's Association head Flavio Volpe as providing the basis to combine "American capital, Canadian minerals, and Mexican human capital," i.e., cheap labour. Biden and Trudeau are expected to discuss several issues in dispute under USMCA, including the Biden administration's "buy American" policies for government projects and Canada's subsidies to dairy farmers. The Canadian ruling class is also scrambling to counter Biden's America First strategy of providing massive subsidies for developing US-based computer chip and other high-tech industries.

A final point of contention is immigration policy. A so-called loophole in Canada's reactionary "Safe Third Country Agreement" with the United States allows people fleeing from war and social misery who cross into Canada outside of official border crossings to remain and apply for asylum. Far and away the most prominent location where this is taking place is Quebec's Roxham Road. The hard-right Coalition Avenir Quebec provincial government and other right-wing Quebec nationalists have seized on the crossing into Quebec/Canada of tens of thousands of poor and persecuted migrants to whip up anti-immigrant xenophobia and denounce the Trudeau government. Conservative leader Poilievre has recently tried to out-shout them, accusing Trudeau of failing to defend Canada's borders and promising that a Conservative government would solve the issue in 30 days, something that would require Ottawa to brazenly run roughshod over both Canadian and international law.

The Trudeau government has initiated negotiations with Washington to "legally" do the same thing—that is close the loophole and bar all migrants crossing into Canada by land from seeking asylum. However, it is highly unlikely that the Biden administration will do this "favour" for Ottawa without Trudeau making concessions elsewhere, such as agreeing to deploy Canadian military forces to Haiti.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact