

Marx21 (Marxism for the 21st century) is an organization of revolutionary socialists across the United States. We stand by the following principles:

ANTI-CAPITALISM

We believe that workers create all the wealth under capitalism, which is a system run by a tiny, wealthy elite. A new society can only be constructed when we the workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan production and distribution according to human need.

SOCIALISM FROM BELOW

We stand in the tradition of socialism from below: the idea that workers can only emancipate ourselves through our own struggles. We do not believe that current social democratic and labor governments around the world represent socialism, nor do we believe states that use the language of socialism (like the former Soviet Union, China, Venezuela, Cuba and elsewhere) offer a model for true liberation. Socialism cannot be handed down to us. We need a fundamentally different system in which we actively participate and democratically control.

ACTIVISM

We are activists and organizers. We do not stand aside from movements and activity in the streets, we strive to lead them. We read theory, debate ideas, and learn history in order to understand the world, and to argue for and implement strategies and tactics that give us the best chance of winning radical change. One function of our website/bulletin is to intervene in movements and demonstrate through our activity that the politics of revolutionary socialism is the only path to creating the world we know is possible.

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

We believe that only a revolutionary break with the current system can deliver us socialism. We believe in fighting for reforms, because they are both an essential part of improving people's lives and preparing our side to run society in our own interests. We believe in the need for a mass, working class, revolutionary party in order to lead a future successful socialist revolution.

OPPOSITION TO ALL FORMS OF OPPRESSION

The working class is multi-racial and multi-gendered. It benefits capitalism to oppress and divide us because capitalism's greatest enemy is

worker solidarity. We need a world free from racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and every kind of oppression. We fight against all these forms of oppression wherever they arise. The only way we can win true equality is with solidarity.

NON-SECTARIANISM

We are an outward-looking, non-sectarian organization that seeks to work together in movements and campaigns, and alongside the wider left. We believe in being honest about our political differences with other groups and having comradely disagreements, but we work with all forces that seek left wing change.

INTERNATIONALISM

Marx21 stands in the international socialist tradition and is connected with other like-minded socialist groups around the world in the International Socialist Tendency. We support the IST's politics, and we work alongside the organizations associated with the tendency, but we are an independent organization that makes its own decisions.

DEMOCRACY

We are a member organization where every voice matters. Any elected leadership bodies are accountable to and instantly recallable by the membership. We make decisions together in our local branches, caucuses, and national meetings. We are accountable to one another as a group.

WHAT MEMBERSHIP MEANS

- We agree with the principles outlined above.
- We attend Marx21 meetings and events as often as possible.
- We write for and share articles from the Marx21 website and sell the Marx21 bulletin where possible.
- We identify ourselves as Marx21 members in meetings and movements wherever possible and practical.
- We pay dues to support the organization's work (based on financial ability).
- **We welcome any non-members who are interested in our politics to attend our meetings and work alongside us.**



100 days of Biden

Eric Fretz breaks down the first 100 days of the Biden administration, arguing that while certain reforms might appear dramatic, his presidency's overall goal is to bolster profits and capitalist stability—and offer working people just enough to quell our discontent.

As we all know, Joe Biden is a creature of the bipartisan state apparatus. A compromiser by temperament, training, and politics, he consistently uses his skills to limit the boundaries of politics to the interests of the capitalist class. Even those who enthusiastically voted for him to oppose Trump did not expect much. Yet, since becoming president, Biden has not only reversed some of Trump's most egregious executive orders, but many commentators have expressed surprise in the "progressive" new proposals he has put out.

The White House [called](#) his stimulus package "the most progressive piece of legislation in history," and liberal commentators have [trumpeted](#) "an end to four decades of Reaganism." *Jacobin* has [written](#) that he has been pushed by the left to reject austerity.

This raises crucial questions. How far do these really go? Where do they come from? Among the limited nods to the left, the limits of these proposals are apparent, and some aspects are being walked back already. But it is notable that Biden, who's history and politics is more conservative than Barack Obama's, has gone much further in his first three months than his Democratic predecessor. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to view his many reforms and expanded spending plans as a sudden break with austerity and economic inequality. We still face the same question for the future: will the millions who opposed Trump, when faced with Biden's reforms, quiet down and wait—or fight for more substantial change?

A diverse cabinet of business as usual

Any notion that Biden was secretly planning to turn to the left is belied by the choices for his cabinet. Despite the talk, none of the left figures like [Bernie Sanders](#),

let alone Elizabeth Warren, were picked. It may be “the most diverse cabinet” in history, but it is still filled with figures from the military industrial complex and previous Democratic administrations.

Biden’s pick for national intelligence director is Avril Haines, the first woman in that post. She worked under [Barack Obama](#) as deputy CIA director and was the architect of the drone strikes program, and played a key role in the cover up of US torture.

Lloyd Austin, the first Black secretary of defense, is a former general who supported the [invasion of Iraq in 2003](#) and helped train the Iraqi Security Forces, notable for their war crimes in Mosul. He is a millionaire who sat on the board of the large weapons manufacturer, Raytheon Technologies.

Biden’s secretary of state, Antony Blinken, worked with both Clinton and Obama, and approves of “humanitarian intervention” as long as it lines up with US interests. He supported Bush’s war on Iraq in 2003, [Obama’s intervention in Libya in 2011](#) and Trump’s bombing of Syrian airfields in 2017. He, along with Lloyd Austin, sits on the board of Pine Island Capital, a private equity firm with dealings in the defense sector.

Ron Klain, his chief of staff, has for decades moved in the revolving door between White House back rooms and the private sector. He was a major lobbyist and executive for a venture capital firm ironically called Revolution LLC. He remains committed to serve the interests of big business.

Biden nods to the left

On becoming president, Biden quickly had the US rejoin the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Accords. He has been signing executive orders repealing many Trump decisions, including the prohibition of transgender people from serving in the US military and the travel ban which barred people from many Muslim-majority countries from entering the country.

More of a surprise was his canceling of the climate-killing Keystone XL pipeline. This was due to years of dedicated protest against it drawing world-wide attention, although several similar projects continue to be built.

More complicated are the extensive proposals to be negotiated and passed in Congress. While [not meeting the demands](#) of immigration rights activists, Biden has responded to them with a proposed bill that could open up an eight-year “pathway to citizenship” for 11 million undocumented people in the US. His clean energy plan envisions a \$2 trillion investment over his first term. The limitations of these plans are discussed below, but as written, they do go farther than anything passed under Republican or Democratic administrations since at least Johnson’s Great Society

lookout for repressive measures ostensibly aimed at the far right, but easily turned on the left in the future. More generally, the left must work in much broader coalitions now to confront the far-right when they attempt to intimidate communities and build.

But we must also grow the independent, revolutionary left. We can not let the right be the only alternative to the status-quo Biden represents.

Inequality continues to widen, and when the COVID-19 crisis dies down, the crisis of climate change will still be with us. We should fight for each reform. But we must also connect that fight with the drastic and structural change which we desperately need, and Biden is incapable of bringing.

Eric Fretz

Online version, including reference links:

<https://marx21us.org/2021/04/14/100-days-of-biden/>



substantially weakened when Obama came to office, and we can not let that happen again.

Where is our power?

A handful of “the Squad”—recently elected Congress members on the left of the Democratic party—have been sharply critical of Biden’s bombing. But they have not reached out to anti-war groups or called for protests.

This is a common pattern. The statements from the Squad are often refreshingly pointed, but they are a minority in the Congress. More importantly, they sit uncomfortably inside a [Democratic Party](#) whose structures were built to limit working-class demands that confront a corporate consensus.

Bernie Sanders has said he is going to push to get \$15 passed separately in the Senate, but neither he nor Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez called for mass activism outside the corridors of power, and that crucial plan has been defeated in the Senate

The union-backed “Fight for 15!” campaign—which can be fairly criticized for being top down, bureaucratic, and not building in workplaces—has nonetheless brought workers into the streets. This brought attention to the issue and helped pressure several states to pass bills raising their minimum to \$15 over time. Our power is not in Congressional procedures, but in the streets and workplaces.

We have learned that lesson fighting on many issues in the past. Under Republican George W. Bush, organizing including “A Day without an Immigrant,” a mass strike of immigrant labor, helped kill a draconian anti-immigrant bill. It could have gone further. But under Obama the movement dissipated, only to see masses of deportations and no move towards citizenship. We can not let that happen again under Biden.

A source from an advocacy organization told *Politico* the administration had “bought themselves time” by frequently talking to grassroots leaders during the transition. “The question is how long does the goodwill last?,” they added.

Where we go from here depends less on what Biden’s plans are than on whether this movement continues independently, showing it is not just Trumpism that is the problem, but the priorities of capitalism.

Importantly, while a left has been growing over the last few years, so has a far-right, which has not gone away with Trump. Four more years of promises and disappointment from a Democratic president—whom 70 percent of Republicans say got the job illegitimately—will be a recipe for the far-right to grow. We saw Biden and the Democrats take a “law-and-order” approach to the January 6 storming of the Capitol building by Trump supporters, defending government buildings from property damage and calling for greater law enforcement. We must be on the

programs in the 1960s. What remains of them after negotiations in Congress remains to be seen.

Especially ambitious is the “American Rescue Plan,” the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress on March 30th. This included \$1,400 stimulus checks, hundreds of billions for extended unemployment benefits, a major (if temporary) extension of the child tax credit, and aid to state and local governments, as well as aid to small businesses and money for schools reopening. It also provides \$160 billion for a long-overdue national program of vaccination and testing.

What is behind Biden’s policies? His predecessor was an unusually incompetent, unpredictable, and divisive president. For many people, any move towards even an exploitative and unstable status-quo seems a relief at first. For the ruling class, Trump’s tax cuts were appreciated, but they would prefer a stable government, and a technocratic approach to COVID-19, as long as they can still force their essential employees to work. [Biden is filling that role.](#)

COVID-19 Keynesianism

The main reason for Biden’s largess, like the larger COVID-19 stimulus under Trump, is the shifting needs of big business. At the root is the problem of low average rates of profit during the long recovery from the 2008 recession, and the sharp COVID-19-related economic crisis on top. After the government interventions of 2008 and 2020, first financial institutions and now a broader range of corporations have become dependent on state action. They have had to drop some small-government neoliberal instincts. With interest rates near zero, big business is benefiting from government borrowing and massive spending on relief as a classical Keynesian stimulus to the economy as a whole.

Granted, this may provide just a temporary boost, and by keeping certain firms afloat, may prolong the problems with profitability. But it is the fix they think they need now. It is not surprising that over 150 senior executives at major companies have [written](#) to influential Congress members urging Biden’s plan be passed. After all, the money is coming from government borrowing, not their own pockets. They also realize that to get the stimulus they need without disruptive objections from below, they will also have to include some help for those who are hurting most.

Keeping the left in line

As a headline in the *Financial Times* put it, “Bidenomics Can Preserve Support for Capitalism.” Parts of the ruling class remember how, after the 2008 recession and Obama’s bank bailouts, the Occupy Wall Street movement brought people onto the streets and focused attention on the 1%. This paved the way for the Bernie Sanders

phenomenon, and the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). As the *Financial Times* has argued, big corporations and the rich might not like every part of Biden's reforms, but they will put up with them as long as they don't challenge the market. There is a hope they "might also avert a larger reckoning further down the line."

"Biden is walking a tightrope," said Robert Mann, a former Senate press secretary. "He cannot afford to fully alienate the progressive wing of the party, but also he cannot afford to be seen as allowing them to set his agenda."

Politically, too, many see they can't get away with another bailout of big industry without some of it being used to support the working class. But of course, this is not nearly enough to reverse inequality or eliminate poverty and many—disproportionately minorities and undocumented immigrants—will be left out completely.

As Biden reassured rich donors during his campaign, "[nothing would fundamentally change](#)." It is the minimum needed to maintain stability—and how much stability is necessary is what's behind the negotiations in Congress.

An American rescue?

In the "American Rescue Plan," the \$1,400 stimulus to eligible citizens was already watered down from the earlier promise of immediate \$2,000 checks, and Biden soon agreed with conservative Democrats to narrow the eligibility. Biden has already disappointed by rejecting calls to cancel up to \$50,000 in student loan debt by executive order. Crucially, the promised increase in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour was dropped without a fight.

If enacted, the \$15 an hour could have lifted close to a million people out of poverty. It was one of the few planks that would be permanent, and actually move money from the employing class to the working class. The failure to get it through, and the lack of a fight, tells volumes about the fate of more structural reforms.

The big limitation of this spending package is it is seen as a one-off injection of money, rather than changing any of the structural problems. It does not take on the big businesses profiting from the pandemic, and in many cases benefits them.

For instance, Biden's plan adopts proposals from health insurance lobbying groups that funnel billions of dollars of public subsidies for private health insurers. This may increase the amount of people with insurance, but does not eliminate charges for patients, and is still significantly more expensive than government healthcare programs.

Neither Beijing nor Washington want to go to war with each other, but both are committed to using their military to strengthen economic competition, and are extending them in dangerous ways. As Micheal T. Clare [concluded](#), "in its first months in office, the Biden administration has given the green light to the same tempo of provocative military maneuvers in contested Asian waters as did the Trump administration in its last months."

Under Biden, the Pentagon has stepped up its patrols of destroyers in the Taiwan Strait, and sent dual carrier task forces to run mock combat exercises near islands claimed by China, sending a message Washington is not prepared to cede control of this space to China.

Always a "stalwart supporter" of Israel, Biden has confirmed he will not reverse Trump's shocking decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. Israel plays an essential role for US imperialism in the region. In Biden's own words: "If there were not an Israel, we would have to invent one to make sure our interests were preserved." To that end, he has consistently undermined any criticism as Israel bombed the Gaza strip and expanded illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories. Naturally Biden will continue to provide Israel the traditional \$3.8 billion a year in unconditional military support that funds all this. [The continued suffering of Palestinians](#) is part of Biden's status quo.

On Iran, Biden claimed on the campaign trail that he would re-enter the nuclear deal reached under Obama, which Trump had reneged on while imposing further crippling sanctions. But hopes for a peaceful approach are dimming. His secretary of state has announced the end of sanctions was not coming soon, and exaggerated how close Iran was to creating a nuclear bomb. And now, Saudi Arabia has built new bases for US troops that could be used in war against Iran. US B-52 bombers flew close to Iran over the Persian Gulf, just to show America's "ability to deploy its air power anywhere in the world." Just last week, Biden ordered US airstrikes against facilities in eastern Syria used by Iranian-backed militias, killing a reported 22 people.

While Biden may want to bring stability back to the Middle East, it is not one of peace. He wants continued US domination, involving economic imperialism, drone strikes and possible wars.

When President Trump bombed Syria in 2017, Jen Psaki was right to [tweet](#), "What is the legal authority for strikes? Assad is a brutal dictator. But Syria is a sovereign country. Psaki is now Biden's press secretary, and defending Biden's use of 500-pound bombs to "send a message."

This is expected of Washington insiders, but the anti-war movement needs to oppose Biden's imperialism and any new military strikes. The anti-war movement was

Today, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers are still full of migrants subject to abuse and COVID-19 infection. Any immigration overhaul should listen to migrants calling to “abolish ICE,” an especially racist and aggressive police force only established in 2003. Instead, Biden has issued new guidance giving ICE officers discretion on operations, which the American Civil Liberties Union called “a disappointing step backward.”

Biden has continued Trump’s use of Title 42, which allows for expedited deportation over the border during a public health crisis, although he has discontinued the process for children. Considering the high level of COVID-19 in the US, the use of Title 42 still seems an unjustified excuse, especially when deportees are placed on crowded buses or planes without COVID tests. It is estimated over 26,000 people were deported during Biden’s first month in office and he currently is on track to accept the [fewest refugees](#) of any recent president, including Trump.

Biden has now reopened a detention facility for young people in Texas, already filling past capacity, and is working on reopening others, including the [notorious Homestead](#) detention center in Florida.

Imperialism uninterrupted

In his quest to reestablish US position and reputation in the world, Biden has avoided Trump’s “America First” phrase, with its fascist overtones, but replaced it with “America is back, ready to lead the world.” His commitment to US hegemony has been shown in his support of US wars throughout his career, including the recent “forever wars.” With the US share of world GDP declining over the last 50 years, to be rivaled by China and the EU, American imperialism has had to lean even more heavily on its unsurpassed military might.

Biden has been intimately involved with US Imperialism in Latin America, being an architect of “Plan Columbia” in the Senate, and leading the “Alliance for Prosperity” as Vice President. Behind the facade of development and the “war on drugs” they imposed neoliberal models on the region, increasing poverty, inequality and deadly police repression. One result was waves of migrants trying to reach the US and militarized borders trying to stop them.

As president, Biden’s foreign policy priorities have been described as “China. China. China. Russia.” His team—including treasury secretary Janet Yellen, the commerce and trade secretaries, Lloyd Austin at defense—have been uniformly hawkish on China. Biden also tapped China hawk Ely Ratner to head a special China Task Force. Following Obama’s “pivot to Asia,” Biden’s administration is prepared to use the “full array” of tools to defend their interests in the region and open up China’s state-dominated economy.

Profits keep COVID-19 growing

Trump’s disastrous denial of the pandemic is probably what won Biden the election, and where their differences are sharpest. Biden came into office just in time to oversee a program of COVID-19 vaccinations, long called for but undercut in the Trump administration. Any federal distribution plan is better than none, but the US’s would be much further along with a national health care system. This Biden refuses to contemplate, just as he has rejected calls for Medicare for All national health insurance.

Neither has Biden sided with overworked union nurses pushing for mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios, which would decrease deaths of COVID-19 patients as well as helping nurses. Staffing levels are universally worse in private for-profit hospitals.

Biden’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has updated guidance on COVID-19 safety in the workplace, but not issued the regulations urgently requested by unions. His administration has also ignored the appeals of unions and public health advocates to reverse Trump’s egregious use of the Defense Production Act to keep meat processing plants open, even as they are found to be epicenters of COVID-19 transmission.

And most visibly, Biden was the influential figurehead pushing for nationwide school reopening well before all teachers were vaccinated. The aim is to get parents back to work and creating profits. While teachers in many districts were resisting the return, they were undercut when Biden received support from the leadership of national teachers’ unions who had rightly condemned a similar push from President Trump.

While still fighting COVID-19, we need to learn the lessons for the next outbreak. Anne Schuchat, deputy director of the CDC, noted that “the underinvestment in public health was a massive vulnerability for an effective response.” The sophisticated electronic data systems used by financial firms (or Google’s targeted advertising) are out of reach to public health bodies tracking and predicting the pandemic. Besides the technical issues, public health needs to do more than pay lip-service to the social determinants of health. And if we really want to stop the next pandemic emerging, we need a sustainable reorganization of how food is produced, but that is unthinkable to US agribusiness.

On the care side, as Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, president of the California Nurses Association and National Nurses United [pointed out](#), “The pandemic exposed the failures of the fragmented, profit-driven American health care system.” Independent profit-based decisions at private nursing homes were another huge contribution to excess deaths.

A president who wears a mask and does not think COVID-19 or global warming are hoaxes may be a relief considering who came before, but it means little when profits continue to come before survival.

Climate change

While Biden fulfilled his promise to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement as soon as he came into office, we should remember what a betrayal that inadequate and non-binding agreement was in the first place. Biden has repeatedly stated that he is opposed to the Green New Deal championed by progressives. In the campaign he insisted he would not ban fracking, linking it to jobs. He did promise to stop new drilling leases on federal lands—but that is less than 10 percent of production. His administration has already quietly issued at least 31 new drilling permits for existing leases.

When Biden took office, it was a great relief to see him cancel the controversial and climate destroying Keystone XL oil pipeline, responding to years of dedicated protests which brought world-wide attention. Yet the less well known Line 3 pipeline is still being constructed in Minnesota. As wide as the Keystone XL, it would carry 760,000 barrels of tar sands oil a day, and violate indigenous treaty rights when crossing [Ojibwe](#) land. [Activists](#), and representative [Ilhan Omar](#), have called on Biden to end the project by canceling the water crossing permit granted in November.

Similarly, Sentinel Mainstream is planning a massive offshore oil export terminal that would load two million barrels of crude oil a day onto tanker ships in the vulnerable Texas Gulf Coast. If we are to save the climate from disaster, all this oil needs to be left in the ground.

Biden has been reversing scores of the over 100 environmental regulations [rolled back by Trump](#), but that is not nearly enough. “Reversing Trump’s gutting of the EPA’s pollution, climate and science programs will be the first task, but the agency’s failings run much deeper,” as the director of the Center for Biological Diversity, Kieran Suckling, [wrote](#) about Biden. “He’ll never succeed in making environmental justice the EPA’s central mission, stop the extinction crisis or save America from climate chaos unless he cuts through the Gordian knot of industry control.”

At the end of March, Biden unveiled details of his \$2.26 trillion infrastructure and climate spending [blueprint](#). The spending outlined goes beyond previous plans, but Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez rightly noted that the richest country in the world could afford \$10 trillion for renewable energy, core infrastructure, and other environmental justice priorities to fight the economic and climate crisis. Brett Hartl of the Center for Biological Diversity called Biden’s proposal an “industry-friendly plan” that

“squanders one of our last, best chances to stop the climate emergency,” and “won’t even come close” to meeting climate goals.

John Kerry, Biden’s special envoy for climate, [suggested](#) that the private sector, not government, will lead the fight against the climate crisis. He stated the government should work in a “supportive” role. Yet it is big business’s imperative for profit before all else which is creating the crisis, and Wall Street continues to pour money into fossil fuel companies. Kerry’s statement prompted a [letter](#) from 145 environmental organizations, pointing out that Wall Street is not an ally, and [demanding](#) the Biden administration help stop “the flow of private finance from Wall Street to the industries driving climate change around the world.”

As Mike Davis had previously [pointed out](#), at most Biden’s vaunted “green energy” revolution (if adopted, which seems increasingly unlikely), “will subsidize private industry, not expand the public sector.”

Biden and General Motors are happy for the latter to build a new fleet of electric cars (along with its gas-guzzling SUVs), but not to decrease American car culture and make the necessary mass investment in sustainable public transportation. What Biden will not do is admit that what is good for General Motors—or any of the fossil fuel corporations—is not good for the world. That would challenge capitalism.

New detention camps

Trump’s family separation and caging of children was a horror felt around the world, but the cages were first used in the Obama administration when Biden was vice president.

While Biden’s proposed 8-year long and reversible path to citizenship may eventually help many, it is written with an eye to the economy’s need for steady, but low-paid, immigrant labor. And, like previous attempts at “comprehensive immigration reform,” it pairs a limited amnesty for some already working here with increased enforcement at the border. Soon after taking office, Biden cut funding for Trump’s ineffectual Border Wall, but there is now discussion of filling in the gaps. His plan also calls for “cost effective” enforcing of the southern border using “smart technology.” It may be a slicker, tech-savvy policy—but is by no means a more humane one.

As Victor Fernandez and Clare Lemlich [explain](#), the politics behind the immigration overhaul is such that the bill may well be broken up, and more positive aspects watered down or eliminated in negotiation. Biden is well aware that “bills passed don’t look like bills presented.” Safeguarding a meaningful path to citizenship calls for mobilization of immigrants and supporters outside government, which Biden is at pains to avoid.