

UK media denounces Corbyn's refusal to support war with Russia

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The right-wing cabal seeking to remove Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn have now centred their attack on his refusal to support Britain going to war against Russia as part of the NATO alliance.

On Thursday, Corbyn took part in the latest Labour leadership debate in Birmingham with challenger Owen Smith. The leadership contest was prompted after 172 Labour MPs supported a vote of no confidence in Corbyn. This followed a walkout by more than 60 MPs from his shadow cabinet.

Asked by the moderator, Carl Dinnen of ITV News, "How would you act on a violation by [Russian President] Vladimir Putin of a fellow NATO state," Corbyn replied, "You would want to avoid that happening in the first place. You would build up a good dialogue with Russia ... We would try to introduce a demilitarisation of the borders between Russia, the Ukraine and all the other countries on the border between Russia and Eastern Europe. What we cannot allow is a series of calamitous build-ups of troops on both sides which can only lead to great danger in the future."

Answering the same question Smith said, "We would have to come to the aid of a fellow member of NATO—that is the nature of the NATO accord. That would be the job of Britain in the event of a fellow NATO member being invaded, obviously."

In committing to war against Russia, Smith said—without any reference to the massive and ongoing NATO military buildup on Russia's borders—that the supposed "expansionism and militaristic aggression by Putin in recent years" had to be opposed. "To do that," he added, "we need to be at the heart of the European Union. The European Union is the greatest bulwark against Russian aggression."

Dinnen repeatedly pressed Corbyn on the issue.

Smith had said that he would authorise war against Russia, he stated. "Would you do that?" When Corbyn replied that he "would want to avoid us getting involved militarily by building up diplomatic relations," Dinnen interjected, "Everyone would want to avoid it, but would you get involved if you had to?"

To this Corbyn responded, to loud applause, "I don't wish to go to war—what I want to do is achieve a world that we don't need to go to war, where there's no need for it."

Corbyn's comments occasioned a slew of denunciatory articles and commentary, declaring that he could not be trusted with the reins of power if he were not ready for a war against Russia—a conflict with a nuclear-armed power that threatens the destruction of the planet.

The *Daily Mirror* wrote, "Article Five of NATO's founding treaty makes clear that all member states must rush to the defence of any fellow ally which comes under attack." *Guardian* columnist Simon Jenkins declared, "Jeremy Corbyn's dismissal of NATO is a step too far," adding that "shunning our most important international military alliance is just reckless."

The *New Statesman's* George Eaton wrote, "It was under the Attlee government in 1949 that the UK co-founded NATO and became one of its senior members. Every Labour leader since has supported the military alliance. But in last night's hustings, Jeremy Corbyn refused to commit to upholding Article 5: the principle of collective defence ... It is for reasons such as these that 172 Labour MPs voted no confidence in their leader last month and 65 resigned from his frontbench."

To confirm this appraisal, Blairite Labour MP Wes Streeting said Corbyn's comments meant he was "unfit to hold the office of prime minister."

Lord West, the former First Sea Lord and an ex-

Labour minister, told *PoliticsHome* that Corbyn “should not lead the nation”. He made a derogatory reference to growing antiwar sentiment, declaring, “He’s stating platitudes because it gets the unthinking masses to vote for him.”

The political offensive against Corbyn is directed primarily against the leftward shift in the working class that led to his election as Labour leader last September, based upon his pledge to implement anti-austerity and anti-militarist policies.

From the outset, Corbyn came under attack as someone who could not be trusted with national security. Within days of his election, an anonymous general threatened a mutiny should a Labour government under Corbyn come to power. He told the *Sunday Times*, “The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul to prevent that ...”

The head of the armed forces, General Sir Richard Houghton, later went on the BBC declaring that Corbyn could not be prime minister because he had stated publicly that he would refuse to authorise a nuclear strike.

Corbyn’s repeated retreats in the face of these attacks, including his allowing a free vote on whether to conduct bombing raids on Syria, has placated the bloodlust of his opponents.

Last month, in the debate on renewing the Trident nuclear submarine missile programme, 140 Labour MPs voted in favour, defying their party’s leader in support of newly installed Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May.

During the debate, May was asked by one MP, ‘is she personally prepared to authorise a nuclear strike that could kill 100,000 innocent men, women and children?’ May replied “Yes” and, in a pointed reference to Corbyn, accused opponents of the UK’s Trident missile system of being “the first to defend the country’s enemies.”

The United States has a direct hand in the ongoing destabilisation of Corbyn’s leadership.

On February 13, the *Independent on Sunday* ran an interview with the former head of NATO, Lord Robertson, who responded to Corbyn’s anti-Trident posture by saying, “There’s a great deal of nervousness around and it’s perfectly understandable. It’s coming

from the Americans, but other countries too. ... We’re not talking about a purely domestic deterrent.”

Labour MP Madeleine Moon, a member of the House of Commons defence select committee, added, “I was in Washington for a NATO conference ... They are watching what we are doing and are very fearful.”

The period when the US was “watching what we are doing” has ended. The escalating efforts to remove Corbyn following the June 23 referendum vote on Britain leaving the European Union have the full backing of Washington, which enjoys close ties with the leading Blairite figures in the ongoing coup.

Amid rising tensions with Russia over Ukraine and Syria and a military buildup of NATO forces on its borders, the ever more strident attacks on Corbyn as a de facto traitor for opposing war and the use of nuclear weapons against Russia must act as a stark warning. Despite official declarations of an intent to “normalise relations” with Putin, Britain’s ruling elite, following the lead of the United States, is actively contemplating what was supposedly unthinkable—a renewed war in Europe. The attack on Corbyn is only an indication of the preparations being made to combat rising antiwar sentiment among workers and young people.



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