

Canada's NDP denounces China, signals support for Obama's "Asia Pivot"

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Canada's Official Opposition, the trade union-backed New Democratic Party (NDP), brought forward a motion last month to scuttle the recently negotiated Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).

Though their motion was doomed to be overwhelmingly defeated and quickly forgotten, the social democrats used the occasion to repeatedly denounce the "Communist" regime in China. And in heated nationalist terms, they charged that the adoption of FIPA would "do serious damage to Canada" and "be dangerous for the future of our country."

In a circular sent to party members after the failure of the NDP motion, Guy Caron, the Deputy Critic for International Trade, wrote, "This week, [Conservative Prime Minister] Stephen Harper came one step closer to selling out Canada's resources to China... Under FIPA, China's state-controlled companies will have the same rights as [private] Canadian companies.

"In other words...the Chinese government will have access to Canada's natural resources—for the next 31 years. The Conservatives negotiated this deal behind closed doors for a reason. They know that Canadians would never stand for the selling out of our resources."

Based on poisonous Canadian nationalism, the NDP's opposition to FIPA—like its opposition to last fall's \$15 billion takeover of the Calgary-based oil giant Nexen by a state-owned Chinese oil company—was aimed at convincing Canadian big business that the NDP is a more aggressive defender of its profit and geostrategic interests than the Conservatives.

But this was not all. The NDP has mounted its campaign against growing Chinese investment in Canada, especially in the country's oil and natural gas sector, with a view to convincing the Obama administration and U.S. big business that they will find in Canada's social democrats a reliable ally.

Federal NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair visited New York and Washington in March to speak with numerous representatives of the US political and economic elite. In an interview he gave to Bloomberg News Service, Mulcair argued that "together, FIPA and CNOOC's takeover of Nexen, effectively limit the ability of Canadian governments to independently control our own natural resource policy, while ceding enormous control over our resources to a foreign power."

By adopting such aggressive anti-Chinese rhetoric, the NDP is signaling that should it form Canada's government it can be counted upon to provide staunch support to the Obama

administration's "pivot to Asia," under which Washington is building up its military power and strengthening its strategic alliances in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. U.S. imperialism is pressuring its allies throughout the region, including the NDP's social democratic "brethren" in Australia's Labour government, to join it in isolating and preparing for war against China.

Mulcair—continuing the policies of his predecessor, the late Jack Layton—has lavished praise upon President Obama and the Democratic Party. He has repeatedly declared that Canada and the U.S. have "shared values" that must be defended in the face of "an increasingly complex set of challenges," while employing Cold War rhetoric to characterize China.

Decades ago the NDP postured as an opponent of Washington's predatory foreign policy. But since the beginning of the 1990s, the NDP has supported Canada's participation in a series of U.S.-led wars in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Libya, justifying these crimes as "humanitarian interventions." At Layton's insistence, the NDP in 2004 dropped its nominal opposition to Canada's participation in NATO.

The NDP critic for International Trade, Don Davies, led the NDP's anti-China charge in parliament last month, lacing his speech introducing the anti-FIPA motion with chauvinistic, anticommunist rhetoric. He began by describing the judicial system in China as "weak" and "unreliable", something that "Canadian companies cannot trust..."

Addressing a Conservative member of the International Trade Committee, he continued: "Yet, my honorable colleague then says that the Chinese will treat Canadian companies just like it treats its own. I have some news for my honorable colleague. China is a communist command economy."

A second NDP MP, Marc-Andre Morin, chimed in: "Every Chinese Canadian I know loves their adopted country and their homeland... Those people fled a corrupt totalitarian communist regime whose economy is controlled to the nth degree... Now they see that China could end up exerting the same type of control over our Canadian economy."

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, who voted for the NDP motion, echoed its rightwing nationalist claims, describing FIPA as "an attack on our sovereignty."

Explicit anticommunism and Canadian chauvinism are nothing new for the NDP or its allies in the trade union bureaucracy. However, that the NDP chooses to use such harsh and

inflammatory language to denounce China at a time when Washington has clearly identified Beijing as its most important global rival is a clear message to the Obama administration: an NDP government would be a loyal U.S. ally in any confrontation or outright clash with China.

Such a clash, which would bring with it the threat of a nuclear conflagration, could—it must be emphasized—emerge very rapidly. Over the past year, the US has been encouraging its Asian allies, including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam, to more aggressively pursue their territorial disputes with China.

A key NDP ally—the Australian Labor Party [ALP]—is already playing a major role in supporting the U.S. “pivot to Asia.”

Australian Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who seized the party leadership with the blessing of Washington, has wholeheartedly welcomed the U.S.’s strategic shift. In 2011, her government agreed to establish bases for U.S. marines, ships and aircraft in the north and west of Australia, from where they can threaten to block Chinese access to vital sea-lanes between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and cut off China’s essential supplies of energy and other raw materials.

The NDP has close relations with the ALP. ALP Labour Minister Bill Shorten gave a lengthy keynote address to the NDP Convention held in Montreal last month.

The massive slide to the right on the part of the NDP is part of an international phenomenon: parties like the ALP, the French Socialist Party, the German SPD and the British Labour Party have openly repudiated any program of “social reform,” brutally implementing austerity programs and aggressively pursuing imperialist interventions around the world.

The NDP, though it has never held office in Ottawa, has enthusiastically offered its services to the Canadian ruling class and is now “preparing for government” by seeking to gain the trust of Washington and Wall Street.

The NDP’s criticisms of the Harper government’s China policy are made with this dual audience in mind.

Before the Canadian ruling elite, the NDP argues that the FIPA does not offer enough benefit to Canadian capital. NDP MP Guy Caron, speaking in the language of a corporate executive, appealed to big business: “In 2011, we had only about \$5 billion worth of investments in China, whereas China had over \$22 billion worth of investments in Canada in 2012. From the outset, the agreement is not providing equal protection. This demonstrates a lack of reciprocity and is a blatant problem with the agreement before us today.”

At the same time, and with a view to catching the attention of the U.S. ruling elite, the NDP is voicing alarm over the rapid growth of Chinese investment in Canada—most of it in the pivotal oil and natural gas sector. This has included denouncing both the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation’s acquisition of Nexen and decrying as woefully inadequate the subsequent restrictions the Conservative government has placed on takeovers in the oil and natural gas sector by state-owned companies.

Mulcair and other NDP spokesmen have repeatedly quoted—including before U.S. audiences—a study that estimates that “by 2020 China will be Canada’s second largest investor, largely in oil and gas.”

Mulcair is clearly trying to win U.S. favour by indicating that an NDP government would limit, if not outright block, Chinese investment in Canada.

The fate of Canada’s resources is no small matter for Washington and Wall Street. Canada is the largest supplier of oil to the U.S. and its share of U.S. oil imports is expected to grow sharply in the coming decades due to the development of the Alberta tar sands.

Chinese competition and investment could drive up the price of Canadian oil, divert energy supplies from the U.S. and weaken U.S. capital’s strong presence in Canada’s oil and natural gas sector.

The Harper government, though it welcomes Chinese investment and the massive profits it generates for Canadian big business, is also lining up with the U.S. drive to war in Asia.

Canada’s military has begun to take on a greater role in the Pacific and a recent *National Post* article suggest that there are discussions now underway in government circles about redeploying Canadian naval resources from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coasts.

Last summer the Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force took an unprecedented role in a giant U.S.-led maritime warfare exercise—the biannual RIMPAC or Pacific war games off Honolulu. A Canadian Air Force general has recently been posted to the U.S.’s Pacific Command in Hawaii and in January a Canadian warship made a rare port call in the Philippines.

With U.S. support, Canada and Mexico recently gained entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership—a proposed free trade agreement among U.S. Pacific allies meant as a counterweight to China’s economic rise.

Like the Harper Conservatives, the NDP recognizes that Canada’s economic and military alliance with the American capital is of paramount importance to the entire Canadian ruling elite.

By opposing Chinese investment, the NDP is seeking to rally ruling class support, presenting itself as a “government in waiting” that can champion the “national interests” of the Canadian bourgeoisie and partner effectively with US imperialism.



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