

Canada backs imperialist aggression in Gaza and Ukraine

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Last week Canada's Conservative government strongly endorsed the bloody war launched by Israel against the people of Gaza, while seizing upon the crash of a Malaysian Airlines in the Ukraine to ratchet up its support for the Western imperialist powers' drive to isolate, bully and threaten Russia.

In a statement issued Thursday, just hours after the crash of Flight MH 17 was first reported, Prime Minister Stephen Harper blamed Russia in no uncertain terms for the tragic loss of life, while baldly declaring that the actual circumstances of the tragedy were immaterial in determining Russia's culpability. "While we do not yet know who is responsible for this attack," declared Harper, "we continue to condemn Russia's military aggression and illegal occupation of Ukraine, which is at the root of the ongoing conflict in the region."

This position has been echoed by all of Canada's leading newspapers. Quebec's leading French-language daily, *La Presse*, published an incendiary editorial Friday entitled "The Culprit". Admitting that "it cannot be excluded that the Malaysian Airlines plane was hit by a missile fired by the Ukrainians," the editorial goes on to state, "But in any case, Russian president Vladimir Putin is ultimately responsible."

A later passage in the editorial underscores the aggressive designs behind the Canadian government's and the corporate media's attempt to exploit the Malaysian Airlines tragedy. It chides NATO, saying it too bears "some responsibility" for the disaster. But not because NATO, with Canada's strong support, broke commitments given to the Gorbachev regime at the time of German reunification and recklessly intensified its pressure on Russia by bringing into NATO virtually every country in Eastern Europe (including all the former Warsaw Pact states) and placing troops on

Russia borders. No, *La Presse* criticizes NATO for being insufficiently aggressive, for "not reacting more vigorously to Russian maneuvers, not only in Ukraine, but earlier in Georgia and Moldova."

The *Globe and Mail*, the traditional mouthpiece of the Canadian financial elite, published an editorial along similar lines, under the title "Ukraine's chaos is 'Made in Moscow'." The pro-Liberal *Toronto Star*, for its part, declared, "Whoever pulled the trigger, Russian President Vladimir Putin can't dodge responsibility for the rocket attack on a Malaysia Airlines flight that left 298 people from a dozen nations dead." Applauding the Conservative government's anti-Russia hardline, the *Star* concluded, "And Prime Minister Stephen Harper is right to say so in the bluntest terms."

Harper's position on the downing of Flight MH17 is a continuation of Canada's aggressive stance on the Ukrainian crisis. This crisis was provoked by the unrestrained efforts of the US and Germany to break Russia's influence in a region of vital strategic importance to it, with the dual aim of making Ukraine a source of cheap labor and resources for western big business and strategically weakening and encircling Russia.

Not only did Canada support the fascist-led coup engineered in Washington and Berlin that overthrew the previous Moscow-aligned Yanukovych government. It was an active participant in fomenting the coup and has since joined with Washington in pressing for the European Union states to take stronger measures against Russia, even at the risk of provoking war. For years now, Canada's government, under the Liberals and Conservatives alike, has been using right-wing Ukrainian-Canadian organizations and businessmen to organize and fund a network of pro-imperialist "civil society" groups in Ukraine.

Earlier this month, Ottawa announced that it was sending six CF-18 jet fighters to join air patrols over the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as part of the NATO campaign against Russia. During their Baltic patrols, which are set to start in September, Canada's fighters will be armed, flying with loaded weapons. Canadian fighters have been conducting NATO training exercises in Romania since May, but those have been unarmed missions.

Other Canadian actions directed at Russia include: a raft of new economic sanctions and travel bans; the dispatching of the HMCS Regina warship to join the NATO Standing Maritime Forces patrolling along the Ukrainian coast line; and the sending of up to 20 staff military officers to bolster the Canadian presence at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

In regard to the other major international crisis of recent days—the brutal ground war launched by Israel against the unarmed, oppressed and defenseless Palestinians of the Gaza strip—the Canadian government has given its full support for the criminal actions of the Zionist state.

In a statement issued July 13, Harper echoed the lies and propaganda of the Israeli government, laying blame for the deaths of Palestinian civilians on the “terrorists” of Hamas—Gaza's elected government. “It is evident,” declared Canada's Prime Minister, “that Hamas is deliberately using human shields to further terror in the region.” Callously indifferent to the hundreds of civilian victims of Israel's highly advanced, US-funded and armed military machine, Harper said, “Canada calls on its allies and partners to recognize that...solidarity with Israel is the best way of stopping the conflict.”

Canada's unconditional support for Israel has been endorsed by the opposition parties. Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau issued a statement lauding in typical Orwellian fashion Israel's “commitment to peace”, while upholding its “right to defend itself and its people” and condemning Hamas as a terrorist organization that “must cease its rocket attacks immediately.”

A similar tone was adopted by the social-democratic NDP, which forms the Official Opposition. “We have reiterated that Hamas' continued rocket attacks are unacceptable,” wrote NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Paul Dewar. In his statement Dewar carefully avoided any

specific condemnation of Israel's targeting and killing of civilians, including women and children, and covered up the fact that the assault on Gaza is transparently a long-planned act of Israeli aggression, with last month's murder of three Israeli youth—an act Hamas has always insisted it had nothing to do with—serving as no more than a convenient pretext.

The support of the Opposition parties and the corporate media for Harper's ringing endorsement of the Israeli offensive in Gaza and the Western imperialist machinations in Ukraine is a fresh indication of the sharp turn in Canada's foreign policy.

Over the past two decades, the Canadian elite has systematically repudiated its former claims—as self-serving and hypocritical as they were—to play the role of an “honest-broker” and “peacekeeper” in world affairs under UN auspices. Canada has played a major role in a series of US-led wars, including in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya, strengthening its military-strategic alliance with US imperialism as Washington seeks to offset the historic decline in the US's economic position by pursuing a policy of aggression and war in all corners of the globe.

Under the Liberal governments of Chretien and Martin, and even more forthrightly under Harper's Conservative government, Canada has laid claim to “its” share in the new imperialist redivision of the world by intensifying—in tandem with Washington—its own policy of militarism and “power politics.” This is inseparable from the massive assault Canada's capitalist elite is mounting on jobs, public services and democratic rights at home.



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