

Britain uses G20 to campaign for war on Syria

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Prime Minister David Cameron's appearance at the G20 summit in St Petersburg made clear his government is determined to do everything possible to aid the US to advance plans for a military attack on Syria, despite its own defeat in parliament last week.

Faced with overwhelming public opposition and divisions within the ruling elite over the timing and planning of a military assault, the government lost its motion by 13 votes. Seeking to reverse this setback, Cameron sought to use the G20 meeting to press for military action. He continued to parrot the discredited claim that the Assad regime was responsible for the chemical attack in Ghouta. Claiming he had "new evidence"—though revealing none of it—Cameron said clothing samples from the site of the alleged attack tested by British government scientists concluded that sarin had been used.

Cameron's case was not helped by the fact that the samples were reportedly supplied to MI6 by "one of Britain's Middle Eastern allies"—i.e. one of the states responsible for financing and arming Al Qaeda forces as a proxy in western efforts to overthrow Assad and install a more pliant puppet regime. In any case, the major dispute is not whether or not sarin gas was used, but who used it—with the preponderance of the evidence, and all of the motivation, pointing in the direction of the Islamist rebels.

Cameron was forced to acknowledge that most people do not believe his lies, stating that what was required was "convincing more people that the regime was responsible."

Nonetheless, repeating US assertions that the United Nations Security Council had been "hijacked" by Russia, he insisted that even if such action was not agreed the US should still attack Syria.

"If we are saying there can only be a response if the

UN security council votes positively, we are in fact contracting out our foreign policy, our morality to the potential of a Russian veto", he said in a statement that will stand testament to the lawlessness of the British ruling class. While war would be "better with a UN security council resolution" he went on, "you cannot rule out taking action, if you cannot get one."

A powerful section of Britain's ruling elite are equally determined to overturn the vote that abruptly delayed its plans to join the US-led bombardment of Syria. Earlier in the week, a government spokesman refused to rule out future British military participation stating that last week's vote "was very specifically a response to the August 21 chemical weapons attack."

In other words, the overwhelming opposition of the British public can simply be flouted and the vote in parliament redone until the "right" result is achieved, preferably after some other pretext for war is fabricated. And sure enough, after two years in which Britain has played a key role in fomenting a sectarian civil war, the government has suddenly become concerned for the millions of refugees displaced as a consequence.

Hoping to exploit their plight, as the G20 was gathering, British foreign secretary William Hague was holding talks in London with Ahmed Asi Al Jarba, President of the Syrian National Coalition, the anti-Assad front cobbled together by the US State Department.

The meeting was supposedly to discuss how to supply "humanitarian aid" to refugees. Hague stated, "This visit will also allow the National Coalition to outline their plans for delivery on the ground in areas under their control. We are committed to supporting this and will discuss with the Coalition how we might step up our practical support."

But by Wednesday Tory MP Andrew Mitchell had already let the cat out of the bag as to the purpose of this latest “humanitarian” initiative, by making demands on the Assad regime that it cannot possibly meet. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* Mitchell commented that the UN “must pass a resolution demanding that all parties to the conflict grant unfettered and immediate access to aid agencies to operate across borders and battle lines”. It is another grave breach of international law to “prevent humanitarian aid from reaching civilians who need it”, he stated.

The *Times*, owned by billionaire Rupert Murdoch, has been the most vociferous proponent of war. In an editorial Wednesday, using the pretence of concern for the Syrian population, it said parliament had to reconvene, warning it was “premature to consider the issue [of war] settled.”

As ever, the Labour Party has proven particularly receptive to Murdoch’s demands.

On Friday former Labour Party Prime Minister Tony Blair, who led Britain into the illegal wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, criticised Labour leader Ed Miliband for failing to endorse the government’s motion for action. “This is something where I just have to disagree with the leadership of the party”, he said, adding, “I would have preferred us to have taken action, I would have preferred us to be there with America.”

Other senior Labour figures have also called for action to be taken in Syria, using the specific pretext of humanitarian necessity. David Miliband, brother of the Labour leader, now heads the International Rescue Committee (IRC) based in New York. Behind its charity status the IRC is a front through which Washington pursues its global strategic interests.

Outlining grounds for intervention Miliband wrote, “We are not yet anywhere near the nadir of the humanitarian crisis already consuming five countries at the heart of the Middle East.” He said the IRC had “just completed a six-week audit of the situation in Syria and its neighbours”, adding, “For geopolitical reasons, as well as basic humanity, we need a fundamental step change in the scale of effort.”

Writing in the *Guardian*, Ben Bradshaw, a leading Blairite, commented that the vote in parliament had left “a considerable number of Labour MPs” feeling

“deeply uneasy.”

“We were not voting to support Britain taking part in immediate military action, but nor were we voting to rule it out completely”. He declared, “Does being nice to Iran and talking about Britain’s now diminished diplomatic and humanitarian role constitute a foreign policy?”

Lord Parry Mitchell, who serves as business policies adviser to Ed Miliband said, “We should take military action against Syria. Assad and his cronies are unspeakable.”

Meanwhile, British military forces, including fighter jets, remain stationed in the Middle East. Six RAF Typhoons and a Sentry early warning plane are based in Cyprus, just 100 miles from the Syrian border. Allied to these are major UK government spying posts on the island, already providing critical intelligence to the United States, which pays half of the cost of the operation. An intelligence source told the *Telegraph*, “We always support our allies and the Commons’ vote was about military action, not about intelligence.”



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