

International Middle East Conference in Istanbul: Support for imperialist propaganda by Gilbert Achcar and pseudo-left

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The Labour Party (EMEP) organized an International Middle East Conference in Istanbul on May 25-26. The conference, which featured speakers such as Gilbert Achcar, a leading member of the Pabloite United Secretariat, and Maher Arafat Al-Taher, a representative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), consisted of four sessions: “Power struggles and hegemony in the Middle East”, “Turkey-Middle East relations and political economy”, “Peoples and struggles in the Middle East” and “Possibilities and conditions for peace in the Middle East”.

EMEP, a Stalinist party, is a member of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations (CIPOML) and has contested elections in alliance with the Kurdish nationalist Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party, formerly HDP). In last year’s general election, EMEP won two parliamentary seats on the DEM party list and supported Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal K??ldaro?lu against Recep Tayyip Erdo?an in the presidential election.

The conference began with an opening speech by Seyit Aslan, head of EMEP. Aslan argued that the genocide in Gaza was part of an “international struggle for hegemony”. Presenting Russia and China as two new “imperialist powers”, Aslan reiterated the pseudo-left thesis that relativizes the aggression of US/NATO imperialism.

“While some of the imperialist states are trying to regain their former colonial power... two new imperialist powers, Russia and China, have also become involved in this war of division,” Aslan said.

In reality, Russia and China, although reactionary capitalist regimes, are not imperialist powers but the main targets of US-NATO imperialism’s aggression. The strategy of US imperialism to counterbalance its prolonged economic decline on the world stage by military means gained momentum after the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991. US-NATO imperialism has launched numerous wars in the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and the Balkans for resources and hegemony.

These were preparations for the complete imperialist subjugation and plunder of Russia and China. In 2016, David North, Chairman of the WSWs International Editorial Board, noted in his preface to *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990-2016*:

The last quarter century of US-instigated wars must be studied as a chain of interconnected events. The strategic logic of the US drive for global hegemony extends beyond the neocolonial operations in the Middle East and Africa. The ongoing regional wars are component elements of the rapidly escalating confrontation of the United States with Russia and China.

The financial, military and political support of the US-led imperialist powers for Israel’s genocide in Gaza stems from the fact that the war in the Middle East is essentially a front in the global war targeting China and Russia.

Aslan’s repetition of the pseudo-left’s claim of “Russian and Chinese imperialism”, which serves to legitimize the aggression of US-NATO imperialism, was followed by his party’s defense of a reactionary “two-state solution” in Palestine.

This bankrupt “solution” put forward by the imperialist powers and their allies such as Turkey has served as a political cover for the catastrophe that the Palestinian people have been suffering for decades. From the establishment of the Zionist state of Israel as an occupying power in 1948 with the complicity of the Soviet bureaucracy led by Stalin, to today’s genocide in Gaza, events have proved that the only way forward is the struggle for a socialist Palestine as part of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

Even Al-Taher, the PFLP’s international relations officer, pointed out this deception, despite the limitations of his nationalist perspective, saying in his speech: “The US demands a two-state solution... It can be an unarmed entity, an entity under control, a tiny Palestinian entity, a structure under your control, a military and economic state, but not a state... The two-state solution is a real deception. The aim is an artificial state under Israeli control”.

The invitation to the conference of Achcar, a staunch defender of US-NATO imperialism and the Ukrainian regime in the Ukraine war, clearly exposed the bankrupt character of the event. Achcar, a professor at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SAOS) in London, was paid to deliver lectures to the British military. He writes for the Pabloite *International Viewpoint* and *Le Monde diplomatique*.

The Pabloite Achcar’s and the Stalinist Aslan’s anti-Marxist

conceptions of imperialism are compatible. In March 2022, Achcar openly stated that he was “in favour of supplying Ukraine with anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, as well as all the weapons indispensable for the defence of the territory”. The pseudo-leftist chorus, which argues that Ukraine has not been adequately supported militarily, today bears political responsibility for the US-NATO authorization of attacks on Russian territory and the escalation of the danger of a nuclear conflict.

Achcar’s condemnation of the US and its Zionist ally in Gaza cannot hide the fact that he and the Pabloite United Secretariat have openly supported imperialist aggression in North Africa and the Middle East, including the NATO intervention against Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011 and the proxy war for regime change in Syria.

“The Western response, of course, smacks of oil,” Achcar said in 2011. However, he argued, this was not a reason to oppose the imperialist intervention in Libya:

Here is a case where a population is truly in danger, and where there is no plausible alternative that could protect it. The attack by Gaddafi’s forces was hours or at most days away. You can’t in the name of anti-imperialist principles oppose an action that will prevent the massacre of civilians.

The imperialist intervention, supported by Achcar with the lie of “preventing the massacre of civilians,” resulted in the killing of thousands, including Gaddafi, and the destruction of Africa’s most developed country. Libya was divided by rival militias and tens of thousands more died in the ensuing decade of civil war. Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist forces, championed in Libya by the imperialists as “freedom fighters”, were then transferred to Syria and became key elements in the war for regime change.

Today, Achcar equates the Palestinians, the target of the genocidal war of the imperialist states and Israel, with the Ukrainian regime, which serves as a proxy force in the war of the same imperialist states against Russia. Writing in *International Viewpoint* in early March, he said:

The twinning of Ukraine and Gaza allows us to show that we are against any invasion, whether Russian, Israeli or American, and that as internationalists we are consistent in defending universal values such as peace, the rights of peoples, self-determination, etc.

Achcar and numerous other pseudo-left figures and tendencies claim that US-NATO imperialism and its fascist proxies are fighting a “good war” in Ukraine, while the genocide in Gaza is a “bad war”.

In fact, both are part of the struggle of the US-led imperialist powers to redivide the world. In April, US imperialism passed a package of tens of billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan in the same bill, proving that it sees these fronts

as part of the same global war.

The International Middle East Conference in Istanbul served to confuse and politically disarm workers and youth by obscuring the link between these wars and relativizing the criminal responsibility of the imperialist powers, while the US and NATO escalate the war in Ukraine towards a nuclear conflict and continue their full support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Absent from this gathering of opponents of Marxism was any trace of a socialist internationalist perspective. Those looking for such a perspective can only find it in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which is fighting to build an international socialist movement of workers and young people against war.

On June 2, the ICFI explained in a statement, “Stop the US-NATO escalation toward nuclear war! Unite the international working class against imperialist war and genocide!”:

There is only one way that the spiral toward disaster can be avoided, and that is through the intervention of the working class to force an end to this war. This demand must be combined with a struggle to end Israel’s genocidal onslaught against Gaza...

The working class must use its power to stop this war, which is plummeting toward disaster. The mobilization of this power requires overcoming the gap between the advanced stage of the global political crisis and the present level of mass political consciousness. The solving of this historic problem requires the development of a Marxist-Trotskyist leadership and the revolutionary renewal of the international workers’ movement on the basis of socialist policies.



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