

Biden uses Canada visit to strengthen North American imperialist powers' alliance for world war and global economic dominance

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US President Joe Biden's March 23-24 visit to Canada had one overriding purpose—to broaden and intensify the North American imperialist powers' preparations for world war and their pursuit of global economic dominance. Enjoying a more than eight-decade-old geostrategic and military partnership, US and Canadian imperialism are deploying their combined resources to come out on top in the new redivision of the world unleashed by the US-NATO-instigated war over Ukraine.

Both Biden's Friday address to a special joint session of parliament and the joint statement the US president and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau issued at the conclusion of the visit placed war with Russia and a looming conflict with China at the heart of their country's foreign policy, and indeed economic agenda. To secure the means and materiel to wage global warfare, the Trudeau government and Biden administration outlined a Fortress North America policy focussed on securing control of strategic minerals and bringing supply chains in key economic sectors back within North American borders. This protectionism will principally be carried out at China's expense.

The joint statement explicitly committed Washington and Ottawa to continue pouring billions of dollars of weaponry into the US-NATO war with Russia, which is increasingly threatening to escalate into a direct shooting war between nuclear-armed powers. Recycling the fraudulent propaganda used to justify the war, the statement condemned "Russia for its illegal, unjustifiable, and unprovoked war." Needless to say, there was not a word about Ottawa and Washington's role in orchestrating the 2014 Maidan coup, their promotion of far-right virulently anti-Russia forces, training and rearming of Ukraine's armed forces, or Trudeau's repeated promises in the years prior to the war's outbreak of Canadian assistance in "liberating" the Donbass and Crimea. Nor was there any mention of the more than three decades of US-led wars in the Balkans, Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia or the eastward expansion of NATO that led to Russia's encirclement.

In their statement, Biden and Trudeau vowed to maintain "our unwavering support for Ukraine for as long as it takes."

To emphasize the far-reaching significance of this latter phrase, Biden made a direct reference in his parliamentary address to the bloody slaughter of the First World War, which was driven by a global breakdown of capitalism and the inter-imperialist rivalries of the great powers. Biden cited the notorious pro-war poem *In Flanders Fields*, written by Canadian John McCrae, who himself fell victim to the mindless slaughter on the Western Front. "The words of a Canadian poet, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, still call to us from Flanders Field, echoing their charge through the ages," Biden declared. "And I quote it: 'To you from failing hands we throw the torch [to you] to hold it high.' So, today, let's once more affirm that we're going to keep that torch of liberty burning brightly. And support [for] the Ukrainian people will not waver."

The joint statement proclaimed Washington and Ottawa's concern over "the serious long-term challenge to the international order posed by the People's Republic of China, including disruptive actions such as economic coercion, non-market policies and practices, and human rights abuses." This from two imperialist powers complicit in waging decades of aggressive wars, employing economic bullying against their rivals and weaker states, and interfering in the domestic political life and violating the sovereignty of countless countries, including Ukraine, Syria, Venezuela and Iraq.

The Trudeau government pledged in the joint statement to invest \$C6.96 billion on over-the-horizon radar (OTHR) capabilities for the bilateral North American Aerospace Defence command (NORAD), which will strengthen surveillance in the Arctic, where China and Russia are seeking to play bigger roles. OTHR systems are designed to operate against nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, underscoring how modernization of the Cold War-era defence system is about enabling the North American imperialists to wage a "winnable" nuclear war. In addition, \$C7.3 billion will be spent on equipping the Northern Forward Operating Locations in Canada's Far North for fifth-generation aircraft, including the F-35 fighter jet operated by American and soon—as the result of a recent massive purchase—Canadian forces.

A key prong in the US-Canada onslaught on China is

economic warfare. The statement stressed the need to “strengthen resilience of critical mineral and semiconductor supply chains.” The statement outlined sweeping aims, including “identifying, securing, and developing critical minerals extraction, processing, manufacturing, and recycling opportunities in both countries to diversify supply chains essential to clean energy, electric vehicles, semiconductors, aerospace, and defense, among other sectors.”

Biden emphasized the point in more colorful language during a Friday afternoon press conference. Responding to a question, he said, “I’ll be darned if I’m going to stick in the situation where ... we have to rely on a supply chain in the other end of the world that is affected by politics, pandemics or anything else.” “I predict to you,” he continued, “you’re going to see after we’re both out of office ... China out of the game in terms of many of the products they’re producing.”

The pair also unveiled an “energy transformation task force.” It is to be chaired by Canada’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland, and Biden’s Special Presidential Coordinator for Global Infrastructure. The task force will “accelerate cooperation on critical clean energy opportunities and supply chains, including but not limited to, securing and strengthening renewable energy and electric vehicle supply chains, critical minerals and rare earths, grid integration and resilience, advanced and conventional nuclear energy and other areas that advance our collective energy security, and to avoid and reduce disruptions to our integrated and mutually supportive supply chains.” Freeland’s selection to co-lead this initiative is significant given her prominent role as a leading international advocate of so-called “friendshoring.” That is, the process of establishing protectionist economic supply chains on the basis of geopolitical alliances aimed at undermining economic and geostrategic rivals. The references to “net zero” and “clean energy” peppering this part of the document demonstrate that a central preoccupation of the US and Canadian ruling elites is seizing control of the economic sectors that are expected to drive economic growth and profits in coming decades.

As is always the case, the predatory imperialist interests discussed between the two leaders were covered over with bogus platitudes about the defence of “common values” like “democracy,” “diversity,” and “freedom.” The two warmongers and economic protectionists pledged their countries will pursue “fair and inclusive policies that benefit all citizens, regardless of sex, gender, or sexual orientation; race, ethnicity, or religion; age; disability; or geography.” This identity politics-laced jargon—entirely compatible with and indeed frequently employed to justify imperialist brigandry and war—has become the stock and trade of the so-called “progressive” wing of the bourgeois political establishment, and the unchallengeable mantra of the upper-middle class, which in both countries serve as a key constituency for imperialist war abroad and attacks on workers at home.

These cynical pledges are exposed no more so than in Haiti, where over a century of US-led imperialist interventions has produced a social and economic catastrophe. Under pressure from Biden to lead a new military intervention in Haiti, the Trudeau government—fearing Canada’s armed forces will be caught in a quagmire—instead pledged an additional \$100 million to the Haitian National Police. Ottawa has a longstanding close relationship with the police and is providing it logistical support in combatting well-armed violent gangs that control much of Port-au-Prince and the country. These gangs are themselves sponsored by factions of Haiti’s oligarchic elite and have ties to elements within the police.

The two imperialist powers, who backed far-right forces associated with the old Duvalier dictatorship in a 2004 armed coup and subsequently presided over the devastation of the country following the 2010 earthquake, proclaimed their commitment in the joint statement to increase “international support for the Haitian people” with “security and humanitarian assistance.” Their pledge to hold “accountable those who undermine Haiti’s stability” amounted to an open declaration of their determination to make the country “stable” for international finance capital to exploit local sweatshop labour.

The hypocritical character of Biden and Trudeau’s invocation of “democracy” and “human rights” was further revealed in the agreement reached on migration aimed at reducing the flow of “illegal” immigrants crossing into Canada. The deal allows Canada to abolish a so-called loophole in the reactionary “Safe Third Country Agreement” with the United States that has allowed people who cross at unauthorized checkpoints to remain in Canada and apply for asylum. Under the new agreement, Canada and the US have declared the entire land border and all lakes and rivers subject to the Safe Third Country Agreement, thereby allowing border guards to turn back refugees fleeing war and social misery wherever they cross. In the US, they are even more likely to be detained at length and deported.

Rushing to cut off the flow of refugees, the Canadian government closed the Roxham Road crossing in Quebec, by far the most well-known of the unauthorized refugee crossing points, as of 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

The Biden administration, for its part, intends to use the “modernized” Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement to legitimize its recently announced measures to immediately expel virtually all refugees entering the US via the Mexican border on the grounds that Mexico is a “safe third” country.



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