

Pseudo-left Awami Workers Party cheers on Pakistani offensive in North Waziristan

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The pseudo-left Awami Workers Party (AWP) and its international Pabloite allies are cheering on the military offensive the Pakistani state is mounting in close collaboration with Washington in North Waziristan.

Two days after the offensive began, the AWP issued a statement hailing the operation, demanding the Pakistani government “isolate and annihilate” all those who “directly or indirectly support the terrorist activities of the Taliban and its likes.”

The statement began, “After all the government and its armed forces have seen the light of day, and have abandoned the futile negotiations, which went on for several months between itself and [the Pakistani] Taliban. Awami Workers Party from the very outset opposed negotiations with the terrorists and demanded a different course of action against Taliban and other reactionary terrorist outfits.”

The AWP was formed in 2013, bringing together two Pakistani Stalinist groups with the Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP), a long-time affiliate of the international Pabloite political tendency led by France’s New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). The AWP’s June 17 “Joint statement” on the “military operation in North Waziristan” exposes the AWP as a pro-imperialist, state party.

For years, Washington has been urging Islamabad to attack North Waziristan—a historically semi-autonomous, Pashtun-speaking tribal area that borders Afghanistan. The current assault is central to the efforts of US imperialism and its Pakistani bourgeois allies to strategically reconfigure Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Pashtun-speaking Afghan borderlands, as the Pentagon draws down its troops in Afghanistan and prepares for military deployments elsewhere, including against Russia and China.

A further aim of the North Waziristan offensive is to strengthen the Pakistani state, as it implements yet another round of brutal IMF restructuring. Shortly after the offensive began, Pakistan’s parliament approved legislation giving the army vast new powers, supposedly to fight terrorism. These include the right to shoot terrorist “suspects” on sight, detain persons without charge, and hold them secretly.

The Pakistani offensive—which involves indiscriminate air strikes, a reported 30,000 ground troops, and US drone strikes—has already led to a humanitarian disaster. Close to a million people have been forced to flee North Waziristan.

The AWP statement welcoming the offensive in North Waziristan demonstrates the Pabloites’ support for US imperialism’s “war on terror”—the trumped-up pretext Washington employed to justify its invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and sweeping attacks on civil liberties at home. The words “terror” and “terrorism” are employed six times in the statement’s two short opening paragraphs.

The statement makes no reference to the Afghan War, or to the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. Nor does it mention the decades-long partnership between US imperialism and the Pakistani bourgeoisie, which has transformed Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Pashtun-speaking Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into killing fields. It entirely ignores the US drone war that has sent more than 275 drone missile strikes

raining down on North Waziristan, resulting in the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of women, children, and other civilians, and terrorizing the populace.

The AWP regurgitates the reactionary ahistorical “Taliban narrative” of the Pakistani state, the Obama administration and the Bush administration that preceded it. This narrative depicts crazed mullahs obstructing the spread of progress and civilization by wantonly spreading terror and mayhem.

The reality is the Islamic fundamentalist militia on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border are a product of the reactionary machinations of US imperialism and the Pakistani bourgeoisie. As part of its Cold War campaign to subvert and destroy the Soviet Union, Washington financed, organized, and armed the Taliban’s mujahedeen forerunners in Afghanistan and propped up General Zia ul-Haq’s brutal “Islamizing” dictatorship in Islamabad. In the 1990s, this partnership continued. Islamabad supported the Taliban’s coming to power in Kabul, so as to give it “strategic depth” in its reactionary military-strategic rivalry with India, while the US sought to use the Taliban government to gain pipeline access to Central Asia’s energy resources and to threaten its longtime adversary, Iran.

Only when the Taliban failed to fall fully in line with Washington’s strategic agenda did the Bush administration turn to invasion and occupation as the means of imposing neocolonial domination over Afghanistan and gaining a military-strategic beachhead in Central Asia. The Pakistan bourgeoisie, for its part, was quick to follow the new marching orders from Washington. It transformed the country into the principal supply route for the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. It then moved to stamp out all opposition to the occupation among the Pashtun of the FATA, who have traditionally ignored the Afghan-Pakistani border and had close ties with their fellow Pashtuns in Afghanistan.

The crimes and hypocrisy of US imperialism are legion. It routinely invokes the “humanitarian” crises produced by its own wars, predatory financial policies, and manipulation of communal-sectarian politics to justify fresh military aggression. And for decades it has cynically used Islamacists to overthrow regimes deemed insufficiently pliant, only later to turn on its fundamentalist allies.

Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif conceded this, albeit for his own purposes, in a recent interview with the *Wall Street Journal*. In the 1980s Washington, explained Asif, had wanted “a made-in-America jihad” in Afghanistan and pressed Islamabad to patronise the mujahedeen. Calling it “shameful,” he noted that today the US is “supporting” the “same people” in Syria it is fighting in Afghanistan.

Far from exposing the crimes of imperialism and its Pakistani bourgeois agents and fighting for the independent mobilization of the working class to oppose the Afghan War and smash the reactionary alliance between US imperialism and Islamabad, the AWP extols the bloodletting in North Waziristan and maintains a complicit silence on its roots in the Afghan

War and US imperialism's strategic objectives.

The AWP's "Joint statement" has exposed the claims of the Pabloite LPP to oppose the Afghan War as a sham and fraud.

During the thirteen year-long war, the Pakistani Pabloites made the occasional statement that included a nominal denunciation of the Afghan occupation. But—and this goes for the entire pseudo-left in Pakistan—they mounted no significant protest campaign against the Afghan war, let alone fought to politically mobilize the working class against it.

On the contrary, the LPP, its partners in the AWP, the other off-shoots of Pakistani Stalinism and Maoism, and "The Struggle," a rival Pabloite group embedded in the bourgeois Pakistan People's Party (PPP), systematically subordinated the working class to the "left" sections of the bourgeoisie.

This included first and foremost to the PPP, but also to a coterie of liberal, pro-imperialist NGOs and their patrons. The pseudo-left promoted Benazir Bhutto when she returned to Pakistan with the support of the Bush administration, and suppressed any working-class challenge to the PPP led-government that ruled Pakistan from 2008-13. Led by Bhutto's widower, Asif Ali Zardari, this government was nakedly pro-imperialist, supporting the extension of the Afghan war to Pakistan itself—including Obama's drone offensive—and imposing IMF austerity and pro-investor restructuring.

As a result of this political suppression of the working class, right-wing forces were able to posture as opponents of US imperialism and exploit mass opposition to the war among the Pakistani people. These include Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Movement for Justice), now the country's third largest parliamentary party, and the Pakistan Taliban itself.

What is true of the LPP is also true of their mentors in the Pabloite parties internationally, politically led by French New Anti-Capitalist Party or NPA.

The Pabloites' "International Viewpoint" website has enthusiastically promoted the AWP, just as it did the LPP when it existed as a separate organization. It also quickly republished the AWP's pro-imperialist statement endorsing the military offensive in North Waziristan. However, it omitted the statement's first three paragraphs—those that are the most flagrantly pro-government and pro-military—in the version published on International Viewpoint.

A brief footnote "explains" that "some changes were made ... after discussion among leadership" of the AWP about the first version of the statement issued on June 17. However, International Viewpoint breathes not a word as to the content of the omitted paragraphs.

This sleight of hand underscores the Pabloites' cynical and conscious support for imperialism. They want to cover up their Pakistani co-thinkers' embrace of imperialism, the Afghan War, and the Pakistani state, so that International Viewpoint can better confuse and mislead workers and youth looking for a means to oppose capitalism and imperialist war.

The abbreviated version International Viewpoint has chosen to reproduce makes crystal clear the AWP's—and the international Pabloites'—support for the North Waziristan offensive, the Pakistani state, and imperialism.

It counsels the Pakistani elite that "millenarian violence in Pakistan cannot be eliminated through military means only," and against the use of "indiscriminate force," while noting that the AWP has "slammed the vacillation of the current government which only a few months launched so-called 'peace talks' and now has decided to undertake military operations."

The entire statement is animated by the absurd and reactionary view that the Pakistani capitalist state and its military—a state founded on the basis of the communal partition of the Indian subcontinent, whose military has subjected the Pakistani people to decades of dictatorship in close

collaboration with Washington—can be a force for progress and secularism.

The imperialist-sponsored military offensive in North Waziristan can be part of a "holistic and coherent policy," claim the AWP and International Viewpoint, that leads to "separating the affairs of state from religious faith" and the "long-run transformation" required to make "the Pakistani state ... responsive to the welfare needs of its own people."

The entire historical experience of South Asia over the past century has shown the opposite. None of the burning democratic problems facing the workers and toilers can be resolved outside of a working class-led socialist revolution directed against the national bourgeoisie and imperialism.

The Pabloites' support for the North Waziristan military offensive is in keeping with their emergence over the last two decades as an openly pro-imperialist tendency—a political process rooted in the sharp rightward evolution of the sections of the upper middle class under conditions of an historic breakdown of capitalism. International Viewpoint and the NPA gave their blessing to the 2011 NATO war on Libya, promoting the lie that the US and its allies intervened to prevent the massacre of civilians. Similarly, they have provided political cover for the US and Saudi fomented proxy war against Syria's Baathist regime, claiming the Islamist insurgents are spearheading a "democratic" revolution. And in the Ukraine, they touted the US-German orchestrated, fascist enforced coup as a revolution for "democracy," then joined the imperialist powers in denouncing "Russian aggression."

In Sri Lanka, the Pabloite Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) has formed an alliance for "democracy," with the United National Party, the party that launched the anti-Tamil civil war and that is now openly soliciting Washington's backing by making it known that should it return to power it will downgrade Sri Lanka's ties with China to the US's benefit.

The six-decade old subordinate alliance between US imperialism and the Pakistani bourgeoisie and the three decade-long US intervention in Afghanistan have resulted in an endless series of disasters for the people of the region and massive social dislocation.

Now US imperialism aims to place South Asia and the Indian Ocean at the center of its plans to strategically isolate and mount war against China. The US "Pivot to Asia" will further destabilize the region, intersecting with and fueling the existing reactionary bourgeois interstate and communal rivalries, and threatening the people of the region and world with a conflagration.

The urgent task is the development of a working class led anti-war and anti-imperialist movement—a movement that mobilizes the working class as an independent political force against the bourgeoisie and can thereby rally the rural toilers and other oppressed on the basis of a socialist program. Such a movement will only emerge through the development of a genuine revolutionary workers party based on the perspective of Permanent Revolution and a relentless struggle to expose the pseudo-left, that is, through the building of a Pakistani section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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