

The Trump administration and the escalating imperialist war in Ukraine

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With eight weeks until Inauguration Day, the incoming Trump administration is wasting no time in preparing its agenda. Trump has assembled a cabinet dominated by billionaires and fascists, intent on unleashing a massive assault on immigrants while dismantling the democratic and social rights of the working class.

In response, top Democrats, from Biden to Bernie Sanders, have pledged to “work with” the incoming administration, emphasizing “collaboration” and “compromise” with Trump and their “Republican colleagues.” The Democrats’ overriding concern is not Trump’s authoritarian designs but safeguarding the continuity of the Biden administration’s central imperialist objective: the war against Russia in Ukraine.

The war was the main topic of discussion at the White House meeting a week after the election, when Biden offered to do “everything we can to make sure you’re accommodated.” Behind closed doors, the outgoing and incoming presidents discussed the plans for a major escalation of the war and, in particular, the authorization for Ukraine to use US-provided long-range missiles to target cities deep inside Russia, which it has now done.

During the campaign, Trump made occasional warnings about the danger of “World War III,” while stating that he favored some sort of negotiated end to the conflict in Ukraine. This, however, will be among the first demagogic statements that will be jettisoned. The incoming administration will be no less committed than the outgoing one to the defense of the core strategic interests of American imperialism.

In a significant statement, Representative Michael Waltz, Trump’s choice for national security advisor, declared in an interview with Fox News over the

weekend, in relation to Ukraine:

For our adversaries out there that think this is a time of opportunity, that they can play one administration off the other, they’re wrong. We are hand-in-glove, we are one team with the United States in this transition.

Waltz said that he has had numerous discussions with Biden’s National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, as part of the “seamless transition” to the Trump administration. While still calling for a negotiated end to the conflict, Waltz stressed the need to “restore deterrence” and “get ahead of this escalation ladder”—that is, engage in some sort of massive military provocation or preemptive action to force a “deal.”

The conflict in Ukraine is central to the imperatives of American imperialism. An underlying driving force has been the effort to secure control over strategic resources, in both Ukraine and Russia itself, which are seen as critical to control over the world economy.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a prominent Trump ally, laid bare the material motives of US imperialism, declaring Sunday:

This war is about money. ... The richest country in all of Europe for rare earth minerals is Ukraine, two to seven trillion dollars worth of minerals. ... So Donald Trump’s going to do a deal to get our money back, to enrich ourselves with rare earth minerals, a good deal for Ukraine and us.

The US puppet regime in Kiev hopes that it can appeal to Trump on this basis to take, if anything, a more aggressive stance. In a commentary on Monday, under the headline “Ukraine prepares to sell Trump on why U.S. should maintain support,” the *Washington Post* reported on efforts of the Ukrainian government to convince Trump that the war is “a cost-effective economic and geostrategic opportunity that will ultimately enrich and secure the United States and its interests.”

Using speculation about Trump’s policies as a pretext, the imperialist powers of Europe are preparing to assert their own interests more aggressively. According to the French daily *Le Monde*, “sensitive discussions, most of which are classified,” have been “relaunched in light of a potential American withdrawal of support for Kyiv once Donald Trump takes office on January 20, 2025.”

Among the options being discussed is the direct deployment of European troops into the war. According to *Le Monde*, plans for the deployment of troops, which were initially raised by French President Emmanuel Macron in February, are now being revived. A British military source revealed that “discussions are underway between the UK and France on defense cooperation, particularly with a view to creating a hard core of allies in Europe, focused on Ukraine and wider European security.”

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot stated during a visit to London last week that European powers must “not set and express red lines” in their support for Ukraine. When asked by the BBC about deploying French troops, Barrot responded, “We do not discard any option.”

The war in Ukraine is itself only a component part of an escalating global war, indeed the initial stages of world war. This includes the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, a campaign of brutal imperialist violence supported by both Democrats and Republicans, as well as the intensifying US confrontation with China.

For the past nearly three years, the escalation of the war in Ukraine has followed a relentless logic. For American imperialism, military victory against Russia is seen as necessary not only in relation to Russia itself but for its implications in this broader war. As the *Washington Post* editorialized on Saturday,

“abandonment of Ukraine—or a deal that leaves Ukraine untenably territorially diminished” would signal “that Western resolve comes with an expiration date.”

For its part, the Trump administration and its cabal of fascists and militarists will come to power under conditions of escalating economic, political and social crisis. Its dreams of imposing a massive assault on the working class will encounter enormous resistance, and its nationalist policies will confront the reality of a globally interconnected world economy. It will seek, as the American ruling class has during the past 30 years of unending and expanding war, to resolve the internal crisis of American capitalism through military force.

Writing in the midst of World War I, Lenin explained:

The monstrous horrors of the imperialist war, the suffering caused by the high cost of living everywhere engender a revolutionary mood; and the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie and its servitors, the governments, are more and more moving into a blind alley from which they can never extricate themselves without tremendous upheavals.

Once again, tremendous upheavals are in store.



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