

Erdo?an-Trump meeting confirms Turkey's allegiance to US imperialism

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an met with US President Donald Trump last Thursday during his visit to the United States to attend the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Amid Israel's US-backed genocide in Gaza and Trump's fascist plot to establish a dictatorship, the meeting marked Erdo?an's first visit to the White House in six years.

The outcome of the meeting was a strong indication of the commitment of the Turkish ruling class and the Erdo?an government to imperialism. Erdo?an is relying on the support of the Trump administration and avoiding any conflict with it while he establishes an authoritarian regime to defend the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie—particularly in Syria—and to suppresses political and social opposition at home through harsh austerity measures.

Erdo?an, amid increasing competition and tensions with Israel following the regime change in Syria, frequently denounces Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the genocide in Gaza, while never criticizing Trump, the main imperialist leader behind it. This alone reveals the falseness of Erdo?an's occasional resort to fake "anti-imperialist" rhetoric and claims to be defending the Palestinians.

The statements made by the two leaders prior to the meeting gave an idea of how it would proceed. While praising Erdo?an, Trump put him in a difficult position. Explaining his relationship with the Turkish president, Trump recalled the release of Pastor Andrew Brunson, who was tried in Turkey on charges of spying during his first term as president, saying, "Pastor Brunson was put in jail for 35 years, before I got there... And the president [Erdo?an], after I called him, released him." This was the US president stating that the judiciary in Turkey is not independent.

Trump once again described the 2020 presidential election, which he lost and then attempted to overturn with the January 6 coup attempt, as "rigged" without presenting any evidence. Looking at Erdo?an he said, "He knows about rigged elections better than anybody." Erdo?an has been accused of rigging the 2017 presidential referendum, which granted him broad powers.

The meeting also addressed Erdo?an's demand for the lifting of US sanctions against Turkey. In response to Ankara's purchase of S-400 air defence systems from Russia in 2019, the

Trump administration removed Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet production process. In December 2020, Congress approved the decision to impose CAATSA sanctions on the country.

Prior to the meeting, Erdo?an issued a presidential decree lifting Turkey's additional customs duties on certain US products, which had been in place since 2018. These duties were imposed in retaliation for tariffs imposed by the Trump administration to pressure Turkey into releasing Pastor Brunson.

Trump said that he was ready to end sanctions, and that he would discuss Ankara's willingness to purchase F-35 aircraft with Erdo?an. When asked after the meeting whether an agreement had been reached regarding the F-35, Trump replied, "We may do that, yes. It depends. If he [Erdo?an] does something for us."

The Turkish president has shown that he is prepared to do many things for Trump. Erdo?an did not hesitate to immediately support the "Gaza ceasefire plan" announced by the US President after his meeting with Netanyahu on Monday: "I commend US President Donald Trump's efforts and leadership aimed at halting the bloodshed in Gaza and achieving a ceasefire. Türkiye will continue to contribute to the process with a view to establishing a just and lasting peace acceptable to all parties."

While answering reporters' questions before the meeting, Trump said to Erdo?an, "I'd like to have him stop buying any oil from Russia, while Russia continues this rampage against Ukraine."

Regarding the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, he said, "Right now, he's [Erdo?an is] very neutral. He likes being neutral." Turning to Erdo?an, he added, "The best thing he could do is not buy oil and gas from Russia." Ankara has not participated in the sanctions imposed on Russia by NATO forces since the beginning of the war.

Although Turkey has diversified its natural gas imports in recent years, Russia remains the country's largest supplier, accounting for 40 percent of Turkey's 52 billion cubic meters of gas imports last year. The US ranked as Turkey's fifth-largest supplier, slightly behind Algeria, providing 10 percent of imports.

Just before the meeting, Turkey signed an agreement to

purchase liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the US. Ankara also signed a long-term preliminary LNG agreement with Australia's largest gas producer, Woodside Energy.

The agreement to import at least 16 billion cubic metres of gas from Russia is set to expire this year, with no new supply agreements yet in place. Purchasing more expensive LNG as an alternative to Russian gas could increase energy prices in Turkey, pushing up inflation. If the state subsidises this, it could further increase the budget deficit.

In an interview with Fox News prior to the meeting, Erdo?an said, "If you recall, Mr. Trump made a statement. He said, 'I will end the Russia-Ukraine war.' Is it over? It is still ongoing. Similarly, he said, 'I will end the Gaza war.' Is it over? No." This created a minor crisis between the two allies.

The Communications Directorate, which is under Erdo?an's authority, hastily issued a correction before the meeting. The correction stated that Erdo?an praised Trump's efforts on these issues and that his words "lost their meaning in translation." In other words, Ankara fulsomely praised Trump's policy of deliberately starving Palestinians in Gaza, subjecting them to ethnic cleansing and genocide. The "efforts" that were praised included Trump's plans to seize Gaza and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's dismissive response to Erdo?an's remarks revealed the true nature of relations between the two countries, in the words of a leading imperialist politician: "All of these other countries, including Turkey by the way, are begging us to be involved. They want us to be involved. Look, these people go out and say what they want to say, but at the end of the day when they want something done, they come— they want to come to the White House."

Rubio added: "President Erdo?an is coming to the White House this week to meet with the president. They all come to the White House, they all want to speak to President Trump, they all want President Trump to fix it... The truth of the matter is that we have leaders—we have meetings going on today—that we have leaders begging to be a part of it. They are calling and saying, 'Can we be included? Can you bring us in? Can you get me five minutes to shake the President's hand?'"

Hours before the meeting between Erdo?an and Trump, Tom Barrack, the US Ambassador to Ankara and Special Envoy for Syria, said, "Turkey is a democracy but seems authoritarian. President Trump brilliantly said, 'I must give him legitimacy as a solution'. That is happening now."

Under increasing political pressure from the government through the judiciary, Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Özgür Özel criticized Erdo?an's stance during his visit to the US, saying, "Turkey has turned from a strategic ally into a lucrative customer." Criticizing Barrack's remarks on "legitimacy," Özel said, "If you don't govern democratically, you have no legitimacy. But if you take the LNG, take the Boeing, give concessions, make the nuclear deal, give the rare elements, the man [Trump] gives you legitimacy with his

words."

Özel was referring to the "Strategic Civil Nuclear Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding" signed between the US and Turkey in Washington. Prior to Erdo?an's visit, it had been suggested that an agreement could be reached regarding rare earth elements allegedly found in Beylikova, Eski?ehir, Turkey. Ayhan Yüksel, President of the Chamber of Mining Engineers, stated: "It was also announced by the former Minister of Energy. It is among 694 million tons of rare earth elements, along with barite and fluorite. It is recorded as the largest reserve after China."

While Erdo?an strives to develop a policy fully aligned with Trump, Devlet Bahçeli, leader of Erdo?an's fascist ally the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), recently reiterated his proposal for a "Turkey-Russia-China alliance" against the "US-Israel evil coalition".

In an interview with the *Türkgün* newspaper, Bahçeli said, "If Turkey's NATO membership cannot go beyond protecting Turkey from potential attacks from within NATO, and if some of our NATO allies can ignore our most vital priorities and demands, then it is time for Turkey to look both ways."

Referring to "efforts to transition to a multipolar world order," Bahçeli said that the Organization of Turkic States "could become a center of attraction and power in the struggle between the West, Russia, and China," adding: "For this, it is essential that the three powers of the Eurasian geography come together on an equal footing. These are Turkey, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China."

Erdo?an's previous efforts to maneuver between the US-NATO and Russia and China played a significant role in the failed military coup attempt on July 15, 2016.



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