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# Yes, Russia should pull out — but Nato's warlike manoeuvres must end too

Friday 25 February 2022, by [The Morning Star](#) (Date first published: 21 February 2022).

**THE STOP THE WAR COALITION is right to call for Russia to withdraw its troops to its own territory and for the resumption of diplomatic negotiations to resolve the crisis.**

Boris Johnson has stirred himself to chair a meeting of the Cabinet's Cobra committee, something the Covid crisis failed to provoke in him.

In distinction to the front-bench Johnson-and-Starmer consensus on confrontation, the British working class and labour movement must counteract the provocative stance of our government and call for a peaceful resolution of the region's problems. An end to Nato troop movements and arms supplies would be a first step to de-escalation.

Putin ordered his troops to enter the breakaway parts of Ukraine on a "peacekeeping" mission.

That peace is long endangered is without doubt. The Organisation for Security & Co-operation in Europe, which maintains observers along the line of control has, for a very long time, been reporting daily exchanges of fire from both sides of the breakaway border with Ukraine.

The most warlike elements in Nato, most particularly the United States and Britain, now label the movement of Russian troops as the invasion they have been predicting. That it is something less has done nothing to dial down the hyperbole — but it has, as yet, triggered a more tentative raft of sanctions than the most combative elements in Nato desire.

There is a first success for the key objective of the US in the suspension of the Nordstream pipeline project, in which substantial amounts of Russian and European capital are invested. US energy barons see export opportunities in Europe. But the big energy consumers in Western Europe — dependent now even more on energy transit lines that run through Ukraine — may not see this as an unalloyed gain. And the inevitable spike in energy prices will put super profits in the pockets of the energy companies and siphon cash from working people everywhere.

Those who view these events exclusively through the prism of Cold War categories might reflect on the revealing passage in Putin's speech in which he attacked the heritage of the Bolshevik revolution, referred to the toppling of Lenin's statues and boasted: "We are ready to show you what real decommunisation means for Ukraine."

This alone should remind the left of the necessity to seek the class politics behind every act and utterance and guard against becoming drawn into the war aims of our class enemies.

Where Russia's long-standing position does win understanding from wide sections of international opinion is in the clear threat that Ukraine membership of Nato entails for Russian security and thus European peace. It would mean missiles sited a few minutes away from Russia's main cities.

That, and the threat to global stability and energy prices, is why there is no international consensus on Russia's responsibility and why China, India and Brazil at the UN security council avoided a one-sided condemnation.

Predictably, Nato states and the EU have announced sanctions against a selection of Russia's capitalist banks and oligarchs and bans on trade with the breakaway republics.

People in the breakaway republics may see Russian troops as protection, and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky knows better than most that Ukraine is a divided society, that history and geography make it a frontier state with all manner of mercenary and neonazi elements in its armed forces and unresponsive to his authority.

The fact is that Nato's eastward offensive, combined with the failure of the post EuroMaidan Ukraine governments to get serious about the Minsk accords — which would have given regional autonomy and enshrined Ukraine's independence and neutrality — has given little chance for a settlement that would have reassured Russia and satisfied its security concerns.

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