

Trump's "Donroe Doctrine" and the crisis of Canadian imperialism: What way forward for the working class?

Our reporters
14 January 2026

US President Donald Trump's January 3 invasion of Venezuela and abduction of President Nicolás Maduro have drastically intensified the economic and geostrategic crisis facing Canadian imperialism. Washington's illegal act of imperialist barbarism, aimed at asserting its unchallenged dominance over Latin America as part of banishing all potential "strategic competitors" from the Western hemisphere and controlling its natural resources, governments and trade routes, underlined just how serious Trump is with his declared intention to make Canada America's "51st state" and seize Greenland.

For over a year, the Canadian bourgeoisie has been groping for a response to Trump's annexation threats, punishing economic tariffs, and pursuit of an "America First" agenda around the world. The first year of the would-be dictator's second term in office had already put paid to any hopes in Ottawa that the more than eight-decade-old bilateral military-strategic partnership, upon which Canadian imperialism relied to realize its global interests, could be retained in its existing form. Following January 3, 2026, there can be little doubt on the part of the Canadian ruling class that if Trump has his way, the very existence of the Canadian federal state is threatened, at least as it is presently constituted. Retired politicians and diplomats and editorial writers, if not yet government officials publicly, are using terms such as "vassalage" and "protectorate," and warning that Trump will seek to leverage the Quebec and Alberta separatist movements.

Trump and his chief henchmen, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and War Secretary Pete Hegseth, have proudly and loudly proclaimed that the seizure of Venezuela's oil resources and transformation of the country into a US vassal state are to be only a first step in implementing the "Donroe Doctrine" promulgated in last month's US National Security Strategy. Building on the 19th-century Monroe Doctrine and Teddy Roosevelt's 1904 "corollary" to it, the Donroe Doctrine proclaims American imperialism's "right" as the Western Hemisphere's "pre-eminent power" to seize critical resources and infrastructure, dictate states' foreign and economic policies, overthrow governments and annex territories from the Arctic Ocean to Tierra del Fuego. By excluding its rivals and asserting unbridled dominance over the entire hemisphere, US imperialism aims to secure its "near abroad" in preparation for "strategic conflict" and war with its great-power competitors: China, Russia and the European Union.

These are bound up with the different roles that various provinces and regions play in the US-dominated continental economy. But over and above all these divisions, the Canadian bourgeoisie is unanimous that the response to Trump's threats requires a vast escalation of the exploitation of the working class. The *Globe and Mail*, the newspaper of record for Canada's financial oligarchy, went so far as to describe Trump's actions in Venezuela as having triggered a "national emergency" for Canada, a characterization that suggests the federal government should be preparing to abrogate core democratic rights, ban strikes, and impose an authoritarian regime.

Ottawa's eight-decade military-strategic partnership with American imperialism, stretching back to World War II, gave it the ability both to project its imperialist interests around the world and secure a degree of social stability at home. These times are now irretrievably over. Canada's ruling elite spent the first year of Trump's second term embracing wide swaths of his far-right social policies. Prime Minister Mark Carney increased military spending last year by 17 percent to reach NATO's 2 percent target and committed to spend 5 percent of the GDP on war by 2035. To cover the costs of this vast rearmament program, the Carney government has intensified public spending austerity and virtually abrogated the right to strike in order to suppress worker opposition, a model followed by Quebec and other provincial governments.

The trade union bureaucracy and social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) have done their utmost to cover up this class war by pumping out "Team Canada" propaganda, claiming that workers should join hands with the bosses and government ministers to oppose Trump. This propaganda offensive has helped smother opposition in the working class as the devastating impact of Trump's tariffs and Canadian counter-tariffs have led to the destruction of thousands of jobs in the auto, steel, forestry and other industries.

Carney, a former central banker who spent his entire adult life catering to the demands of the oligarchy, was brought to power last year with the backing of dominant sections of the bourgeoisie because he was seen as a safe pair of hands to uphold Canadian imperialist interests in the face of Trump. In addition to further militarization and attacks on public services and worker rights, Carney has overseen sweeping tax cuts for the wealthy and big business, and an intensification of the anti-immigrant witch-hunt begun under his predecessor, former Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

War on the working class

There are deep-rooted rivalries and cleavages within the Canadian

Inter-imperialist rivalries

The breakdown of the post-war economic order, upon which the Canada-US military-strategic partnership rested, has exacerbated conflicts between rivals and erstwhile allies around the world.

In the new redivision of the world between the major powers, all of which want to seize hold of the lion's share of raw materials, cheap labour, trade routes and geostrategic influence, the interests of American and Canadian imperialism are increasingly at odds. The seizure of Venezuela's oil by Trump signals Washington's determination to act unilaterally and exclude junior partners from any share of the spoils. This includes Canada in Latin America and the Caribbean, regions where it has had large investments and significant imperialist interests since emerging as an imperialist power in its own right at the beginning of the 20th century.

Despite the growing tensions between Washington and Ottawa, preserving Canada's privileged access to the US market is viewed by the Canadian ruling class as pivotal to upholding its imperialist interests. Ottawa seeks to secure a place as Washington's recognized junior partner within Trump's "Fortress North America." Over the past three decades, it has participated actively in US-led wars in the Middle East and Central Asia, fuelled and helped wage the US/NATO war on Russia, and collaborated with Washington's campaign against Venezuela through sanctions, diplomatic isolation and support for pro-imperialist opposition forces.

The 1988 Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (subsequently subsumed into NAFTA) secured Canada's access to the US market amid the breakdown of the post-war equilibrium and the emergence of regional trading blocs. Taking advantage of Canada's heavy dependence on the US, which is the destination for about three-quarters of all Canadian exports, Trump strong-armed Canada and Mexico during his first term to replace NAFTA with a new agreement, USMCA, that strengthened American economic dominance across the continent.

Exploiting Canada's economic and geopolitical vulnerability to US pressure, and in accordance with the "Donroe Doctrine" and his call for a "new age" of American territorial expansion, Trump now intends to go far further. He intends to use "economic force" and geopolitical pressure to refashion Canada's economy in the interests of Wall Street and Washington and press for Canada's absorption, or at least choice parts of it, into the US.

Canada's political and media establishment looked upon the impending renegotiation of the USMCA with trepidation prior to Maduro's abduction. With Washington now making clear that the Donroe Doctrine is its blueprint for its relations with Canada, the ruling class is being compelled to recognize that what it faces is not a trade "negotiation," no matter how fractious, but something more akin to a mafia shakedown. If Trump does not get his way, he has made clear that he will blow up the agreement altogether.

In testimony before Congress in mid-December, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer underscored that the USMCA was deliberately designed to preserve Washington's leverage as the largest economy on the North American continent. He made clear that the Trump administration has no intention of automatically extending the agreement and that renewal will depend on Canada and Mexico acceding to US demands. Trump has insisted that he wants unhindered access to Canada's critical minerals and water, which are considered essential elements in fueling Washington's war economy.

Workers must oppose all factions of the Canadian ruling class and unite with American workers

The sharpening tensions between the US and Canada, and the predicament facing Canadian imperialism produced by the breakdown of its most important strategic partnership have aggravated longstanding regional cleavages within the ruling class.

None of the factions engaged in bitter squabbles over their policies towards Trump and the European imperialists, or how state borders and the spoils should be distributed in the event of a breakup of the Canadian federal state, has anything to offer the working class in the struggle against Trump and all he represents—fascist dictatorship, imperialist war and the impoverishment of the working class.

Carney reacted to Trump's Venezuela invasion January 3 with a series of steps underscoring how the faction of the ruling class for which his government speaks is hedging its bets in the face of Trump's threat to annex the country. Carney travelled to Europe on January 5 and 6, where he participated in a meeting chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron on the ongoing war with Russia in Ukraine. The so-called "coalition of the willing" was established by the European imperialist powers with the aim of sabotaging Trump's effort to reach an accommodation with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the European powers' expense and continue the war at all costs. Carney signed on to a statement released following the meeting that pledged to deploy British and French troops to Ukraine once a "peace deal" had been struck. Since coming to power last year, Carney has also backed and sought to involve Canada in the European powers' massive rearmament drive, which is aimed at enabling them to act militarily on the world stage independently of and against the US.

While in Europe, Carney issued a statement backing Denmark and the European powers in their clash with Trump over his intention to seize Greenland by military force if necessary. The Danish territory is of immense geostrategic importance due to its location in the Arctic, which is being opened up to exploitation and trade routes due to climate change, and its rich deposits of raw materials.

Carney is also visiting China this week, as part of his plan to double non-US trade by 2035. China is the main target of Trump's "America First" trade war policies, and as part of Ottawa's alignment with Washington was identified by the previous Trudeau Liberal government as a "disruptive global power" inimical to "Canadian values."

Far-right Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, who enthused over the abduction of Maduro in a Trump-style outburst, speaks for a faction of Canadian big business in favour of a closer alliance with Trump. He is supported by Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, who has repeatedly flown south to meet Trump, voiced support for his global "energy dominance" strategy and fanned Alberta separatism.

Indicating that powerful sections of Canadian capital are hungering to profit off Trump's imperialist rampage, Bank of Nova Scotia CEO Scott Thomson has praised Trump's action in Venezuela and strategy to dominate the Western Hemisphere. "Longer-term, this is a good thing for the Western Hemisphere," he told a Royal Bank of Canada conference. "It's a good thing for the US. It's a good thing for the Bank of Nova Scotia."

In Quebec, the "sovereignist," i.e., Quebec separatist, movement advocates establishing direct relations with Trump and Wall Street by establishing a third imperialist state in north America by seceding from Canada. The systematic whipping up of vicious anti-immigrant hysteria and "Quebec first" chauvinism by the Parti Québécois and its federal sister party, the Bloc Québécois, together with the pseudo-left fraternity organized in and around Québec Solidaire, underlines the right-wing, anti-worker character of this movement, which serves the interests of Quebec capital.

The NDP, together with its sponsors in the trade union bureaucracy, have been the chief promoters of foul Canadian nationalism in response to Trump's threats to annex Canada. They championed "Team Canada,"

which involved urging workers to subordinate themselves to the Liberal government, and bosses' organizations like the Business Council of Canada and Canadian Chamber of Commerce, all in the name of securing "unity" and defending "Canadian jobs."

Former NDP MP Charlie Angus has taken the party's pro-imperialist, nationalist tub-thumping to the next logical stage. He has hailed Carney's plan to expand the military to include 300,000 reserve soldiers as a welcome step to establishing a "people's army" to fight Trump. Given the decades-long record of the NDP and unions in promoting divisions between Canadian and American workers, while at the same time propping up pro-war Liberal governments and backing Canadian imperialist wars of aggression, the real danger posed by such reactionary proclamations cannot be overstated.

The eruption of imperialist barbarism epitomized by Trump's Donroe Doctrine urgently demands an independent political response from the working class in Canada, the United States and around the world. Canadian workers cannot fight Trump and his program of fascist dictatorship, imperialist war and social misery for workers at home in alliance with any faction of the Canadian bourgeoisie. To the extent that they "oppose" Trump, the Canadian ruling class does so merely from the standpoint that he threatens its core interests by refusing to recognize their "right" to brutally exploit the Canadian working class and enforce their own imperialist ambitions on the coattails of Washington. All of the warring factions agree on one thing: the working class must pay the price for Canadian imperialism's crisis.

The only basis to combat war, dictatorship and austerity for Canadian workers is in the closest fighting unity with workers in the United States, Latin America and beyond. This struggle requires a socialist and internationalist program to put an end to capitalism, the decrepit social order that has produced Trump and the embrace of his policies by ruling elites around the world. The working class must be politically mobilized through the construction of rank-and-file committees in opposition to the trade union bureaucracies and the foul Canadian nationalism they peddle. The struggle to unify the working class internationally and put the interests of the vast majority before those of private profit must find expression in the fight for workers' governments committed to the socialist reorganization of society.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)