

The Downward Spiral of Militarism

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In response to Israel's recent attacks on Iran, the Group of Seven (G7) at their annual summit issued a statement expressing support for the aggressor and condemnation of the attacked, the pretense being that in the near future Iran might develop nuclear weapons. This was despite the fact that both the International Atomic Energy Agency and American intelligence had recently indicated that Iran was not in the process of developing nuclear weapons.

The G7 claimed that "Iran is the principal source of regional instability and terror" in the Middle East but didn't mention that Israel is already armed with nukes and currently at war with four other countries in the region besides Iran. The G7 themselves have continued arming Israel with conventional weapons during this latest war, and the United States has recently engaged in airstrikes of its own, first against Yemen and then against Iran, following Israel's attacks.

Aside from Canada and Japan, all the other G7 countries currently possess nuclear weapons. Canada and Japan formerly hosted nukes for the US, the only country in the world to have ever used the weapons in combat. Toward the end of the Second World War, the US leveled the entire Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, massacring Japanese and Korean civilians. After the war, the US, France and the United Kingdom carried out hundreds of nuclear weapons tests in their colonies, causing mass harm to civilians, including displacement, starvation, sickness and death. The victory of the US over Japanese imperialism is what won the Americans the colony of the Marshall Islands, which they then used for their own imperialist interest in nuclear tests, to the great detriment of the Marshallese people.

Israel, an ally rather than a member of the G7, for decades has maintained a secretive nuclear program, developed partly in collaboration with imperialist France and apartheid South Africa. More recently, Germany has supplied Israel with submarines knowing that Israel would equip them with nuclear weapons.

Israel, unlike Iran, has never been a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, meaning that Iran has subjected themselves to oversight by the International Atomic Energy Agency but Israel has not. In response to Israel and America's latest attacks, Iran has now formally ended their cooperation with the Agency.

Israel and the G7 claim to be protecting the Western world from a potential nuclear threat but they themselves already are the larger and more present version of that threat, and their actions only increase the global nuclear danger. Their real struggle isn't to protect us from weapons of mass destruction held by foreign evildoers, rather it's to subject us to even greater domination and exploitation at their own hands. The claims of the nuclear-armed West to be concerned with the looming threat of such weapons in the hands of Iran should not just ring hollow but ring the alarm.

Popular Power

The historic social movement against nuclear weapons and their proliferation was not initiated by colonizer nation-states but by activists and common people who spoke out, demonstrated and took action, and in doing so influenced the politicians.

Already in 1946, the English anarchist newspaper *Freedom* published a four-part series of articles against nuclear weapons and the State, written by Jewish American anarchist Marcus Graham, who'd already long been active in opposing both the World wars.

As Graham put it, “the revelations about the ‘democratic’ States’ construction and ultimate employment of the two atomic bombs that alone caused the deliberate murdering of several hundred thousands of innocent men, women and children ought to dispel once and for all time any illusion that the common man ever held of the ‘democratic’ State having any more regard for human life and welfare than the fascist, nazi or bolshevist State.”

The process for developing the nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty was introduced in 1958 by Frank Aiken, the Irish Minister for External Affairs. Aiken had formerly been a member of the anti-colonial Irish Volunteers and Chief of Staff of the Irish Republican Army. Mass protests against nuclear weapons took place in Japan and the UK the same year as Aiken’s political intervention.

The notorious Scottish anarchist Stuart Christie noted in his autobiography that the mass movement against the placement of American nuclear submarines in the Holy Loch near Glasgow at the start of the 1960s was his introduction to social resistance more generally.

Conventional Catastrophe

Since 2023, Israel has dropped tens of thousands of tons of conventional explosives on the open-air prison that they have made of Gaza, far surpassing the amount used by the Allies against cities such as Dresden or Tokyo in World War Two. The majority of the housing and civilian infrastructure of Gaza has been damaged or destroyed, while aid is being used as a daily death trap.

Militarism, the endless pursuit by states and corporations of greater armaments and armies, always means the massacre of countless lives as well as the mass destruction of all that is materially necessary to sustain life. The grand leaders of the West and their henchmen have already long been throwing stones inside the big glass house that we all have to live in together, leaving the rest of us lowlifes to pick the glass out of our feet while we duck further incoming projectiles. The settler colonial project, whether in Israel or the Americas, accentuates and re-concentrates the brutality of militarism that is common to all states, making colonized peoples pay the highest price of all.

It’s plain to see that colonizers will not save us from nuclear catastrophe, nor the destruction of the Earth by means of conventional militarism and its contribution to climate change. Only the anti-colonial and anti-capitalist resistance of common people can be the impetus for the necessary social transformation.

Combative Context

For the US and Israel, attacking Iran and neighboring countries isn’t anything new. In 1953, a coup backed by the US and the UK overthrew Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and installed a regime more to the liking of the allied countries of the West. The US then began cooperating with Iran on developing nuclear power, even supplying the country with their first reactor and enriched uranium. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 subsequently turned the tables on the US but also did not fully end all cooperation between the two countries. During the Iraq-Iran War of the 1980s, the US materially supported both sides, but primarily Iraq against Iran.

In their wars against Iraq launched in 1991 and 2003, the US used depleted uranium rounds, a type of ammunition that makes use of the byproduct of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and energy. This ammo is a chemical and radioactive pollutant linked to birth defects and cancer among Iraqi civilians. More recently, the US, which has the largest stocks of depleted uranium in the world, has been supplying the rounds to Ukraine for use against the Russian invasion, with further disregard for civilian harm on all sides.

The lengthy US-occupation of Iraq led to multiple insurgencies, one of which spilled over into Syria. The US, in fact, still maintains military bases in Iraq, and elsewhere in the Middle East, more than two decades after their 2003 invasion, which was at first materially supported by Ukraine, Canada, and the UK, among other countries.

In 2001, a US-led coalition, involving both NATO and non-NATO countries (such as Ukraine and Iran), invaded and occupied Afghanistan as part of America's inaptly-named Operation Enduring Freedom, which ultimately resulted in the ousted regime re-assuming power and the withdrawal of US forces, mission unaccomplished, in 2021. Afghan refugees in both Iran and the US meanwhile have been facing mass expulsion, while Afghan fighters, trained by the US, have been involved in both sides of the war between Russia and Ukraine.

In 2015, Saudi Arabia, with the extensive backing of Western weapons, launched a war and a land and sea blockade against Yemen, contributing to the humanitarian crisis in one the poorest countries in the world.

The US in 2020 assassinated Iranian General Qasem Soleimani with an airstrike in Iraq. Previously, in 2001, Soleimani and other Iranian military leaders had worked with US forces to capture the city of Herat in Afghanistan, but even this would not be enough to save him from his former allies decades later.

In 2024, Israel carried out an airstrike on the Iranian embassy complex in Damascus, Syria, killing 16 people, both officials and civilians. Since October of 2023, Israel has been launching numerous attacks against Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Syria, in addition to Iran.

Israel's ongoing military occupation and aggression against Palestine, both Gaza and the West Bank, is part of the ethnic cleansing they began in 1948 with the founding of the Israeli state itself, after they violently ousted British soldiers and police from Palestine. With the help of American, French, Czechoslovakian and British weapons, not to mention British training, Israel soon won their first war against Palestine and the Arab League.

The Czechoslovakian communist party had assumed power just a few months prior to Israeli independence and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the year before had already lent their political support at the United Nations for the formation of the settler colonial state of Israel. Statists, be they capitalist or socialist, are always pragmatic enough to dehumanize and eliminate certain peoples whose very existence gets in their way, and to flip and pretend they were always on the side of the oppressed, when opportunity arises.

Jewish English anarchist Albert Meltzer had already in 1948 pointed to the role of communist Czechoslovakia's arms exports to Israel, having written, since 1939, several other articles on Zionist colonialism and its relation to British imperialism. He'd been present in Egypt during the Second World War, having been conscripted by Britain, and had discouraged disgruntled British soldiers from selling their weapons to Zionists.

Allied Antagonists

At this year's G7 summit, the war in the Middle East was not the only case of mass carnage on the table. Canada's Prime Minister, following his participation in the declaration of support for Israeli aggression, also pledged an additional \$4.3 billion in aid for Ukraine, on top of the \$4.5 billion in military assistance that Canada has already offered since 2022, when Russia escalated into a full-scale invasion from their partial invasion they began in 2014. On top of all the material supplies, Canadians have been training Ukrainian troops and cops since 2015.

Canada's PM, at this year's G7 summit, also condemned Russia's "barbarism." Only last year, under a different PM, Russia hadn't been quite barbaric enough to keep Canada from lifting sanctions on their titanium. At that time, France's president urged Canada to lift the sanctions because the French company Airbus (the twelfth largest arms manufacturer in the world in 2023) needs the material and all landing gear for their premier A350-1000 jet comes from a single Canadian factory.

For the allied countries of the West, in both the G7 and the military alliance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Israeli aggression is grand but Russian aggression is foul, and even then, not quite terrible enough to stop the titanium from flowing freely when colonizer countries like France and Canada need it.

Then, there are the cases of the Canadian company Tallysman and the French companies Thales and Safran who have been caught with their parts showing up in captured Russian military equipment, in contravention of what sanctions remain. Companies and countries will always try to make money from both sides of a conflict as long as they can get away with it, even as they hand-wring about one side being the bad guys and the other being the heroes. Meanwhile, Russia has now reverse-engineered the Canadian antennas formerly built into their Iranian-designed drones. The technical development of militarism by one belligerent country indirectly benefits the opposing side, when it's not directly helping them.

For Canada, like other countries, war is good for business, and not just in terms of arms sales. In 2023, a deal was cut under which Canada will supply, for a period of 12 years, all of the uranium needed to fuel all nine of Ukraine's current nuclear reactors, along with additional reactors too, should Ukraine, with the help of NATO, manage to reclaim them from Russian occupation. No country anywhere in the world, however, has any plans to help liberate the Native nations of North America from Canadian and American occupation. What Israel is doing to Palestine and Russia to Ukraine is considered by all countries to be a done deal when it comes to North America.

A Canadian-owned gold mine in the Central African Republic was seized in 2020 by the Russian government's Wagner Group and has been used ever since to help fund the war against Ukraine. The Canadian company (with primarily Chinese investors), Axmin Inc., which owns the mine, has only been concerned with seeking a pay-out and royalties through a legal process. Profiting off Russian aggression and exploitation of African resources is not a problem for them at all, even a potential benefit.

For more than a decade now, Saudi Arabia has been Canada's second highest arms export destination after the US, despite the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Like the rest of the West, Canada is no saviour to the common people, but only a profiteer and benefactor to fellow aggressors and exploiters.

Ancillary Imperialism

Ukraine, though currently neither a member of the G7 nor NATO, and still not a player on the level of the countries in those alliances, nonetheless serves as their junior partner in their imperialist sphere of power and profit.

Even with extensive NATO support, Ukraine undoubtedly remains an underdog in relation to the size and scope of Russian military power. Russia's invasion remains in the wrong and Ukrainian resistance, were it not simply militarist and by definition statist, would be in the right. As it stands, Ukrainian resistance to their own state's conscription efforts can't be any less legitimate than resistance to Russian state aggression.

Yet, Russia's imperialism doesn't cancel out that of the West. Much as Canada would not cease to be a settler colonial and by definition imperialist state if the US invaded. Much as the UK didn't become anti-imperialist by successfully repulsing, with significant Indigenous help, the US invasions of British North America in 1812-1814, or by freeing slaves held by American patriots.

Being relatively small and less powerful does not make a country anti-imperialist, even in the case of invasion and occupation by a greater foreign power. Belgium too was an underdog in relation to Germany in the First World War. Yet, at the time, they possessed the colony of the Congo "Free State" in Africa, from which they brutally extracted resources. Being invaded by Germany did not cause Belgium to have a change of heart after the war either. Instead, they expanded their colonial empire, taking Germany's colony of Rwanda-Urundi as reward and only giving up the Congo decades later, after the anti-colonial riots of 1959 forced their hand.

Ukraine has no colonies of their own but has taken part in Western imperialism in its other forms. The participation of Ukrainian troops in the American-led occupation of Iraq in the 2000s was apparently unpopular back at home, and when Iraqi insurgents managed to oust the occupying Ukrainian forces from the city of Kut in 2004, the Ukrainian government's support for the war effort collapsed too, and they withdrew their forces from the country.

Ukraine's arms industry and ambitions of NATO membership, however, grew in the years following. By 2012, Ukraine had reached their peak, becoming the fourth largest arms exporter in the entire world, even beating out major players such as Germany, France and the UK.

Before and after the 2014 Russian aggression, Ukraine had no hesitancy in supplying arms to various repressive regimes, including India, Saudi Arabia, and Myanmar. Even following the start of the Rohingya genocide in 2016 and the military coup 2021, Ukraine continued to supply weapons to Myanmar, before apparently folding under pressure.

On the other hand, since at least 2022, Ukraine has purchased and imported Israeli weapons, in this case rifles and grenade launchers, for use in the NATO-backed war against Russian invasion and occupation. Israeli parts can be found in Ukraine's F-16 jets supplied by other Western countries. Ukraine also purchases and imports weapons from Turkey and has a free trade agreement with that country, despite their oppression of the Kurdish people.

Clearly, Ukraine does not support self-determination for all on principle, but only looks out for themselves and their allies, even supporting aggression and invasion by other countries, no matter how many ordinary people have to die. As if to emphasize this point, the government of Ukraine released a statement supporting the recent Israeli aggression against Iran. In fact, Ukraine has long maintained friendly diplomatic relations with Israel and framed Iran as their common enemy.

The President of Ukraine even more recently signed a decree that would pull Ukraine out of the anti-landmine Ottawa Treaty of 1997, showing further disregard for indiscriminate harm to civilians (not to mention other animals), beyond just the matter of depleted uranium rounds. In fact, Ukraine has been violating the anti-landmine treaty already since 2022 and has been receiving landmines from the US, which isn't a party to the treaty.

Both Ukraine's withdrawal from the anti-landmine treaty and Iran's ousting of the International Atomic Energy Agency stand as stark examples of how militarism can only increase militarism, regardless of which side has started each particular war. Meanwhile, the politicians sit safe behind their desks and podiums, or go out and hit the golf course, as others do their fighting, suffering and dying for them on the battlefield.

Armament Interlinked

NATO's military support for Ukraine has been so extensive that by 2024, Ukraine had become the largest arms importer on the planet. Israel, for comparison, languished in 15th place between 2015 and 2024. The arms economies of Ukraine and Israel, we can further note, are interlinked beyond just Ukraine's limited purchase of a certain Israeli weapons, which nonetheless arrive in units by the thousands.

An exclamation point was put on this recently by Palestine solidarity activists in Belgium, when they blocked, occupied and defaced the offices of Optronik Instruments and Products (OIP), a subsidiary of Israel's largest arms company, Elbit. The mainstream media in both Belgium and Israel acted as if this targeting had somehow been a mistake, since OIP was producing arms for Ukraine, but as activists with Stop Arming Israel Belgium explained, all the money made by OIP "goes to fund a group up to its neck in genocide in Gaza and apartheid in the occupied territories."

"We can support the Ukrainian people without collaborating in the genocide of the Palestinian people," they added.

A similar situation had already played out in Canada, where the armoured vehicle company Roshel, run by a former member of the Israeli Defense Forces, has been supplying Ukraine. The company has faced protests for their attempt to sell vehicles to Israeli police, these sales being put on hold by the Canadian government due to public pressure.

Yet, the links go even deeper still. Prior to Israel's escalation against Palestine in October of 2023, the US had been supplying Ukraine via an ammunition cache that they have kept in Israel since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This had been done with the understanding that the US would replenish the stocks of ammo should Israel suddenly need it, which is exactly what happened, as the US then rushed to provide rounds to Israel and sourced further supplies from South Korea to replenish their own stocks. The South Korean arms company, Hanwha, which restocked the US, then made a deal with the Israeli arms company Elbit to help outfit infantry fighting vehicles for Australia.

The US, meanwhile, had already been ratcheting-up production levels for Ukraine, and once Israel started their escalation against Palestine, the US indicated that this increased production might now benefit Israel as well.

US arms manufacturer General Dynamics, which produces the Mark 82 bomb that Israel uses against Palestine and other countries, was aided in the set-up of new facilities for the purpose of supplying more ammo to Ukraine by the Turkish company Repkon, sticking another pin in the

chart of colonial oppression of Native peoples from North America to Kurdistan and Palestine. Half of the very same workers who helped produce the Mark 82 for Israel in Garland, Texas, were transferred to the new General Dynamics plant in Mesquite to then make ammo for Ukraine. Repkon's US branch subsequently bought the GD factory in Garland and was awarded a contract by the US government to produce arms for Israel.

The US and Turkey haven't been the only NATO countries involved in interlinked military purchasing and production in relation to the wars waged by Ukraine and Israel. Germany, in 2023, made the single biggest arms purchase in Israel's history when they bought, with US approval, the Arrow air defense system from Israel, under the pretense of an increased Russian threat to Germany.

The company Dynamit Nobel Defence, a German subsidiary of the Israeli state-owned arms company Rafael, has been supplying both Ukraine and Israel with grenade launchers that were first field-tested against Gazans in 2009 before being supplied to the likes of the fascist Azov and 3rd Separate Assault brigades of the Ukrainian army. In early 2024, the Ukrainian state-owned arms company, Ukroboronprom, the largest weapons company in the country, cut a deal with the Rafael subsidiary, Dynamit Nobel Defence, to jointly produce German-Israeli arms within Ukraine itself.

The profits from one war fuel the other and the cycle of carnage continues. But beyond just the issue of the capital generated by and for war, there is also the issue of political leverage and the use of soldiers as cannon fodder, as was illustrated when the US last year urged Ukraine to lower their age limit for the conscription of civilians into the army.

Calamitous Conclusion

Militarism is truly a global system, not only deeply embedded in capitalist exploitation, the settler colonial elimination of Indigenous peoples and various forms of racist oppression, but also ecological harm to all life on Earth via its over-sized contribution to pollution and climate change.

One good war deserves another. Each conflict justifies the next, leaving many if not all of their causes unresolved, and generating ever graver consequences for everyone, not just the active belligerents. The arms race threatens the very existence of the human race, along with that of countless other species.

"Without a doubt," proclaimed Japanese socialist and later anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui in 1901, "patriotism and militarism constitute the foundation upon which the imperialism practiced by the great powers of the present day rests."

If modern war is a political means to an end, and that end is imperialist domination and profit, we'd do well to better examine their roots in patriotism and militarism, as we were advised by our Japanese comrade so long ago. The stakes can only get higher, and pointing the finger at foreign countries so as to avoid dealing with the responsibility of our own is akin to sticking our heads in the sand as the world floods and burns around us and our neighbours cry out for help.

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