

ISIS offensive in Iraq exposes French pseudo-left's support for Syria war

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The offensive of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militia against the US-backed regime in Iraq is a devastating exposure of the pro-imperialist politics of France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). Stunned by ISIS's turn from a war the NPA supports in Syria towards one in Iraq that cuts across French imperialist interests, the NPA is turning 180 degrees, cynically denouncing ISIS while downplaying the risk of a new US-NATO war in Iraq that could devastate the region and the world.

The NPA's brief news analysis, titled "The offensive of ISIS in Iraq," seeks to cover up the central role played by the policies of US and European imperialism in creating the crisis, policies the NPA has aggressively supported.

It cynically lays responsibility for the bloodshed entirely at the door of the United States' Shiite-led stooge regime in Iraq. Complaining that Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki "let the situation rot," the NPA writes: "With the Syrian revolution, he got his orders from Iran: to back the Syrian regime. He entered into conflict with [Iraqi] Kurdistan, which was backing the Kurdish opposition [in Syria]. Finally, by crushing all representation of moderate Sunnis, he pushed Sunni militants towards the extremists."

What a miserable cover-up! What triggered the ISIS-led Sunni revolt in Iraq was, on the one hand, the massive arming of far-right Sunni Islamist militias in Syria—a CIA-led operation the NPA supports and cynically glorifies as a "revolution"—and, on the other, the deep ethno-sectarian tensions created in Iraq by the 2003-2011 US war and occupation, during which Washington pursued a divide-and-rule strategy designed to weaken the Iraqi resistance.

The NPA is directly responsible for the latest bloodshed, having pressed during the three years since

the Syrian war broke out in 2011 for the imperialist powers to arm Islamist forces like ISIS, and more broadly to escalate the war in Syria as it destabilized the entire region.

"[French foreign minister Laurent] Fabius is a broken record, he's said the same thing for months. He should graciously give weapons to the Syrian revolutionaries," NPA spokesman and former presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot told RFI last September, as Washington and Paris threatened a direct attack on Syria.

Besancenot even dismissed concerns raised by sections of the imperialist foreign policy establishment that pouring weapons into the Syrian opposition meant arming Al Qaeda-linked jihadists like ISIS. "Those who say, 'We should above all not give weapons because they will end up with the jihadists,' well, that is already the case," he said, pompously adding: "It is my principle as an internationalist to have confidence in the peoples to decide on their own destiny."

Besancenot's defense of the arming of ISIS by the imperialist powers and their Arab allies, and his attempt to pass it off as a left-wing, "internationalist" position exemplifies the rotten role of the French pseudo-left. Drawn from a narrow, affluent layer of pro-imperialist academics, union bureaucrats, and media-driven political fixers, they seek to give a thin "left" cover to the bloody operations of far-right forces, so long as they were aligned with French imperialism. The NPA is now reaping the whirlwind, as its Islamist proxies turn in a direction Besancenot and his associates did not expect.

As ISIS's offensive undermines the Maliki regime and threatens the Iraqi holdings of oil firms like France's Total, the NPA is changing its tune, denouncing its erstwhile protégés. Now, it writes, "ISIS

has shown its true face: raping women, assassinating imams, floggings of youth, exodus towards Kurdistan, expulsion of Christians, forced marriages of young girls, massacres of 1,700 Shiite military men.”

This comment exposes the filthy, pro-imperialist politics of the NPA. As long as ISIS was fighting in a French-backed war that the NPA hoped would increase French influence in its former colonial sphere, it studiously ignored ethnic massacres and other war crimes by ISIS and its allies, or blamed them on Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. From the standpoint of the reactionaries inside the NPA, the raping and killing was a necessary down payment to install a right-wing stooge regime in Damascus subordinated to the interests of Washington and Paris.

The NPA shifted its attitude as ISIS seized large parts of Iraq and its oil industry, and affluent petty-bourgeois like Olivier Besancenot and NPA founder and ex-1968 student radical Alain Krivine contemplated the damage this might do to the Total stock in their financial portfolios. Suddenly, the NPA discovered that the Syrian Sunni Islamist forces it has supported carry out bloody and brutal crimes.

As it tries to gloss over the crying contradictions in its foreign policy agenda in the Middle East, condemning Sunni Islamist militias in Iraq while continuing to promote their activities in Syria as a “revolution,” the NPA descends into complete political incoherence.

While acknowledging the Sunni militias’ crimes in Iraq, it tries to blame this offensive on ISIS’s regional opponents, the Assad regime and Iran. ISIS, the NPA writes, “has benefited from financing by regimes that are apparently opposed to it, but who are in agreement on the disintegration of the peoples of the region: Qatar, Iran, Syria, and others.”

The NPA’s claims that Iran and the Assad regime are conspiring to secretly back ISIS in a plot to take over large parts of Iraq—while fighting a bloody war against Sunni Islamist militias like ISIS that has claimed over 100,000 lives just across the border in Syria—are ludicrous. The driving force behind the ISIS offensive is the imperialist powers’ flooding of the Syrian opposition militias with weapons, which has destabilized the entire region.

More is involved in the NPA’s crafting of such blatant falsehoods than simply an attempt to cover up the NPA’s filthy record in Syria, however. As

Washington sends hundreds of military “advisors” back to Iraq, events are rapidly moving in the direction of a renewed US-NATO war in Iraq. Such a war, fought in even more explosive global conditions than the initial 2003 invasion, would threaten to draw in the major regional powers allied to factions inside Iraq, such as Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, in a regional or even global conflict.

Placed in this context, the closing lines of the NPA’s analysis are criminally complacent. It blandly writes, “As for Obama, facing the disastrous balance sheet of US policy in the region, he has conditioned aid to Iraq to a political solution between Maliki and his former partners, while at the same time moving closer to the Iranian regime.”

The NPA’s speculations about a truce between Maliki and Sunni forces brokered by Washington, coming amid escalating fighting and US military intervention in Iraq, are absurd and reactionary. Even if the imperialist powers succeeded in negotiating a temporary truce between the Iraqi factions, this would not halt the trend of escalating violence in the region. That is determined by the reckless and aggressive policies of imperialism—the war in Syria, threatening Iran with war over its nuclear program, and the bitter legacy of the nine-year US occupation of Iraq—which the NPA defends.

The working class internationally is confronted not with a peace policy from Washington, but the necessity of a political struggle against imperialist war, in which it will face pro-imperialist pseudo-left groups like the NPA as political enemies.



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