

Canada's opposition parties line up behind imperialist war drive against Russia

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Canada's opposition parties have lined up squarely behind the imperialist war drive against Russia, which is being spearheaded by the Biden administration in Washington and backed to the hilt by the Trudeau Liberal government. There is not a single principled opponent of imperialist aggression to be found in Canada's Parliament, only cheerleaders for war. From the "left" New Democrats to the avowedly right-wing Conservatives, the Greens and the pro-Quebec independence Bloc Quebecois, all the opposition parties are whipping up war fever.

The Trudeau government announced last Wednesday that it is extending its participation in NATO's training mission for the Ukrainian military, Operation Unifier, for three years until 2025. Ottawa will send 60 additional Canadian Armed Forces personnel, raising the Ukraine deployment to 260, provide a \$120 million loan and grant Kiev access to Canadian signals intelligence. The troop deployment, Ottawa has added, could be increased to 400 at any time.

In his announcement, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau struck a provocative tone, declaring that his government supports "the Ukrainian people" in their struggle to "choose the course of their country" and "defend their territorial integrity." This was a reference to the Trudeau government's support for Kiev's reconquest of Crimea, which was annexed by Russia following a referendum in 2014. The annexation was Russia's response to the fascist-spearheaded coup in Kiev, orchestrated by the US, Germany and Canada to overthrow pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovitch and install a pro-Western puppet regime.

Trudeau's remarks came as top Biden administration officials ratcheted up pressure on Russia by refusing to rule out Ukraine's admission to NATO, sending massive amounts of military gear to Kiev and preparing to deploy up to 50,000 troops to Eastern Europe. As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in a statement Friday, Washington's primary goal is to goad President Vladimir Putin into attacking Ukraine and triggering a military conflict. "The conflict that Washington is provoking with Russia over Ukraine threatens the globe with a catastrophe beyond measure," the statement warned. "Driven by insoluble internal crisis and rapacious geopolitical ambition, US imperialism is recklessly marching to the brink of World War III."

Canadian imperialism fully endorses this reckless policy for the same reasons.

On her arrival in Kiev yesterday for talks with top Ukrainian leaders, Canada's Defense Minister Anita Anand said Canada

stood by the claims of Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other NATO leaders that a Russian invasion is imminent, although Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called them unhelpful and untrue. Later in the week Anand is to travel to Latvia, the Baltic republic where Canada has deployed over 500 soldiers since 2017, to lead NATO's new Forward Presence Battle Group against Russia.

Speaking alongside Trudeau, Anand and Foreign Minister Mélane Joly last Wednesday, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, a longtime supporter of the Ukrainian far right, stood reality on its head and accused Russia of attempting to create "a world in which might makes right and where the great powers ... have the authority to redraw the borders, dictate the foreign policies..." This comes from a representative of the Western imperialist powers whose wars of aggression have razed Yugoslavia, Iraq, Haiti, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya and imposed murderous sanctions on governments who refuse to obey their diktats.

In so far as the opposition parties have criticized the Liberal government's role in NATO's war threats and preparations against Russia, it is for not providing Ukraine more fulsome support. The Conservatives have complained that the Trudeau government is only sending "non-lethal" support to Ukraine. They are demanding that Ottawa provide Ukraine with offensive weapons originally intended for the Kurdish Peshmerga guerrillas in Iraq. "Ukraine has been clear in its request to the Trudeau government of what it needs to defend itself: Lethal defensive weapons," declared a statement signed by three Tory frontbench MPs. "The time for half-measures has long passed. Ukraine needs Canada's support, and today Mr. Trudeau let them down."

This position was backed up by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), which has its origins in the pro-Nazi Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1930 and 1940s. The UCC declared, "It is disappointing that Canada has not joined our allies in providing Ukraine with weapons."

Full support for Canada's continued military deployment to the Ukraine was extended by the New Democrats. In a statement on Ukraine, the party declared, "New Democrats stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We are alarmed by escalating threats of further Russian invasion. Canada was the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence 30 years ago, and we must continue to support an independent and democratic Ukraine."

To cover its support for imperialist violence in a "progressive"

garb, the NDP said it opposed Ottawa providing “lethal” aid to Kiev—leaving that, for the moment, to the US, Britain and other “allies” it wants Canada to work in close concert with; expressed concern about “extremists” in Ukraine’s military; and concluded with an appeal for a “diplomatic solution” with Russia.

This is all hogwash. Ukraine today is neither “democratic” nor “independent.” The current regime has its origins in the imperialist-sponsored 2014 coup, in which far-right and outright neo-Nazi elements such as “Svoboda” (Freedom), “Right Sector” and the Azov Battalion played key roles. These fascists provide the Ukrainian state with its shock troops on the front line against Russian speakers in Donetsk and Lugansk, regions that only attempted to separate from Ukraine after the far-right government passed legislation suppressing the Russian language and launched hysterical campaigns targeting ethnic Russians.

Ukraine is governed by some of the most corrupt oligarchs to emerge from the Stalinist bureaucracy, which liquidated the Soviet Union in order to enrich themselves. The top 10 percent of the population controls 60 percent of national wealth.

“Independent” Ukraine is, in fact, a political dependency of American, Canadian, British and German imperialism, whose collective will is expressed through NATO and the IMF, and to which Ukraine says, “Yes, sir.”

As for its professed commitment to “diplomacy,” the NDP supports economic sanctions on Russia under the 2015 Magnitsky Act, which would target Russia’s political leadership. The Russian government has declared that such sanctions would result in the severing of all diplomatic relations, a development associated historically with the commencement of military hostilities. In calling for these sanctions, the NDP is thus seeking to provoke an end to diplomatic efforts.

The bogus character of the NDP’s “concern” about extremists in the Ukrainian military was underscored by its participation in a bellicose mobilization organized by the far-right UCC on January 23.

NDP Foreign Affairs critic Heather McPherson and Blake Desjarlais, the deputy chair of the party’s parliamentary caucus, joined the UCC-initiated “Stand with Ukraine” mobilization. Also participating were former Defense Minister Harjit Sajan, Mary Ng, and Marco Mendicino from the Liberals, Dave Epp and others from the Conservatives and the BQ’s Foreign Affairs and National Security critic Stéphane Bergeron.

McPherson’s and Desjarlais’ tweets of support for the UCC and the right-wing Kiev regime are in keeping with their party’s support for Canadian imperialism’s participation in a long series of US-led wars of aggression. From the 1999 NATO assault on Yugoslavia, through the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the 2011 “regime change” war in Libya and the ongoing interventions in Iraq and Syria, Canada’s social democrats have dressed up their support for imperialist war and intrigue in phoney “human rights” and “responsibility to protect” rhetoric.

The NDP’s visceral hostility to any opposition to Canadian imperialism and its far-right allies was underscored by the party leadership’s refusal to defend MPs Leah Gazan, Nikki Ashton and Don Davies, after they came under vicious attack from the UCC for posting tweets critical of Canada’s full-throated support for

NATO’s provocative and threatening stance on Ukraine.

Gazan, who counts Holocaust survivors among her relatives, came under special attack for pointing to Canada’s support of “an anti-Semitic, neo-nazi [sic] and fascist militia,” referring to the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, whose members have received training from Canada’s government. (See **Canadian Armed Forces providing military training to Ukrainian neo-Nazis.**)

The UCC, along with the Zionist Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, preposterously accused Gazan of trivializing the Holocaust, claiming her tweet was “ignorant, inaccurate and hurtful” and “could provoke attacks against our community.”

Gazan quickly walked back her comments and voiced her support for the Canadian imperialist-NATO narrative that Ukraine is a victim of Russian aggression, when it is the NATO powers that have encircled Russia and are intent on using Ukraine as an economic vassal and geostrategic outpost.

Of course, Gazan said nothing about the political origins and record of the UCC, which has long enjoyed the sponsorship of the Canadian state and, like the contemporary far-right and neo-Nazi militia groups in the Ukraine, celebrates the Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and fascists who collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War, including in the mass murder of Jews and Poles. The UCC recently saluted the 70th anniversary of the creation of the League for the Liberation of Ukraine, which was founded by members of Stepan Bandera’s fascist and Nazi collaborationist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists who were given safe haven in Canada after the Third Reich’s defeat.

Meanwhile, in its official statement of last week on Ukraine, the NDP top brass went out of its way to downplay the significant role fascists play in Ukraine’s security forces and allied militia, saying it was “concerned” about “reports of extremism within a small part of the Ukrainian military,” a “problem,” that it hastened to add “many militaries, including our own, have faced.”

The enthusiasm for the drive to war with Russia within all sections of Canada’s political establishment, from ostensible “left” to right, underscores that the only social force capable of opposing the eruption of a catastrophic conflict is the international working class. Workers in Canada must build an international anti-war movement alongside their class brothers and sisters in the United States, Russia, Ukraine and throughout Europe to put an end to the imperialists’ mad push for war by fighting for the socialist transformation of society.



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