

# Ahead of NATO summit, Ankara proclaims its “indispensability” to the imperialist war machine

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Just days before the NATO summit convenes in Ankara on July 7–8, a NATO Parliamentary Summit was held in Istanbul on June 28–29. The event was attended by the speakers of parliament of 20 countries, along with the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Marcos Perestrello, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Radmila Shekerinska.

In a speech delivered on June 29 at a luncheon held in honour of the parliamentary speakers, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared that Türkiye’s role in the war agenda of NATO and the European Union (EU) was “indispensable.”

Delivered at this preparatory summit ahead of the gathering that will host the imperialist war criminals led by US President Donald Trump, Erdoğan’s speech amounted to a summary of the foreign policy Ankara has pursued in recent years. Ankara is increasingly abandoning the “balance” policy it long maintained in NATO’s war against Russia in Ukraine; it supports—in rivalry with Israel—Washington’s drive to establish total dominance in the Middle East; and it is seeking to use its geopolitical position as a bargaining chip to expand the influence of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

From beginning to end, Erdoğan’s speech was an advertisement for the contributions Türkiye would make to the imperialist war machine. He asserted that the present “geopolitical equation” had enlarged NATO’s role, and that Türkiye was among the countries that had “best read the spirit of the new era.” Pointing to its more than 1,800-kilometer land border with “crisis regions,” its powerful army and its advanced defense industry, Erdoğan presented Türkiye as foremost among the allies that have contributed to the alliance’s security for over 70 years.

Referring to the commitments adopted at last year’s Hague Summit, which compel member states to devote at least 5 percent of their GDP to military spending, Erdoğan said that Türkiye had increased its defense expenditures and

had entered the top five countries contributing most to NATO missions. Complaining that, despite this, Türkiye’s “indispensable” contributions were at times ignored, he requested support for Türkiye’s inclusion in the defense and security initiatives announced by the EU. He crowned his remarks with a call to build an unobstructed security and defense network across the alliance, one “stretching from Texas to Ankara.”

Özgür Özel, the elected leader of the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP)—which is under mounting political pressure from the Erdoğan government—voiced essentially the same perspective in different words in the *Financial Times* on Wednesday. Pointing to the danger of a growing social explosion bound up with Erdoğan’s authoritarianism, Özel appealed to the imperialist powers of NATO, telling them in effect that he would best defend their interests, and issuing a call for support.

That Özel and Erdoğan converge on the line of consolidating collaboration with the imperialist powers amid escalating war stems from the fact that both reflect the interests not of the working people but of the Turkish bourgeoisie. Appearing willing to take on a greater role in Europe’s “security” and to assume new NATO obligations, the Turkish political establishment is using this card to strengthen its hand—above all against its regional rivals Israel and Greece—and to secure the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

Erdoğan is attempting to do this above all by deepening his “friendship” and alliance with Trump amid rising tensions with the regime of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump, who met with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the White House on June 24, said, “I am going [to Ankara] out of respect to President Erdoğan.” Moreover, when a journalist asked, “They [Turks] want the F-110 jet engines and they want the F-35 fighter jets. Are you going to Türkiye with a big gift bag for Erdogan?” Trump replied, “I’m going to probably do something that’s

going to make him very happy.”

The same day, Trump formally notified Congress of his intention to sell Türkiye 80 F-110 jet engines worth more than \$700 million. Because Türkiye had purchased S-400 air defense systems from Russia, Congress imposed the still-in-force CAATSA sanctions on Türkiye during Trump’s first term, and Türkiye was excluded from the F-35 fighter jet program. The F-110 jet engines are to be used in the KAAN, a new-generation fighter aircraft developed by Türkiye itself.

In an article published Monday in *Haaretz* under the headline “Trump Blows Wind in Erdogan’s Sails as Türkiye Advances Regional Ambitions,” the Israeli journalist Zvi Bar’el wrote that the war on Iran and the lavish NATO summit Ankara will host have given Türkiye an opportunity to display its bid to become a power that sets regional politics and forges partnerships.

The regional rivalry between Israel and Türkiye extends to the future of Iran—the target of the US-Israeli war of aggression—as well as to Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa. While Ankara seeks to exploit for its own benefit the region-wide weakening of Tehran, which has been subjected to a major military assault and a sanctions regime, it is at the same time anxious that a possible collapse of the Iranian state would increase the influence of the Iranian Kurdish nationalists allied with the US and Israel. As it strengthens its influence in Syria and Iraq, Türkiye aims to develop defense cooperation with the Gulf states. Israel, for its part, expanding its influence in Syria and Lebanon, is concluding military and strategic agreements with Greece and Cyprus that are directed against Türkiye.

The scale of the tensions between Israel and Türkiye was laid bare at Trump’s press conference with Rutte. On this matter Trump said: “You know, he [Erdo?an] was a prime candidate to go into the war with Iran, maybe on the Iran side, because he’s not a big fan of Israel, as you know. And I asked him to stay out, he stayed out.”

In the latest episode of the Türkiye-Israel tensions, the Netanyahu regime on Tuesday joined the imperialist and capitalist governments that seek to exploit the Armenian genocide—which took place in the midst of the First World War—for their reactionary interests. The Israeli government unanimously recognized the 1915 massacres of Armenians, carried out in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, as “genocide.” The decision will become law if it is approved by the Knesset.

Recalling that Israel is on trial at the International Court of Justice for the crime of committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, the Turkish Foreign Ministry stated: “The Israeli government ... aims to cover up its own crimes

through the political decision it has adopted regarding the events of 1915.”

Erdo?an has from the outset described the war against Iran as an “Israeli war.” Pointedly refraining from criticizing the US and Trump by name over the war, Erdo?an nonetheless signed the Riyadh Declaration, which condemned Iran’s right to self-defense.

The rivalry and rising tensions between Türkiye and Israel are real, but there is no progressive side to be found between the regimes of these two countries. Both allied with, and in willing collaboration with, US imperialism, these regimes pursue the reactionary interests of their own ruling classes. Despite the growing danger of conflict, cooperation between the two countries continues. Azerbaijani oil, which is critical for Israel, is transported through Türkiye. The US-NATO bases in Türkiye continue to provide intelligence to Israel.

While the perpetrator of genocide Netanyahu flounders amid crises in Israel, Erdo?an too confronts, at home, a social opposition growing within the working class against the soaring cost of living, austerity, genocide and war. Opinion polls show that more than 90 percent of Türkiye’s population oppose the war against Iran and the US bases in the country. Fearing that this opposition will erupt in the form of a mass anti-genocide and anti-war movement, the government has effectively declared a state of emergency in Ankara and many other provinces for the NATO summit, and has arrested and jailed more than 200 anti-NATO protesters.

The Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi (Socialist Equality Party), the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), is fighting to organize and mobilize the working class as an independent political force against the Turkish bourgeoisie and imperialism, and against all the establishment parties that defend them. As part of this struggle, which is international in character by its very nature, workers must demand the immediate release of those arrested for opposing NATO and war, and of all political prisoners.



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