

Trudeau joins Macron in celebrating air strikes on Syria

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau declared his full solidarity with the militarist, anti-working class policies of French President Emmanuel Macron during a two-day visit to Paris that concluded yesterday.

Just days after Macron ordered French warplanes to join US and British forces in launching illegal air strikes on Syria and in the midst of mounting working class resistance to the president's class war domestic agenda, Trudeau went out of his way to emphasize his political kinship with Macron—underscoring his Liberal government's determination to pursue like policies at home and abroad.

“We have an extremely close convergence of views,” declared Macron at a joint press conference with Trudeau Monday afternoon. For his part Trudeau enthused, “Canada, France and Europe are extremely aligned.” He specifically touted the Canada-EU free trade agreement and the bilateral deal with France on combating climate change that he and Macron signed Monday.

In a further indication of the close partnership between the two governments, the Macron government asked Trudeau to address France's National Assembly Tuesday, a first for a Canadian prime minister and the first time that a major world leader has done so since King Felipe of Spain in 2015.

The summit underscored Trudeau's unflinching support for imperialist violence. His Liberal government, which is pledged to increase military spending by more than 70 percent over the next decade and has expanded Canada's role in US-led military-strategic offensives around the world, including NATO's aggressive anti-Russia military build-up in Eastern Europe, is undoubtedly “extremely aligned” with Macron. The French government, as well as launching missiles at Syria on the basis of unsubstantiated and highly dubious claims of a Syrian chemical weapons attack, recently proposed a €300 billion military spending increase. Moreover, together with Germany, France is spearheading the militarization of the European Union as a means to aggressively assert their respective imperialist interests on the world stage.

Macron's use of emergency powers to impose pro-

business labour market “reforms” and attack railway and other public sector workers also undoubtedly represents a “close convergence of views” with Trudeau. The Liberal prime minister is opening up Canadian public infrastructure to private investors through the creation of a Canadian infrastructure bank and undermining public services through the imposition of a below-inflation health-spending “accord” on the provinces.

Macron's determination to resist and ruthlessly suppress working class opposition is of a piece with the Trudeau government's firm commitment to brook no opposition to initiatives it deems to be in Canada's “national interest,” including—as Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr inadvertently let slip—preparations to use the army to quell protests against the Kinder-Morgan oil pipeline expansion.

Trudeau used his French trip to reiterate Ottawa's support for the US-led aggression in Syria, which threatens to provoke a direct military confrontation with Russia that could rapidly escalate into a major war. Immediately after Friday evening's missile strike, Trudeau released a statement endorsing it and the bogus claims Washington, London and Paris have advanced to justify their wanton violation of international law. “Canada condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in last week's attack in eastern Ghouta, Syria,” declared Trudeau. “Canada supports the decision by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to take action to degrade the Assad regime's ability to launch chemical weapons attacks against its own people.”

Although Canadian forces did not participate in last week's air strikes, the Canadian ruling elite is deeply complicit in the carnage wrought in Syria, Iraq and more broadly throughout the entire Middle East by more than a quarter century of US-led wars. In 2011, a Canadian general oversaw NATO's bombardment of Libya. Packaged as a “humanitarian” intervention, this regime-change war killed tens thousands of Libyans and has left the country, seven years on, mired in strife and chaos.

Canadian air and ground forces joined the US-led war in

Syria and Iraq in 2014, with CF-18 fighter jets carrying out air strikes in both countries. In 2016, Trudeau shifted the focus of the Canadian intervention by tripling the deployment of Special Forces personnel to northern Iraq, where they were subsequently involved in advising and fighting alongside the Kurdish Peshmerga, including during the US-organized onslaught on Mosul that left thousands of civilians dead.

Trudeau not only consulted with Macron about advancing French and Canadian imperialism's predatory interests in the Middle East, but also on expanding military-strategic cooperation in Mali and the broader North and West African regions. France, the region's former dominant colonial power, has deployed thousands of troops across the much of the Sahel under the pretext of fighting "terrorism."

The Trudeau government recently committed 250 Canadian troops and six armed transport helicopters to the UN "peacekeeping" mission in Mali. This mission, which works in close concert with the French intervention, is aimed at propping up the country's pro-Western government and securing the business interests of major Canadian and European corporations. Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan let the cat out of the bag when he stated recently that the stabilization of Mali will require large-scale foreign investment so as bring about "broader economic development." His comments came as Canada launched a new development finance institution that will fund projects throughout Africa.

Canadian companies have some \$1 billion in mining investments in Mali and an estimated \$30 billion invested in mining operations across the continent.

The Mali deployment will draw Canada still more directly into the increasingly frantic struggle for geostrategic and military dominance on the African continent. This scramble is being led by the United States but also includes the European imperialist powers, and increasingly China.

Macron applauded the Canadian decision to deploy troops to Mali, telling Trudeau, "I think this is a very important gesture that has been made by Canada, and we very much appreciate it."

Trudeau's close alliance with Macron is backed by the Canadian ruling class, who see in the French president someone the prime minister should emulate. The *Globe and Mail*, the main mouthpiece of the Bay Street financial elite, titled its lead editorial Monday "Emmanuel Macron is becoming the Trudeau we wanted." Macron has adopted "initiatives aimed at the country's many structural problems," wrote the *Globe*. "He cut a wealth tax to spur investment and pushed through labour-code reforms opposed by France's powerful unions. He has taken on the reform of national shibboleths, from the state train monopoly

to the baccalauréat exam."

Canada has "structural problems" of its own, the *Globe* complained, "from a lag in worker productivity and a shortfall in business investment to a backlog of asylum seekers and a generational crisis of opioid addiction." But if Trudeau is to deal with any of these to the business elite's liking, he will have to exhibit more of Macron's "purpose" and "discipline," insisted the *Globe*.

The message could not be clearer. Canada's corporate elite is demanding Trudeau move more aggressively to assert its interests at home and abroad, including: using state repression to intensify the exploitation of the working class; pushing through major initiatives like oil pipelines and privatization programs in the face of mass popular opposition; and pressing forward with rearmament, so as to bolster Canada's military-strategic partnership with Washington and the capacity to pursue its own independent interests in any divvying up of the spoils of aggression and war.

This reactionary agenda finds no opposition among Canada's establishment political parties. The Conservatives, who under Stephen Harper increased military spending to its highest level in real terms since World War II and waged war in Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Iraq, were as full-throated as Trudeau in their endorsement of the illegal air strikes on Syria.

The New Democratic Party released a duplicitous statement making clear its support for the attack. The statement parroted the claims of a Syrian chemical attack and urged Trudeau to work closely with Britain and France in bringing "peace" to Syria, while conspicuously avoiding mention of either Donald Trump or the United States. The NDP's support for imperialist aggression is to be expected. Canada's social democrats have supported every Canadian military intervention since the bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999 and in the early 2000s abandoned their nominal opposition to NATO.



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