

French NPA offers “anti-imperialist” rationale for imperialist intervention in Syria

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On November 1, France’s New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) published a comment titled “Syria: The bad remedies of the imperialists,” criticizing an October 22 column in *Le Monde*. In this column, titled “Enough evasions, we must intervene in Syria,” politicians and media celebrities— “new philosophers” Bernard-Henri Lévy (BHL) and André Glucksmann, former Socialist Party (PS) minister Bernard Kouchner, and Doctors without Borders founder Jacques Bérès—called for war with Syria.

An examination of the NPA’s article reveals the hypocrisy and pro-imperialist politics of this petty-bourgeois “left” party. While stressing their support for the US-led proxy war to arm the opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, they cynically seek to distance themselves from BHL and Co., trying to manufacture fundamental political differences where none exist. Examining their arguments reveals that the NPA largely shares the views of these figures, which the NPA itself says are pro-imperialist.

The NPA begins: “When a legitimate ‘cause’ does not find a way out of its problems, cannot satisfy legitimate demands (social or democratic) based only on its ‘natural’ supporters, it runs the risk of finding false prophets on the side of the road. ... This is what threatens the ‘cause’ of the supporters of the Syrian revolution. Its false prophets would be the neo-conservative and pro-imperialist ideologists Bernard-Henry Levy, André Glucksmann, and Bernard Kouchner.”

Behind its vague, cryptic comments about “causes” and “natural supporters,” the NPA is nervous about being openly aligned with “neo-conservative and pro-imperialist ideologists” in support of the Syrian war. BHL and Glucksmann—anti-communist “new philosophers” and intellectual charlatans who began

their careers in the toxic milieu of post-1968 “radical” intellectual politics—are viewed with contempt by broad sections of the population. As for Kouchner, he made his ministerial career in the unpopular right-wing government of President Nicolas Sarkozy.

The NPA’s alignment with such forces highlights the reactionary character of its politics, and the fact that masses of working people stand far to the left of the NPA.

The NPA half-heartedly tries to distance itself from the advocates of “humanitarian” war, though it ultimately finds only minor tactical differences with them.

The NPA stresses that it largely agrees with arguments presented by *Le Monde* for intervention in Syria: “Not all is wrong in this text, far from it. And its authors are right to denounce a regime in Syria that has ‘come to kill nearly 40,000 people, removed, tortured or killed thousands of others, and used tanks and aircraft against its own people.’”

Such comments testify to the NPA’s alignment with the press campaign launched to promote war in Syria. By solely blaming the Assad regime for the killings, the NPA seeks to hide the imperialist powers’ role in stirring up right-wing Islamist forces to launch a proxy war in Syria, a former French colony.

For one-and-a-half years, Western imperialism has funneled money, weapons and Islamist fighters into Syria via its regional proxies: Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Backed by the CIA, these forces carry out terrorist attacks throughout Syria, advocate mass killings of pro-Assad minorities, and regularly resort to torture and murder.

Explaining its differences with the *Le Monde* article, the NPA writes: “The problem is not in the description of the current situation by the authors, which largely

sounds correct. The problem lies in the remedies they want to apply ... First, they repeatedly refer to the idea of ‘supplying arms to the revolution’ in Syria. One cannot be against it, if, however, one specifies certain conditions.”

That is, the NPA agrees with BHL that the Syrian rebels should be armed by the imperialist powers to bring down Assad. From there, the NPA’s attempts to explain its differences with BHL rapidly descend into absurdity.

It writes, “One should propose to deliver above all weapons that the rebels could use with full autonomy, without needing to have military ‘advisors’ (which, French and British, were thick on the ground in Libya in 2011). Sophisticated weapons systems sometimes require specialized personnel and therefore create a form of external dependence. This is not the demand of the Syrian rebels, who primarily need anti-tank weapons and anti-air missiles to protect themselves from murderous artillery assaults and the fighter jets of the regime.”

One barely knows how to begin in answering such a dishonest statement. It does not matter what type of weapons the CIA and allied intelligence agencies are distributing to the forces the NPA supports in Syria and Libya. These “rebel” groups depend on Washington and its allies for military supplies and, like the NPA itself, function as tools of the imperialist powers.

The NPA tries to evade this question, pretending that the opposition will retain “autonomy” if only they do not get “sophisticated” weapons from the CIA. To anyone who might think that the NPA wants their Islamist “rebel” proxies in Syria to be armed “only” with assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, or truck bombs, they promptly specify that the Syrian opposition needs high-tech anti-air and anti-tank missiles.

In conclusion, the NPA criticizes full-scale war with Syria as “not a realistic, desirable, or viable solution.” They prefer a US-backed proxy war to bring down Assad to a direct invasion, which “risks creating other ills and massacres.”

The NPA explains their opposition to intervention by comparing a potential NATO war in Syria to the NATO war in Libya, which the NPA supported: “Libya is a militarily weak country, lightly populated—the population of Syria is five times higher, if one leaves

out the immigrant proletariat in Libya—with only two major urban centers and a relatively ‘homogeneous’ population from a religious standpoint. A foreign intervention in Syria, a far more densely populated country with multiple religions and ethnicities, threatens to produce very different outcomes.”

The NPA’s glorification of proxy wars—or of wars fought by Special Forces and air force units, like the 2011 Libya war—as more palatable alternatives to direct invasion is reactionary and sinister. NATO’s war of aggression in Libya, which cost 50,000 lives, left the country devastated and controlled by corrupt networks of Islamist militias and mafia-type gangs.

Whether the imperialist powers choose the strategy of direct military intervention promoted by BHL or the NPA’s alternative of arming Sunni jihadi forces to the teeth, the success of their strategy would lead to a horrible bloodbath. The Syrian opposition largely consists of right-wing Sunni Islamist forces. Their coming to power, whether through a direct NATO intervention or thanks to escalating arms supplies from NATO, is widely expected to produce bloody sectarian warfare against Christian and Alawite minorities.

Characteristically, the NPA alludes to this with veiled references to “massacres” and Syria’s “multiple religions and ethnicities.” They do not spell out, however, the implications: the NPA is complicit in the preparation of such a bloodbath, having cynically promoted pro-imperialist opposition forces as “revolutionaries.”

In the final analysis, the only difference regarding Syria between the NPA and the authors of the *Le Monde* column is over what tactics imperialism should pursue as it prepares another disaster in the Middle East.



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