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Canada joins US-led Olympic boycott as Trudeau government pursues ever more belligerent anti-China policy

Egged on by the corporate media, Canada's Liberal government is binding itself ever more tightly to Washington's all-sided diplomatic, economic and military-strategic offensive against China.

The latest move saw Ottawa swiftly fall into line behind the Biden administration's call for a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics, which are to take place in February.

Announcing that Canada would join the diplomatic boycott initiated by the US, Britain and Australia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau cynically invoked Beijing's alleged human rights abuses against its Uyghur Muslim minority. Canada's Liberal government is "extremely concerned" about "repeated human rights violations carried out by the Chinese government," Trudeau declared. Foreign Minister Melanie Joly followed suit, adding: "Canada has been playing a leadership role on this—this is in line with our foreign policy. Canada always stands up on questions of human rights."



A woman wearing a face mask to protect against COVID-19 walks past the logo for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Torch Relay during an event at the Beijing University of Posts and Communications in Beijing, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

Trudeau followed this up just days later by attending US President Joe Biden’s “Summit for Democracy,” which brought together the leaders of the imperialist powers and a series of US-aligned far-right authoritarian strongmen—including Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro, India’s Narendra Modi and the Philippines’s Rodrigo Duterte—to posture as defenders of democratic rights against China, Russia and Iran.

Biden has picked up seamlessly from where Trump left off in pursuing Washington’s drive to block China’s rise as an economic and geostrategic competitor to US imperialism. However, unlike his fascist-minded predecessor, Biden prefers to cloak US imperialism’s pursuit of its predatory interests and ambitions behind a tissue of lying propaganda about “democracy” and “human rights.”

Trudeau’s official statement to the summit asserted that the gathering was “promoting” and “protecting democracy,” before declaring that Canada will “promote democratic renewal at home and abroad” by strengthening “its capacity to provide fast and flexible support to fragile or emerging democracies through international assistance and diplomatic efforts.”

The “human rights” rhetoric should fool no one as to the aggressive purpose of the Olympic boycott and, more broadly, Canada’s increasingly prominent role in Washington’s military-strategic build-up against Russia and China. Canadian imperialism

has invariably invoked “human rights” as the pretext for its participation in a series of US-led wars of aggression over the last three decades. From the bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999 through the 2011 regime-change war in Libya, Ottawa has joined Washington in hurling lurid, unsubstantiated allegations of “genocide” and “human rights violations” against their chosen targets, so as to provide “progressive” cover for their pursuit of their imperialist interests and ambitions through acts of military savagery.

The kind of “international assistance” for “democracies” that the Trudeau government has in mind is shown by its military collaboration with far-right and outright fascistic forces in Ukraine—the descendants of Stepan Bandera’s pro-Nazi Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists—against Russia.

The claim that China is conducting “genocide” against the Uyghur minority, for which there is no evidence, is being accompanied by a massive military build-up in the Asia-Pacific. Just two months ago, a Canadian warship provocatively sailed through the Taiwan Strait as part of a US Navy battle group. This dangerous development occurred as top US commanders openly discuss the prospect of an all-out war with Beijing within a few years.

The *World Socialist Web Site* holds no brief for the Stalinist regime in Beijing, which oversaw the reintroduction of capitalism and the transformation of China into a sweatshop for global finance capital. That being said, there is nothing more grotesque than Trudeau, Joly and Biden waxing lyrical about “human rights” and wagging their fingers at Beijing under conditions where their governments have presided over the avoidable deaths of hundreds of thousands of people during the pandemic. In China, meanwhile, the implementation of a Zero COVID policy has restricted COVID-19 deaths to three since the pandemic’s first wave was suppressed in April 2020. Canada, with a population approximately one-fortieth that of China’s, has recorded six times more COVID-19 deaths. The regime in Beijing could justifiably respond to the Western propaganda by arguing that if it really wanted to conduct a genocide against the Uyghur population, all it would need to do would be to adopt Washington’s and Ottawa’s homicidal pandemic policy of prioritizing corporate profits over the safeguarding of human lives.

As the closest ally of Washington for over eight decades, Canada is fully integrated with Washington’s incendiary offensive against China. Shortly after the Obama administration initiated its anti-China “Pivot to Asia,” the Harper Conservative government signed a

secret agreement with the United States to enhance Canadian-US military cooperation, the Asia-Pacific Defense Policy Cooperation Framework. Canadian submarines and warships are now routinely deployed off China's shores and to ply the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea.

In August, the Trudeau government concluded an agreement with Washington to "modernize" the Canada-US North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) for "strategic competition" with China and Russia. Their plans include rapidly expanding Canadian and US military capacities in the resource-rich and strategically important Arctic region as well as developing and deploying new high-tech and nuclear-capable weaponry to deal with so-called "beyond the horizon" threats.

On the economic front, the Trudeau government participated in the Trump-demanded renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to consolidate North America as a US-led protectionist trade bloc aimed at China and other rivals of the continent's twin imperialist powers. At a bilateral meeting with the Biden administration earlier this year, the Trudeau cabinet also approved a comprehensive economic and security strategy to consolidate US and Canadian imperialist dominance of the rapidly expanding global market for clean energy products and related technologies.

In a further indication of Canadian imperialism's determination to strengthen its geostrategic and economic position in the Asia-Pacific in opposition to China, Ottawa has initiated negotiations for a free trade agreement with the 10-nation Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Ahead of the official launching of trade talks last month, Trudeau labelled the prospective free trade deal a "win-win" agreement, while International Trade Minister Mary Ng commented that it was a significant milestone in "deepening Canada's economic relationship with the Indo-Pacific region."

The proposed trade deal is part of the new "Indo-Pacific strategy" that the Trudeau government is currently developing, and—as was publicly announced after Trudeau met with Biden at the White House last month—it is doing so in close consultation with Washington.

The Indo-Pacific is a strategic concept developed by the Pentagon as part of its efforts to isolate and encircle China by reinvigorating and creating new alliances and deploying

military assets across East and South Asia, the West and South Pacific and the Indian Ocean region. Control over the Indian Ocean is seen as critical because its sea lanes are the conduit for much of China's exports and the oil and other resources that fuel its economy.

While the Trudeau government is systematically integrating Canada into Washington's ever-escalating anti-China offensive, powerful political forces are demanding it do more. Among their complaints is that the Trudeau government has yet to join its Five Eyes allies—the US, Britain, Australia and New Zealand—in excluding the Chinese tech giant Huawei from its 5G mobile phone network; nor has it withdrawn from the Chinese-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

David Cohen, the newly installed US ambassador to Canada, has been demanding a swift decision on banning Huawei ever since his confirmation hearing in the US Senate. Speaking in an interview earlier this month, Cohen stated in no uncertain terms that he expects Canada to cooperate even more closely with Washington against China during his time in Ottawa. “I think the two countries share a commitment for the defence and pursuit of human rights and a social and just society, things that China does not share a commitment to,” he declared. “What I am looking for, is for Canada and the United States, in the tradition of our countries, to once again come together ... [and] make sure that our abhorrence of the way in which China conducts its policy toward human rights, that we are unified in expressing our opposition to that.”

An indication that the Trudeau Liberal government intends to bind itself still more tightly to Washington in its confrontation with China was provided by the sudden resignation, on December 6, of Dominic Barton as Canada's ambassador to China. A former top manager at the global consultancy firm McKinsey, Barton was associated with a more conciliatory approach toward China, at least on issues of trade and economic ties, and consequently was singled out for attack by top Democratic and Republican US congressional leaders.

Canada's main opposition parties, the Conservatives and the trade-union-supported New Democratic Party (NDP), also continue to assail the government from the right on China, demanding it adopt an even harder line. Both parties grudgingly endorsed Trudeau's announcement of an Olympic boycott, but complained that Ottawa should have done more to push for the relocation of the games.

In December 2019, the NDP and Bloc Quebecois united with the hard-right Conservatives to establish a special parliamentary committee on Canada-China relations to press for a more aggressive stance against China. Two months later, all three parties, joined by the entire Liberal backbench, unanimously adopted a Conservative-tabled motion that described Beijing's persecution of the Uyghur minority as "genocide."

The political establishment's foul anti-Chinese propaganda has helped fuel racist attacks during the pandemic on Chinese Canadians, who make up a significant minority in the country's major cities. A report by the Chinese Canadian National Council in March reported 1,150 racist attacks on Asian Canadians during the first year of the pandemic. Vancouver, the city with one of the largest minorities of Asian Canadians, recorded a seven-fold increase in racist attacks.

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