

New Anti-capitalist Party demands military escalation against Turkey in Syria

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The response of the Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) to the bloody offensive of the Turkish government against Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria exposes it as a tool of imperialism. As protests against the Turkish attack begin, the NPA is intervening in them to promote a pro-war perspective, calling for aggressive action by the main NATO powers against Turkey and stepped-up imperialist military intervention across the Middle East.

In its statement “Against (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdoğan’s military expedition,” the NPA writes: “Trump’s announcement of the US withdrawal from the buffer zone between Turkey and the zone held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), even though the US president then partially went back on his statements, was taken as a green light to Erdoğan to commit a new massacre.” It goes on to demand stepped-up sanctions and military action against Turkey.

“The question of sanctions against Erdoğan’s Turkey must also be posed,” the NPA declares, adding in an accompanying article: “It is the duty of the entire French left to obtain the imposition of a no-fly-zone and economic and diplomatic sanctions against Turkey.”

The NPA’s Professor Gilbert Achcar echoed this call from his university post in London, demanding the major NATO powers arm Kurdish militias for a proxy war against Turkey: “NATO allies of the Turkish government ... must stop their military support to Ankara, impose economic sanctions on the Turkish government until it withdraws its troops from Syria, and provide the Kurdish movement with the weapons it needs in fighting Turkey’s invasion of its territory.”

Achcar, a long-time supporter of imperialist war in the Middle East, hails Democratic presidential candidates who oppose the withdrawal of US troops from Syria. He approvingly cites criticisms of US troop withdrawals by Bernie Sanders, who calls them “extremely irresponsible,” and Elizabeth Warren, who calls them “reckless and unplanned.” This only underscores the close ties between the NPA and unabashed parties of big business like the Democratic Party in America.

The NPA opposes the only viable, progressive policy: unifying workers internationally—Turkish, Kurdish, Middle Eastern, European, American and beyond—in a revolutionary

movement against imperialism and the Middle Eastern bourgeoisie. Instead, the NPA seeks to railroad workers and youth behind calls for a war to be led by sections of the imperialist ruling elite, notably those tied to the Democratic Party, the Pentagon, and Washington’s Kurdish-nationalist SDF proxy force.

The NPA issues its policies with contempt and indifference for the Turkish working class. Sanctions like those already imposed by Trump on Turkish steel exports would throw countless thousands of workers in Turkey out of work, raise inflation and slash workers’ living standards. After Trump threatened to crush Turkey’s economy with trade war tariffs, US Senators Lindsey Graham and Chris Van Hollen have unveiled plans for new such sanctions on Turkey.

Bitterly hostile to uniting workers of different nationalities against the accelerating spiral of war in the Middle East, the NPA instead advocates an imperialist war on Turkey. This is the class content of its calls for NATO to enforce a no-fly-zone and arm the SDF against Turkey. Enforcing a no-fly zone at the Turkish-Syrian border entails US and European armed forces taking control of Turkish and Syrian air space, and deploying forces prepared to shoot down Turkish jets in this zone and destroy Turkish ground and missile forces trying to protect these jets.

Remarkably, the NPA never considers the consequences of potential military retaliation by Turkish forces against France or other imperialist powers launching such a war on Turkey—which fields one of the Middle East’s most powerful and advanced armies.

The NPA pyromaniacs are in too much of a hurry to bother with principles or the consequences of their own actions. The class orientation of the 1968 student ex-radicals that the financial aristocracy has for decades fraudulently passed off as the “left” now stands starkly exposed. As these affluent university professors and union executives watch the debacle of their Middle East policy and fear the impact on the global standing of US and European governments and financial markets, and thus on their own stock portfolios, they are erupting into a frenzy.

The war fever they are stoking against Turkey directly echoes their hysterical response in 2011 to the revolutionary uprisings

of the working class in Tunisia and Egypt. They supported NATO proxy wars in Libya and in Syria, from which the Turkish intervention in Syria ultimately flows. Anyone tempted to support the NPA's campaign against Turkey would do well to recall the horrific consequences of the NPA's last major war drive.

As NATO carpet-bombed Libyan cities, Achcar insisted that the NATO war had to be supported as a humanitarian act to protect anti-government protesters in Libya. Claiming that he was regretfully compelled to support war, Achcar declared that in "the absence of any alternative means of achieving the protection goal, no one can reasonably oppose it... You can't in the name of anti-imperialist principles oppose an action that will prevent the massacre of civilians."

The tragic outcome of this conflict, in which NATO bombed Libya and armed Islamist militias as proxy forces against Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime, vindicated the WSWS's insistence on a principled, Marxist opposition to imperialist war.

Nearly a decade after the war ended with Gaddafi's torture and extrajudicial murder, Libya is still plunged in a civil war between rival, imperialist-backed Islamist militias. Its oil industry is in ruins, and NPA lies that imperialist war would build democracy are exploded. Libya's neo-colonial regime runs a network of European Union (EU) concentration camps where refugees are beaten, raped, murdered or sold into slavery to keep them from crossing the Mediterranean to Europe.

The Turkish attack on the SDF is another poisoned fruit of this war drive and eight years of bloodletting backed by the NPA in Syria that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. By 2015, the Syrian regime, aided by Russian and Iranian troops, had largely crushed the unpopular Islamist militias the NATO powers mobilized against it. As a result, Washington threw its support behind Kurdish nationalist militias that provided the decisive forces within the SDF as the new, leading US proxy force in Syria.

The Kurdish nationalist parties, by entering into an alliance with US imperialism, betrayed the Kurdish people's struggle to obtain democratic and cultural rights across the Middle East. With NPA support, they led it into a bloodbath. The US-SDF alliance terrified the Turkish government, which feared it would inflame Kurdish separatism in Turkey and pressed Washington to abandon the SDF. Finally double-crossed by Trump, the Kurds now face the Turkish onslaught without being able to appeal to mounting discontent among Turkish workers against Erdo?an.

Another casualty of the Turkish offensive is the NPA's posturing as progressive based on its embrace of the pro-imperialist Kurdish nationalist parties. For years, petty-bourgeois parties across Europe have hailed the SDF's "Rojava" enclave, trying to paint their support for the Syrian war in "left" colors by presenting it as an anarchist paradise of women's rights and autonomous self-organization. This has

fallen apart, as the Turkish offensive after Trump's withdrawal revealed that Rojava's existence depended entirely on the presence of US troops.

The NPA writes that Erdo?an's "objective is clear: destroying the zone of autonomy created by the Kurds, that Erdo?an can only view as a threat to his government and nationalist politics, given the rising problems he faced in the recent municipal elections. ... The growth of religious pluralism, the respect for autonomy of nationalities, and advances on women's rights make its existence intolerable to the autocratic Erdo?an."

In fact, Rojava was not a democratic haven but a garrison protected by US troops. As has now been widely reported, it contained prison camps where over 11,000 people were imprisoned at the say-so of the imperialist powers, simply on suspicion of being Islamic State (IS) fighters. The NPA's attempts to portray Rojava as a revolutionary, democratic way forward for the Kurds and other peoples of the world were a shameless fraud.

Rojava operated under the diktat of the Pentagon, the decisive counterrevolutionary force in the Middle East. As such, its population was subordinated to the relentless war scheming of American imperialism and its European allies, and their accelerating preparations for war with Iran and an all-out military conflagration across the Middle East. The propaganda cover the NPA had drawn over this bitter reality was suddenly blown when Trump withdrew his troops and discussed with Erdo?an the Turkish army's offensive into Syria.

The only progressive strategy to struggle against Erdo?an's onslaught on the Kurdish forces is to unite and mobilize the working class in struggle against war. Opposition inside Turkey to Erdo?an, rising strikes and social protests in the Middle East from Iraq to Jordan and Algeria, and the rising social anger and disaffection with war in America and Europe, indicates the objective basis for such a policy.

Above all, however, such a movement requires a political leadership fighting on the internationalist and revolutionary socialist perspective advanced by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement. Such a leadership can be built only through an uncompromising struggle against the pro-imperialist political line of the NPA.



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