

Quebec separatists intensify their efforts to court Trump after Canada-China trade deal

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The Canada-China trade agreement that Prime Minister Mark Carney reached with President Xi Jinping during his visit to Beijing earlier this month has been angrily denounced by the Quebec separatist establishment. The Parti Québécois (PQ) and its federal sister party, the Bloc Québécois (BQ), have seized upon the modest trade agreement as a further argument for Quebec independence, and above all to signal their allegiance to American imperialism, now led by the would-be dictator Donald Trump.

The Trump administration's trade war and its threats to use "economic force" to transform Canada into America's 51st state have caused the virtual collapse of Canada-US relations. Ottawa's deal with Beijing to scale back their own tariff war represents a tactical maneuver by Canadian imperialism. It is aimed at diversifying Canada's economic ties, so as to gain greater leverage in pushing back against an increasingly belligerent Washington that is seeking to use Canada's dependence on the US market to extract economic and geopolitical concessions.

Ottawa's limited rapprochement with China is taking place amid a concerted drive on the part of the Carney Liberal government to expand economic and military-strategic ties with the European imperialist powers, as well as Japan, South Korea and India.

The China trade deal in no way suggests a departure from Canada's previous imperialist alignments and alliances. With its insistence that any improved relations with Beijing must be within strict "national-security guardrails," the Carney government has made clear that it remains committed to the US-led military-strategic offensive against China, including denying Beijing access to "dual-use" technologies. Just before embarking on his visit to China, the first by a Canadian prime minister since 2017, Carney participated in a "coalition of the willing" meeting in Paris to underline Canada's support for the continued prosecution of the NATO-instigated war against Russia in Ukraine.

Despite all this, the PQ leadership has denounced Carney's China trip and the trade deal in the most virulent terms. The PQ has accused Ottawa of imperiling Canadian "national security" and threatening Canada and Quebec's relations with Washington.

The PQ and its leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon are determined to demonstrate their alignment with Washington's anti-China war drive, as part of their efforts to convince the Trump administration, and Washington and Wall Street more broadly, that an independent capitalist *République du Québec* would be no threat to US imperialist interests. Indeed, they argue, it would be a more dependable and loyal ally than Canadian imperialism.

Even before Carney had set foot in Beijing, the PQ broadcast its opposition to any rapprochement with China and eagerness to work with Trump. It reprised the strident anticommunist rhetoric in which the fascist president and the US political and military establishments couch their predatory geopolitical agenda.

In a January 12 social media post, PQ leader St-Pierre Plamondon denounced Carney's "insane desire to suddenly forge an alliance with a

totalitarian communist regime that already constitutes a threat to our national security, China." The posting—coming amid Trump's threats to launch a further US military attack on Iran on the fraudulent pretext of defending its people from repression—also proclaimed the PQ's "support for the Iranian people in their uprising against a totalitarian Islamist regime."

The PQ elaborated on its opposition to Carney's China trip in an article written by PQ spokesman and legislator Pascal Paradis and published in the nationalist tabloid the *Journal de Montréal* the same day. It declared:

This visit occurs at the very moment when Chinese interference in Canada and Quebec is vastly documented and constitutes one of the most important threats to our security. This mission also takes place at a time when China supports Russia in its large-scale war against Ukraine, where the authoritarian Chinese regime—a communist dictatorship—violates the human rights of dissidents and Uyghur and Tibetan minorities, among others.

Paradis continued:

This dynamic now takes on another dimension if it is part of an endorsement of the Chinese regime and a rupture of cooperation with the Americans in matters of security and commercial exchanges: displeased with negotiations with the Trump administration, Mark Carney and (former Liberal Prime Minister) Jean Chrétien are going to throw themselves into the arms of China, the United States' main rival for decades and for the foreseeable future.

At a press conference at the Quebec National Assembly on January 16—the same day that Carney announced the China trade deal—St-Pierre Plamondon doubled down on his attack on any thawing of relations with Beijing. He explicitly endorsed Washington's characterization of China as a strategic threat, and went on to make clear the PQ's alignment with the most aggressive elements of Trump's foreign policy.

While denouncing China for violating "international law," the PQ leader excused the Trump administration's illegal January 3 military invasion of Venezuela, the abduction of its president, Nicolás Maduro, and the announcement that it was seizing the country's oil wealth. "Venezuela," he declared, "is a country, a truly totalitarian and oppressive regime, that openly collaborated with China and Russia in the territory of the Americas." At the same time, St-Pierre Plamondon downplayed Trump's threats to militarily seize Greenland, and affirmed the PQ's recognition that Washington has a legitimate "interest" in "defending" North

America.

"I work for Quebec businesses," declared the PQ leader, who according to the opinion polls is poised to become the province's premier after the election slated for this October. "There is no scenario where our Quebec businesses will stop doing business with our main partner, which is the United States." St-Pierre Plamondon expressed anger and dismay that Ottawa would "throw ourselves... into the arms of the totalitarian communist Chinese regime to slightly increase our canola exports a few months before a crucial negotiation with the United States, in the context of which our businesses may face all sorts of other measures."

Speaking of US imperialism, St-Pierre Plamondon then affirmed, "We are part of the same geopolitical team," adding, "it is undeniable that we have shared security and foreign interference concerns."

Courting Trump in the name of Quebec independence

Under St-Pierre Plamondon, the PQ has spelled out a far-right agenda for independence based on an explicitly chauvinist, pro-big business agenda. In a Quebec version of the fascistic "great replacement" conspiracy theory, the PQ claims that if Quebec does not vote to secede from Canada by 2030 it will be submerged in a sea of English-speaking immigrants.

St-Pierre Plamondon has made common cause with the far-right, pro-Trump Alberta separatist movement, and like them is planning to visit Washington in the coming weeks to solicit support.

Far-right ideologue Mathieu Bock-Côté (whose columns are avidly read by Quebec's nationalist political establishment) pointed to the political calculations behind the PQ's courting of the Trump administration in the *Journal de Montréal* earlier this month: "Are we not capable," he asked, "of understanding that our membership in Canada is far more dangerous for our people than a cordial relationship with the United States?"

Trump, he continued, "is less closed-minded regarding the idea of redefining state borders. It is reasonable to assume that an independent Quebec, offering the U.S. a favourable energy agreement and serious military cooperation, primarily to ensure the defence of the North, could find a partner in Washington willing to recognize it."

The PQ sees Trump's openly imperialist and territorial expansionist agenda as an opportunity to secure American backing for Quebec independence. It is effectively offering Quebec's services as a willing junior partner in a "Fortress North America." This includes assisting Washington in its efforts to redefine its relations with the Canadian federal state, so as to reshape Canada's economy and its borders to the advantage of Washington and Wall Street.

St-Pierre Plamondon's declaration at his January 16 press conference that an independent Quebec would take "a completely different approach," than Carney and the most powerful sections of Canadian capital, "much more aligned with the prevention of foreign interference and the preservation of security in our region," represents nothing less than an offer to serve as Washington's loyal sentinel on the north-east flank of North America as Washington prepares for world war with its principal rivals, China and Russia.

The PQ's support for Trump's criminal foreign policy represents a continuation of decades of Quebec separatist backing for American and Canadian imperialism's wars and regime-change operations—from Yugoslavia and Haiti to Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. Previously, this was wrapped in the language of "humanitarian intervention" and "democratic values." Today, the PQ is supporting American imperialism under conditions in which it is led by a fascistic administration that models its foreign policy strategy on Hitler's Third Reich, openly

proclaiming its "right" to seize territories and plunder resources at will.

The PQ is aligning with a criminal regime that has:

- *enabled Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza and illegally attacked Iran, as part of a drive to impose a "New Middle East" through aggression and war;

- *attacked Venezuela, threatened to "take back" the Panama Canal and invade Mexico and Colombia, and—under the so-called "Donroe Doctrine"—asserted the right to seize assets and territories throughout the Americas to ensure US "preeminence" in the Western Hemisphere;

- *threatened military action against Denmark, an ostensible NATO ally over Greenland;

- *systematically dismantled democratic rights and the rule of law within the United States, as part of a drive to establish a presidential dictatorship.

War and escalating attacks on the working class are incompatible with democratic rights. As Trump declared at last week's Davos summit: "Sometimes you need a dictator." The Trump administration's drive to violently assert US global hegemony is taking place as Gestapo-type federal agents are occupying American cities, conducting illegal raids against immigrants and citizens alike, and even executing anti-ICE protesters. In Minneapolis, ICE agents summarily executed the poet and mother Renee Good on January 7, and Alex Pretti, a nurse, last Saturday.

The Quebec separatists' efforts to court American imperialism under these circumstances carry a stark warning for the working class: the drive to war abroad is inseparable from war on workers at home. As the rapid turn of Canadian and Quebec establishment politics to the right since Trump's return to the White House has underscored, the development of the class struggle in Canada and Quebec is inevitably shaped by American developments.

In a climate of increasing xenophobia and anti-Muslim hysteria, the PQ has consistently positioned itself to the right of Quebec's ruling Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), denouncing it for being "too soft" in its promotion of chauvinism and insufficiently vigorous in defending Quebec's "national interests" and "values." The party has called for even more draconian restrictions on immigration, joined the CAQ in blaming immigrants for myriad social problems caused by capitalist austerity, and labelled asylum seekers, temporary foreign workers and international students an "existential threat" to the "Quebec nation."

The PQ's offer to serve as Washington's loyal partner in "Fortress North America" is also a statement of intent for domestic policy: more austerity, the criminalization of strikes and dissent, and the whipping up of anti-immigrant hysteria to divide workers along national and linguistic lines and undermine democratic rights. An independent Quebec under PQ leadership would function as a garrison state, fully integrated into American imperialism's war machine, with the Quebec working class subjected to intensified exploitation and repression in the service of US imperialism and its Québécois junior partners.

For the unity of the North American working class!

This does not mean, however, that the unravelling of the US-Canada economic and military-security partnership transforms Canadian imperialism or its federal state into any sort of "progressive" alternative to American imperialism or Quebec separatism. Insofar as the Canadian bourgeoisie opposes Trump, it is only from the standpoint of defending its own profits and privileges and its "first right" to exploit Canada's working class and abundant resources.

In a revealing illustration of the Canadian bourgeoisie's predatory appetites, Carney told last week's Davos summit that "middle powers" must act together, "because if we're not at the table," where the

imperialist powers divide up resources, plunder and spheres of influence, “we’re on the menu.”

Canadian imperialism is determined to profit at the expense of its traditional rivals and erstwhile allies alike in the rapidly escalating repartition of the globe. Carney’s reference to Canada as a “middle power,” rather than the imperialist predator that it is, is part of a concerted propaganda offensive by the Canadian ruling class to exploit popular revulsion against Trump and US imperialism to garner undeserved political sympathy, justify rearmament and the intensification of worker-exploitation and further divide workers along national lines. Workers in Canada must respond by forging unity with their class brothers and sisters in the US and internationally in struggle against imperialist war.

The resistance of workers everywhere is growing. Last Friday’s demonstration of over 100,000 in freezing temperatures in Minneapolis is merely a harbinger of a prolonged period of mass struggles. The growing upsurge of the American working class poses with increasing urgency the fundamental question of unifying the North American working class in a mass industrial and political offensive against rearmament and war, austerity, oligarchy and dictatorship. This unity can only be forged in a political fight against all factions of the Canadian bourgeoisie and their various political representatives, including the Quebec separatists, who are desperately scrambling to reinforce borders or create new ones, while promoting nationalism, anti-immigrant chauvinism and other forms of political reaction.



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