

Canada's Harper visits Kiev to laud coup, threaten Russia

Keith Jones
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Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited Kiev for six hours Saturday to demonstrate the Canadian elite's strong support for the fascist-spearheaded coup that ousted Ukraine's elected president.

At a joint press conference with Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the interim prime minister installed as a result of last month's coup, Harper repeatedly denounced and threatened Russia.

He hypocritically painted Russia as an aggressor, when it was the US and Germany that engineered the overthrow of Ukraine's president, and he lauded those now wielding state power in the Ukraine for their "restraint." In fact, Ukraine's new government has mounted one provocation after another, including declaring the country to be at war and creating a new National Guard so as to give official sanction to the fascist militia that spearheaded the overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovich.

Harper vowed that the western imperialist powers will not restore normal relations with Russia until it withdraws from Crimea—a strategic peninsula that was historically part of Russia and whose majority Russian-speaking population recently voted overwhelming to secede from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation.

"I think it is important," declared Harper, "that we in the free world not accept the occupation of Crimea ... that there be no return to business as usual with the Putin regime until such time as the occupation of Crimea ends."

Harper also made it clear that he will argue at an emergency meeting of the major western powers to be held in the Hague today for Russia's expulsion from the G-8. His aides have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that at the conclusion of last June's G-8 meeting—where sharp differences had emerged over the US's use of al-Qaeda and other Islamicists as its proxies in a war for regime change in Syria—Harper had vehemently denounced Moscow, declaring the meeting as the "G-7 plus Russia."

In response to a direct question about Russia's continued participation in the G-8, Harper said, "I don't think it takes much imagination to figure out what my view is, but I will certainly listen to what our partners in the G7 have to say before we arrive at final decisions."

In lockstep with Washington, Canada has already imposed sanctions against senior Russian government officials and businessmen and the Bank Rossiya.

Canadian officials have put out that Harper will be working alongside US President Barack Obama at the Hague meeting to pressure the European powers to take even more provocative measures against Russia. These likely include both additional economic sanctions and the authorization of further military exercises and deployments in NATO countries bordering Russia.

In the past Canada has lobbied for NATO to offer Ukraine membership.

Aides to Canada's Conservative prime minister and Canada's corporate media have emphasized that Harper is the first leader of a G-7 country to visit Ukraine since last month's coup. He was joined by Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and Justice Minister Peter MacKay.

In addition to Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, Harper met with the new president, Oleksandr Turchynov.

Press reports do not indicate whether Harper or either of his two ministers met with any of the half-dozen leaders of Svoboda, a neo-fascist party, who have top positions in Ukraine's new government, including the deputy prime ministership.

Led by the oligarch Yulia Tymoshenko, Yatsenyuk's party, the right-wing nationalist Fatherland Party, openly worked alongside Svoboda and the fascist Right Sector militia to topple Yanukovich and has now formed an alliance with Svoboda to jointly contest the next election.

The smallest of the G-8 countries, Canada has nevertheless played a not insignificant role in the US-German drive to detach Ukraine from Russia's sphere of

influence and subjugate it to the domination of western capital and NATO, so as to further cripple Russia and transform the Ukraine into a source of cheap labor and agricultural produce and other natural resources for German big business.

Under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, Ottawa has leveraged an extensive network of right-wing Ukrainian Canadian organizations, many of them with roots in the Cold War, to help organize and finance pro-western parties and “civil society” groups.

Whilst in Ukraine, Harper with consummate cynicism tried to pass himself and Canadian imperialism off as votaries of international law and democracy.

He denounced Russia for wanting to return the world to the “law of the jungle.” This under conditions where Canada unfailing supports Washington’s relentless pursuit of its predatory interests and systematic violations of international law—whether it be drone strikes, the outright invasion of countries, or spying on people in very corner of the world.

A neo-conservative ideologue, Harper was an enthusiast for the illegal pre-emptive war the US mounted against Iraq beginning in 2003—a war that killed as many as a million people and that was justified on fabricated charges of “weapons of mass destruction.”

Under his government, Canada extended its participation in the neo-colonial counter-insurgency war in Afghanistan. This included supporting the Canadian military in violating the Geneva Convention by turning over alleged insurgents—most of them poor Afghan peasants—for torture by Afghan security forces. Harper was also a strong advocate of Canada’s leading role in NATO’s 2011 regime change war in Libya, a war that he claimed was legal on the basis of a transparent, willful manipulation of a UN resolution authorizing a no-fly zone on “humanitarian” grounds.

Harper’s government prides itself on being the “staunchest” supporter of Israel, which with US support acts with impunity in the Middle East to bomb its neighbours and dispossess the Palestinian people. Harper’s government has strongly supported the punitive economic sanctions the US and European Union have imposed on Iran and made it clear that should the US attack Iran it will have Canada’s backing, including military support.

Harper’s claims to be a champion of democracy are no less Orwellian. His government has baldly asserted the state’s “right” to spy on Canadians’ electronic communications, sanctioned the national-security

apparatuses’ use of information acquired through torture, routinely illegalizes worker job action, and staged its own parliamentary coup in 2008, shutting down parliament to avoid being defeated by the opposition.

According to a recent article in the *National Post*, the Harper government has launched a fundamental rethink of Canada’s military-geo-political strategy in response to the confrontation between the West and Russia over Ukraine. “There is a growing consensus the Harper government’s hard line over events in Ukraine is going to require a radical new defence doctrine, prepared for the contingency of an expansionist Russia,” reported the *Post*’s John Ivison in a March 17 article.

Ivison says the government is considering accelerating the militarization of the Arctic, including possibly welcoming a major NATO role, and also wants to revisit the Martin Liberal government’s decision that Canada should not participate in the US’s highly destabilizing plan to deploy an anti-ballistic missile shield.

In other words, the Harper government is plotting to exploit the Ukraine crisis to overcome popular opposition to the ruling class’ plans to militarize Canadian society and further tighten Canada’s strategic embrace with Washington.

The opposition parties have strongly supported the Harper government in backing the US-German orchestrated coup in Ukraine and stoking a confrontation with Russia that could escalate into a military confrontation with incalculable consequences for the world. Indeed, the trade union-supported NDP has repeatedly commended the Conservative government for its Ukraine policy and party leader Thomas Mulcair is regularly having private consultations with Harper to discuss Canada’s role in the crisis.



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