



“Stopping US and Canada’s participation in NATO wars.”

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I am joining you today from the unceded, unsundered, and stolen territories of the Algonquin and Anishinaabek peoples. Other excellent speakers and experts, will talk about the history and the current role of NATO in initiating and escalating wars around the world; I would like to focus on connecting these wars to a greater system of global exploitation that is led by the motive of profiteering and maintaining control of the global economy.

Wars deeply and most devastatingly impact the working-class people of the world. In wars of aggression between imperialist powers, for example, the war between the NATO bloc and Russia benefits no one but the rich imperialists of both countries. Across the world, the Ukrainian people are suffering; the Russian people are suffering; the people of Palestine, Yemen, Haiti, the Philippines, and Kashmir are being displaced, brutalized, or are living in chronic poverty as their countries are ravaged by NATO member states or other US-led wars.

Canada’s Role in the US/International Imperialism:

As anti-imperialists, we acknowledge that the US is the primary force of global militarization. However, it is not only the US that is to blame. It would not be nearly as successful without its lackeys – the NATO member states. Canada is an enthusiastic junior partner to US imperialism. **The Canadian economy is located within that violent and exploitative system.** Canada has attempted to disguise itself as a diverse and respectful country through rewriting its colonial history but its ongoing repression of Indigenous nations and its contributions to the world system of imperialism makes it clear that the Canadian empire is not the safe haven it pretends to be.

The very existence of Canada began with bloodshed and colonization supported by European colonial empires. Removing Indigenous peoples from their land, entering into agreements that were not respected, killing animals and means of livelihood, forcibly evicting people from their land, removing children from their parents, and the murdering and raping of Indigenous women and girls that continues to this date. **Canada has continued to exploit that position, riding the coattails of British and American imperialism, including through participation in NATO.** Canada has funded imperialist militaries and expanded their presence in the Asia-pacific region and the South China Sea. Canada is one of the founding members of coalitions of elite countries like the G7 and APEC. It directly participates in funding and providing military training and other technical support to authoritative regimes, such as the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Israeli army.



NATO background

NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is an alliance of 29 states committed to upholding its common imperialist goals. These states came together to shore up the power of capital against the growing power of labour movements and the threat of socialist revolution. Although the USSR is no more, NATO's modus operandi is still to deter or stop states and movements deviating from the monopoly-capitalism model. It defends the economic system which allows a small number of companies to exploit, plunder, and murder, while keeping the working classes poor and precarious.

Military Spending:

Canada's membership in NATO has been draining Canadian tax-payers funds for increased military spending, committed Canada to production and trade in military fare such as light armoured vehicles, armed drones and fighter jets, compelled it to engage in threatening military exercises in the Caribbean, Europe and East Asia, and made it a party to the wars in Syria and Ukraine. It has obligated the Canadian government to join in economic coercive measures against many countries, and illegally so, such as Iran, Venezuela, Syria, Yemen and so on. It makes Canada subservient to US foreign policy and aggression.

In its most recent defense policy paper titled "Strong, Secure, and Engaged" (released in June 2017), the Canadian government outlines its defense priorities over the next 20 years. The paper proposes to increase the defense budget per year from \$18.9 billion in 2016-2017 to \$32.7 billion in 2026-2027, which is an increase of over 70 percent. Significant costs include over a hundred billion dollars to purchase new fighter jets and naval ships, which has been called the largest single taxpayer expense in Canadian history. These figures only account for the cost of acquiring the new weapons, not the additional billions needed to operate and maintain them over the cost of their lifecycle. This increased spending is due in large part to its support for NATO militarism.

Since the intensification of the war in Ukraine, the cost of living has skyrocketed, causing both inflation and opportunities for price-gouging by businesses. As the basic necessities have gotten more expensive, it has provided yet another opportunity for the rich to profit. In both the war zones and the rest of the world, it is the working people who pay the price while the ruling class gets rich.

While the military budget increases to fund war abroad, funding for social services such as healthcare and education remains inadequate. The military is by far the world's largest polluter and contributor to climate change, which leads to negative health effects for those living near military installations, especially Indigenous people. Military recruitment continues at schools and targets vulnerable youth who believe they have no other opportunity to escape poverty, all while the Canadian military continues to foster a culture of misogyny and white supremacy.



Causing conflict and supporting reactionary regimes:

Let's talk about the most recent conflict, the war in Ukraine. Not only does NATO continue to fuel the war in Ukraine, it is most responsible for causing it in the first place. Despite the dissolution of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact and the establishment of the Russian Federation in line with Western capitalist policy, NATO expansion continued.

Why have NATO powers provoked Russia and pushed for the remilitarization of Europe? NATO and Russia's actions are motivated by competition for natural resources and by NATO powers' desire to establish control over the former socialist economies of Eastern Europe alongside Russia's desire to do the same. Western powers have sought the integration of Eastern European economies into the European capitalist system. Ukraine is rich in mineral resources and is a crucial area for transporting oil and gas to Europe. It is these considerations which weigh on the ruling classes of Russia and the NATO powers rather than the security or well-being of the Ukrainians or Russians themselves.

By recklessly provoking conflict and then opportunistically taking advantage of it, NATO has proved that its interests are fundamentally incompatible with the interests of ordinary working people.

It has done this through its continued expansion and provocative actions in Eastern Europe. It spread, for instance, to Poland, Hungary, the Baltic States, and the Balkans. In 2008, it announced its intention to extend NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine, knowing fully well that this would represent a direct threat to the Russian Federation. Even in the 1990s, many realized that continued NATO expansion risked re-militarizing Europe and provoking conflicts with Russia. Because Russia is also an imperialist power, it is no surprise that Russia has eventually responded to the extension of a military alliance to its doorstep.

The threat posed to Russia by NATO expansion is not an abstract one. It involves the stationing of missiles within reach of Russian cities, regular military exercises on Russian borders, and the withdrawal of US and NATO powers from arms-control agreements, as well as an increasing intervention into Ukrainian domestic politics. The latter significantly impacts Russia's political and economic interests. NATO expansion thus confronts Russia with a direct threat of violence and foreign political influence.

For the rest of us, the war between imperialist powers achieves nothing but death, destruction, and impoverishment. By participating in NATO, Canada perpetuates the ongoing devastation in Ukraine by continuing to send lethal aid to Ukraine, training fascist Ukrainian militias and promoting NATO membership for Ukraine. Ordinary people have been forced to pay the price of the ruling class' political maneuvers for too long.



Conclusion:

NATO is a threat to security, an obstacle to peace; Canada must withdraw from NATO.

Our government is not working for the people's interest but is pouring money into weapons and turning countries into war zones, all to uphold a broken system. **There can never be real peace as long as this system rules us.**

As anti-imperialists in Canada, it is our job to join with the working classes of the world in opposing imperialist war, and to take a stand against our own bourgeoisie that perpetuates it. Just as many Russian people have taken a stand against their own warmongering ruling class, it is up to us to stand against the Canadian ruling class, and its support for NATO militarism.

Despite what the government may claim, **Canada's involvement in the war industry is not for defense but rather to protect and maintain its imperial interests while generating profits for the ruling class.**

In conclusion, there is an urgent need to rebuild the anti-war movement in Canada.

Canada must get out of NATO.

Canada must stop all support of authoritarian and reactionary regimes

Canada must stop arms trading for profit!