

Young Scots for Independence embraces NATO

Darren Paxton**20 June 2022**

Young Scots for Independence (YSI), the youth wing of the Scottish National Party (SNP), has voted in favour of an independent Scotland joining NATO.

The YSI had opposed NATO membership for a decade after the SNP reversed its previous opposition to the US-led military alliance. The YSI's shift signals that all pacifist and anti-war sentiments around the SNP will be suppressed and underscores the party's full support for the proxy-war against Russia by US and British imperialism in Ukraine.

Jack O'Neil, a leading YSI member who spearheaded the policy change, tweeted it was, "One of the proudest moments in my political life. Over the moon that the YSI have affirmed their support for NATO. Delighted to propose the resolution and play my part over years in adopting this sensible foreign policy."

His tweet included a photo of himself and a YSI colleague holding a NATO flag.

O'Neil is the type of political careerist that stuffs every level of the SNP. His LinkedIn profile shows he has served as Communications Assistant for the House of Commons for four years, doubtless building relationships with senior political figures in and out of the SNP.

In running for a National Executive Committee (NEC) spot, he boasted of his rapid rise through the ranks of the SNP, "I joined the SNP prior to the 2014 referendum... I quickly became a Youth Officer, and later PEO [Political Education Officer] of the Ellon/District branch". He moved to Aberdeen and then Dundee where he was elected as branch convener, one of the youngest in Scotland to hold this position. He joined the YSI's NEC serving as Northeast regional convenor, a position he held longer than any other member in the party's history.

O'Neil's careerism, youth and pro-war politics are a perfect resource for the SNP, explaining his rapid rise in the party.

His Twitter feed showcases O'Neil's admiration for the SNP's viciously pro-war Westminster defence spokesperson, Stewart McDonald, whom he regularly retweets. He has also retweeted Toomas Hendrik Ilves,

president of Estonia from 2006 until 2016. Ilves's Twitter feed is littered with anti-Russia propaganda depicting Russian soldiers as emotionless child murderers, with retweets advocating "shell the Russians" to "oblivion". O'Neil mixes these with reposts celebrating Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian forces from pro-war pages including the fascistic "Defence of Ukraine" run by the Ukrainian state.

In celebrating the YSI's endorsement of NATO, O'Neil describes the imperialist military alliance as "progressive" and in "stark contrast to... Imperialist Russia". This turns reality on its head. The war in Ukraine is raging as a direct result of NATO's expansion eastwards and military encirclement of Russia. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not an expression of "Russian imperialism" but rather a reactionary and reckless response to NATO aggression. The sanctions on Russia have been so devastating precisely because Russia is not an imperialist power.

The NATO alliance described by the YSI as "progressive" has reduced entire societies to rubble in the Middle East and countless other war zones. Millions lost their lives and centuries of development was wiped out by NATO-backed military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, far eclipsing anything Putin is accused of in Ukraine.

In the aftermath of the YSI's vote, O'Neil absurdly claimed that the SNP's nominal opposition to Trident nuclear weapons was compatible with its advocacy of membership in a pro-nuclear NATO. He wrote, "This does not for a second put us at odds with our commitment to remove nuclear weapons from Scotland, nor does it end our opposition to the existence of weapons of mass destruction." The delirious celebration of NATO across the SNP exposes its opposition to Trident as window dressing for a right-wing and pro-war party of the British establishment.

Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister and leader of the Scottish National Party, made this clear on May 16, when she travelled to the Brookings Institute in Washington. There she prostrated the SNP before NATO and grovelled to US imperialism.

Sturgeon spoke at the Brookings Institute's "European Energy Security" webinar titled, "Scotland and the future of European energy security". Her session explored how Scotland can help isolate Russia economically and advance NATO's operations in Europe.

John Allen, President of the Brookings Institute, introduced Sturgeon, reminding her what Scottish capitalism stands to gain in destroying Russia, "With enormous stakes not just for Europe but for the entire planet, this discussion comes at a critical time. And today's conversation will focus on Scotland's not-insignificant role... and the benefits of transitioning to a greener economy and what's needed, especially in the wake of Russia's destabilization of fossil fuel energy supplies to boost Scottish and European energy security and self-reliance."

The First Minister fell over herself committing Scotland to NATO's war, "I want to be very clear today to you here in the United States that Scotland stands with the United Kingdom, the European Union, and countries around the world, including of course the United States, in our condemnation of Putin's actions. We support the severity of economic sanctions on Russia and also the supply of military assistance to Ukraine."

Sturgeon has been one of the loudest advocates for a no-fly zone over Ukraine that would provide a pretext for all-out war with Russia. She continued this belligerent stance in her Brookings speech. She called for maximum participation in the war, proclaiming it was the "duty" of every so-called democracy "to offer tangible support and solidarity to Ukraine..."

Sturgeon lauded German militarism as an example for the rest of the world's "democracies" to follow, "Germany has reversed its long-standing position of not supplying arms to conflict zones, and it has set out plans to significantly increase its own defence spending." She continued "I am firm in my view that—coupled with a strong relationship with the UK—membership of the EU and of NATO will be cornerstones of an independent Scotland's Security policy."

The SNP leader signalled her willingness to use Scotland's geographic position in NATO's war plans against Russia.

"The Scottish Government is acutely aware of Scotland's strategic position... close to the Arctic", she said. The Arctic is critical for NATO. A report by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in 2010, "U.S. Strategic Interests in the Arctic: An Assessment of Current Challenges and New Opportunities for Cooperation", explained how global warming was opening new transportation pathways to "oil, gas, minerals, fish" as "viable sources of profit." It called for a "plan of action" against Russia to ensure "US leadership" over the region.

Sturgeon did not mention it, but another strategic battleground making Scotland vital to NATO's war against Russia is the so-called GIUK Gap. This stretches of the North Atlantic separating Greenland, Iceland and the UK. A report and tabletop exercise "Forgotten Waters" from the think tank CNAS (Centre for a New American Security) in May 2017 explored precisely how NATO would utilise this region in a Third World War against Russia.

The report explained that control of this "gap" is vital in isolating Russia and controlling the movement of military and cargo ships through this passage, "The GIUK Gap forms the principal choke point between Russia's great Northern Fleet and its strategic interests in the North Atlantic and all points south". The region is also filled with underwater telecommunication cables that are critical for military communications and daily life. The report called for a massive increase in sea, air and land arms spending.

Sturgeon pledged at Brookings that an independent Scotland would be a trustworthy ally, "And so we are clearer than ever that membership of NATO would... be the principal way in which an Independent Scotland, in an interdependent world, would contribute to the collective security of our neighbours and allies".

The YSI's open embrace of imperialist militarism and war confirms the fundamentally reactionary role of separatist and nationalist politics. The only way to oppose the eruption of war is the unification of the working class of the entire planet to abolish the capitalist nation state system in the struggle for socialism.



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