

# Taras Kuzio: US, Canada rift over Ukraine as big as that with Europe

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A father shows an armored personnel carrier interior to his daughter at the exhibition of Russian weapons captured in the Donbas during battles in eastern Ukraine.  
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This week Ukraine has been celebrating the first anniversary of the Euromaidan Revolution that toppled kleptocratic President Viktor Yanukovych. In the same week the second peace agreement signed in Minsk on Feb. 11 collapsed for the same reasons as the first Minsk agreement signed last September; then and now Russia and its separatist proxies failed to adhere to a single article of Minsk-1 or 2.

It is only therefore a matter of time before the European Union will return to the question of tougher economic and financial sanctions and U.S. President Barack Obama has to decide whether to continue to fight his own Democratic Party, as well as Republicans and both houses of the U.S. Congress, over whether to authorize supplying defensive military equipment for Ukraine (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/18/lets-call-the...>).

But, Canada, in addition to Western Europe, is also opposed to providing Ukraine with military equipment and with Minsk-2 having disintegrated at the strategic railroad crossing of Debaltseve from which Ukrainian forces retreated, will Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government, which has been strong on rhetoric but weak on substance, and the Canadian parliament continue to oppose the sending of military equipment to Ukraine?

While the rift between EU members Germany and France and the US over the sending of defensive military equipment to Ukraine has been prominently highlighted there has been no focus on as important a rift between the US and Canada, the second in just over a decade since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Ukrainian-Canadian activists point the finger at Germany and France for selling out Ukraine while ignoring their own political leaders (<http://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/oksana-bashu...>).

The split between the then Liberal government and hawkish neocon Bush administration represented a strategically important shift in the NATO alliance

as Canada broke ranks with the US and Britain over intervention and regime change in Iraq. Today, a new rift has appeared between a Conservative government and Canadian parliament and a Republican-dominated US Congress and US president.

Both houses of the US Congress support the sending of defensive military equipment to Ukraine while the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has only found two MP's who support this in the House of Commons, a Conservative and the National Democratic Party.

Former Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj asked 'As the founder of what at one time was the most active parliamentary friendship group The Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group, I do not understand why the group has not passed a resolution demanding that Canada send defensive lethal weapons.

Last December the US Congress adopted a Ukraine Freedom Support Act that provides for all-round economic, financial, democratic and security assistance to Ukraine. There is no such equivalent legislation in the Canadian parliament.

The US-Canadian rift is perhaps best seen by the plethora of editorials and opinion page commentaries in the British and US media in support of sending defensive military equipment to Ukraine and a more generally tougher policy to President Vladimir Putin's Russia. There is an absence of such media coverage in Canada.

Former Ukrainian Ambassador to Canada Vadym Prystaiko complained last summer of low level of support (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ukraine-has-not-received-canadian-aid-promised-months-ago-ambassador-says/article19735632/>).

After President Petro Poroshenko visited Ottawa last September the promised aid was dispersed to Ukraine.

Nevertheless, when Poroshenko told the US Congress that his country could not fight Russian troops and their terrorist proxies with blankets, Ukraine's DeBaltseve Dunkirk shows he could have said the same thing about winter clothing.

Canadian government ministers and commentators have argued along two lines against the sending of defensive military equipment to Ukraine.

Firstly, Ukraine is highly corrupt and the aid could be stolen. While it is true that Ukraine has a high level of corruption, this is true for Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan with which Western democracies have long had security ties. Indeed, if Canadian special forces can train the Kurds to fight the Islamic State's threat to Iraq's sovereignty why could they not train Ukrainians to defend theirs? Training could be increased within long-running annual Canada-Ukraine Maple Arch and Rapid Trident exercises.

Training and advice is as important as military hardware in transforming Ukrainian forces into counter insurgency forces and such assistance by its very nature cannot be stolen. Training by Canadian special forces, considered to be one of the best in the world, would make Ukrainian forces more accountable reducing civilian casualties arising from out dated Soviet

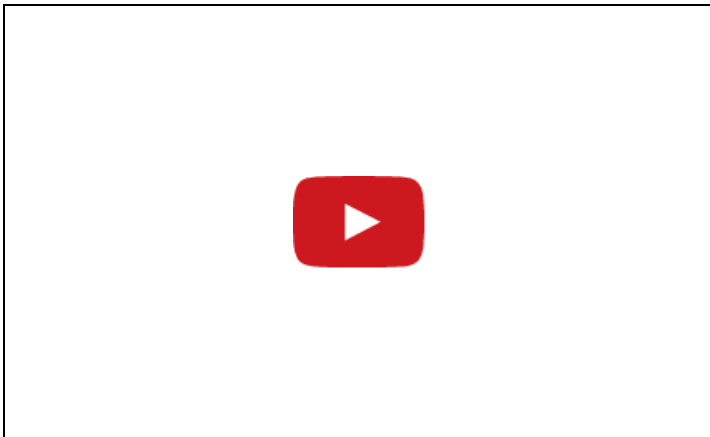
era military tactics that rely heavily on indiscriminate artillery and rocket attacks.

Secondly, defensive military aid to Ukraine could end up in the hands of nationalist volunteer battalions. Here, the answer is simply for Canada to do the same as the US in only sending assistance to the Ukrainian military.

While Harper has used a megaphone in his attacks against President Vladimir Putin's destructive support for conflict in Ukraine, his government and the Canadian parliament have adopted weaker economic and financial sanctions than the EU and have not supported the call of the U.S. Congress to provide defensive military assistance to Ukraine. U.S. will begin to train Ukrainian forces next month.

Now is the time for Harper to follow Lithuania and Poland who have stated their willingness to begin supplying arms and Britain, which has sold 75 Saxon armored personnel carriers to Ukraine. Canada should be on the same page as the U.S. on this important strategic decision.

Failing a repair of the rift with the U.S., Canada's 1.5 million voters of Ukrainian descent will undoubtedly bare the Harper government's reticence when they go to cast their votes in the next elections. Former Liberal MP Borys Wresznewskyj said 'Ukraine will win the war of aggression that Russia has begun against Ukraine. But, at what cost will this be? 10,000 lives? 50,000 lives? 100,000 Ukrainians?' and why Canada is not giving support to Ukraine during its battle for survival as a sovereign state.



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*Borys Wrzesnewskyj, a former member of parliament, talks about the need to help Ukraine's defense against Russia's war.*

*Taras Kuzio is a senior research associate at the Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta and non-resident fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C. He is author of the forthcoming book to be published in June entitled "Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption and the New Russian Imperialism."*

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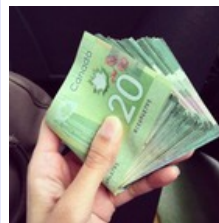
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