

# Mélenchon aligns with NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine

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As the conflict between NATO and Russia in Ukraine intensifies, raising the threat of nuclear war, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the presidential candidate of Unsubmissive France (La France insoumise), is backing NATO against Russia. He thus supports the aid to the Ukrainian nationalist far-right militias that he had explicitly criticized only three years ago.

This underlines the reactionary role of organizations that the mainstream media pass off as “far left.” Although the vast majority of the French population (69 per cent according to a recent poll) oppose participation in the war, Mélenchon is not campaigning against the war. He has made no call to mobilize the 7 million voters who voted for him in the 2017 presidential elections. In this, he aligns himself with the CGT apparatus and the Pabloite NPA, who have also called for supporting NATO against Russia.

Mélenchon accuses Putin of bearing “the entire responsibility” for the war, covering up NATO’s warmongering campaign and its militaristic escalation against Russia.

Speaking on France Bleu Radio’s “Ma France” program last Friday, Mélenchon said: “I have always clung to the idea that we do not cross borders. The Russians have done it, they bear total responsibility for the situation, and it must be said that we are continually on the brink of total war.”

Far from warning about the danger of the annihilation of humanity that a Third World War would pose, Mélenchon applauds the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union against Russia and President Vladimir Putin. According to Mélenchon, “destabilizing him by destabilizing the oligarchs, that is to say the very rich who surround him and whose henchman he is, in a way, I think that will be effective.”

In fact, the sanctions attack not only the Russian oligarchs but, more importantly, the jobs and living standards of masses of workers in Russia and around the world, including Europe.

The Socialist Equality Party opposes the Putin regime’s invasion of Ukraine, which serves the interests of the Russian capitalist ruling class. The invasion of Ukraine, whatever the justifications given by the Putin regime, can only divide the Russian and Ukrainian working classes. It plays into the hands of US and European imperialism. But if Putin launched the war, the main responsibility lies with the NATO powers, especially Washington, who did everything to provoke Moscow into launching the invasion.

Having approved a coup led by the Ukrainian far right that

installed a pro-NATO regime in Kiev in 2014, NATO provided billions of euros to arm the right-wing regime against Moscow. They refused to discuss security guarantees demanded by Moscow, while they armed Kiev and wanted to install missiles on Ukrainian soil, very close to Russia. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, NATO continues to support Ukraine with weapons, including combat drones and long-range anti-aircraft systems.

Mélenchon’s positioning demonstrates his cynicism and conscious alignment with imperialism, even while he poses as a “peace” candidate in next week’s presidential election and evokes Jean Jaurès. He occasionally calls NATO a “useless” alliance and advocates a “non-aligned” France. But, reprising his role during the Cold War of NATO against the Soviet Union, it is only to cover his support for imperialism with a few pacifist phrases.

Hiding his military alignment with Washington with a few anti-American nationalist jabs, Mélenchon commented to the newspaper *La Croix*: “NATO is a machine for creating trouble, an instrument of the declining American empire. But I distinguish this subject from Ukraine, because the responsibility for the war lies on Putin’s shoulders. It was not NATO that violated the border with its tanks.”

In reality, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 by the Stalinist bureaucracy, the imperialist powers have been leading the offensive. They have attacked Iraq, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Mali, to mention only the best known wars. Similarly, the NATO powers have systematically surrounded Russia in Eastern Europe to put pressure on it.

Mélenchon was involved in these wars, as he was an adviser to President Mitterrand and a senior Socialist Party official during Mitterrand’s two terms in office, from 1981 to 1995. This was the period that saw the first Gulf War against Iraq in 1991, the first NATO interventions in Somalia and Yugoslavia, and the genocide carried out by the Mitterrand-backed regime in Rwanda in 1994.

In February 2014, after absorbing almost all of Eastern Europe, NATO gave its support to the coup led by far-right forces such as Svoboda and the Right Sector against the elected pro-Russian government of President Viktor Yanukovich.

Mélenchon is fully aware that his position on Ukraine aligns him with neo-Nazi militias. Indeed, in 2014 he felt compelled to make some hypocritical criticisms of French foreign policy and its alignment with Ukrainian fascists.

On Russia’s annexation of Crimea by popular referendum, Mélenchon said: “the ports of Crimea are vital for Russia’s

security, one can foresee absolutely that the Russians will not let it go through, they are taking protective measures against an adventurous putschist power, in which the neo-Nazis have an utterly detestable influence.”

In 2018, Mélenchon even criticized the reception of the president of the Ukrainian assembly, a member of the far-right Svoboda, by François de Rugy, the president of the National Assembly. “Tomorrow de Rugy solemnly receives the Ukrainian anti-Semitic neo-Nazi Svoboda! That’s where forced Atlanticism leads,” Mélenchon wrote on his Twitter account.

Today, it is Mélenchon himself who is becoming the madman of support for NATO and the Ukrainian far right, which he had criticized in the past. He states bluntly: “I am not unaligned between Zelensky and Putin. It is quite clear that I am on the side of Zelensky against Putin.” But behind Zelensky and his collaboration with far-right forces in Ukraine is NATO. Mélenchon’s support for Zelensky goes hand in hand with his alignment with NATO’s warlike approach against Russia.

Mélenchon articulates policies to serve French imperialism. He adopts his cynical and nationalist rhetoric in line with decisions made by the ruling class.

When Trump was in power, the European imperialist powers came into conflict with the US. They criticized Trump’s cancellation of the Iran treaty, asking whether the transatlantic alliance is dead. At the time, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Europeans would in future have to fight “for ourselves,” and Trump even called NATO “obsolete.”

At the time, criticizing Trump’s threats against Iran, Mélenchon called for an anti-American alliance between Paris and Moscow. Before travelling to Moscow in 2018 for talks with the Stalinist United Communist Party (OKP), he said, “I am absolutely against the American alliance, I want to leave NATO.” He told the media, “I came here to undertake a militant act: to say ‘The Russians are our friends’.”

Today, and since the election of Joe Biden, Paris is aligning itself behind Washington against Russia. Mélenchon is once again aligning himself with the policies of the ruling class.

Mélenchon plays down the danger of nuclear war, which can break out at any time as tensions escalate, and recklessly encourages workers to believe that the great powers are not in danger of starting a nuclear war. About Putin, Mélenchon said: “Since nobody wants a nuclear war, he takes us on the back foot and does what he wants. And we now realize that no other strategy had been thought through apart from trying to scare him.”

In fact, 60 years after the Cuban missile crisis, the war in Ukraine has brought the world to a point where the use of nuclear weapons is a real possibility. Faced with the danger of a nuclear war between Russia and the NATO powers that could break out at any time, killing millions of people in Europe, Russia, the US and around the world. This possibility is widely reported in the media and by senior NATO officials.

Recently, Sam Nunn, the former US senator and founder of the “Nuclear Threat Initiative,” presented a “hypothetical scenario illustrating one of the possible paths to a global and catastrophic nuclear war that could be triggered by the Ukraine crisis.” Following an escalation of military strikes between Russia and

NATO, Nunn writes, there would be a risk of nuclear strikes being exchanged by both sides with catastrophic consequences:

“within an hour, 82 million Americans are killed and the allied countries suffer the same fate. Most of them die instantly, while others will die of radiation in the days and weeks to come. Those who survive will have chronic health problems for the rest of their shortened lives, and their children will probably be born with genetic defects.”

With his alignment with NATO, Mélenchon sends a clear signal to the French ruling class. Two weeks before the first round of the presidential election, he was up in the polls (around 15 percent) in third place, nipping at the heels of the unpopular Macron and the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen. Against the backdrop of growing social anger against Macron’s austerity, the ruling class sees Mélenchon as a potential candidate to implement an anti-worker policy.

Geoffroy Roux de Bézieux, the boss of the French employer’s federation, Medef, said he considered Jean-Luc Mélenchon “ready to govern.” Speaking on France 2’s “Elysée 2022” program, Roux de Bézieux gave a sign that one could not miss that the Medef is thinking about him as a potential president, saying: “Yes, our disagreements are deep. But even we opponents recognize it: the left’s favorite for the presidential election is ready to govern, with a solid and coherent program.

The Socialist Equality Party issues the most serious warnings about Mélenchon’s political role. If elected, he will pursue a policy of war and austerity as did his allies, the Syriza government in Greece in 2015–2019, and the PSOE-Podemos coalition government currently in power in Spain. Currently, that government is leading a force of 23,000 gendarmes against a nationwide strike by truckers against high living costs and exploding gas prices.

For workers and young people, the urgent task is to break with petty-bourgeois pseudo-left parties like LFI, and to build an independent movement in the working class against imperialist war and the danger of nuclear war.



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