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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Bill Van Auken

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The Democrats support the “Forever War”

US President Donald Trump’s order to pull back US troops from northeastern Syria in the name of calling a halt to Washington’s “endless wars” has touched off a political firestorm. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has joined with Trump’s staunchest Republican defender, Senator Lindsey Graham, in opposition to the troop withdrawal. Pelosi tweeted of her meeting with Graham: “Our first order of business was to agree that we must have a bipartisan, bicameral joint resolution to overturn the president’s dangerous decision in Syria immediately.”

Democratic presidential candidates have roundly denounced the threat of a US pullout from Syria, many of them invoking the plight of the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which served as Washington’s proxy ground force in the Pentagon’s five-year-old direct military intervention in the country.

Putative Democratic frontrunner Joe Biden declared, “It’s shameful what he’s done.” The same Biden has expressed no shame for his vote in support of the criminal US war of aggression based upon lies that claimed the lives of over a million Iraqis, or for his role in the orchestration of the CIA wars for regime change in Libya and Syria that killed hundreds of thousands more.



A U.S. soldier sits in an armored vehicle on a road leading to the tense front line with Turkish-backed fighters, in Manbij, north Syria, Wednesday, April 4, 2018. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

Not missing an opportunity to demonstrate his reliability in matters relating to “national security,” Bernie Sanders proclaimed: “You don’t turn your back on allies who have fought and died alongside American troops. You just don’t do that.” Sanders has conveniently forgotten that back in the 1960s and 1970s, the main argument made by Johnson and Nixon against withdrawing from Vietnam was that America could not “cut and run” and desert its South Vietnamese political and military allies.

For her part, Elizabeth Warren, talking out of both sides of her mouth, found the best platitude for the occasion: “We should bring our troops home, but we need to do so in a way that respects our security.” In other words, the US should continue to wage war in Syria.

Trump, who has secured a \$750 billion budget for the US war machine, while just last week ordering another 3,000 US troops deployed to Saudi Arabia in preparation for a confrontation with Iran, is no pacifist. He is also no fool. Even as he prepares for bigger wars, particularly against China, he knows that his public appeals for an end to Washington’s wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East strike a chord with an American population sick of these interventions.

This is particularly the case for the countless families who have borne the brunt of back-to-back deployments for their loved-ones, and the tragic cost paid by those who have returned with grievous physical and mental wounds. Significantly, the cover story of the

current issue of *Time* focuses on “America’s Forever War.” It includes a harrowing account of the impact of one soldier’s death in Afghanistan on his wife and children.

In an essay that precedes the story of the bereaved family, novelist and Marine veteran Elliot Ackerman writes: “The burden of nearly two decades of war—nearly 7,000 [American] dead and more than 50,000 wounded—has been largely sustained by 1 percent of our population.”

Trump was no doubt aware of *Time*’s coverage of the war when he tweeted on Monday: “The same people who got us into the Middle East mess are the people who most want to stay there! Never ending wars will end!” The Democrats are creating the political conditions for Trump to posture fraudulently as an antiwar president.

Nowhere is the reactionary character of the Democratic Party’s opposition to Trump expressed more explicitly than in the pages of the *New York Times*.

In an editorial titled “Trump Just Created a Moral and Strategic Disaster,” the *Times* complains that Trump’s decision to pull some 1,000 US troops out of northeastern Syria “makes as little sense strategically as it does morally,” while insisting that the “status quo” of an illegal imperialist occupation of a former colonial Middle Eastern country “was entirely sustainable.”

The *Times* states that “One thousand decisions led the United States to find itself refereeing the border between Syria and Turkey,” but only one “abrupt” decision by Trump “led to the chaos and bloodletting that has gushed across the region in the past few days.”

The *Times*’ editors neglect to mention that every one of these “thousand decisions” leading to the illegal deployment of US troops in Syria was taken behind the backs of the American people.

The editorial’s lament over the “chaos and bloodletting that has gushed across the region” is grossly hypocritical. What attention did the *New York Times* give to the tens of thousands of Syrians massacred in the so-called war on ISIS, in which the Kurdish YPG militia served as proxy ground troops for a US air war that reduced the Syrian city of Raqqa and other towns to rubble? What concern was shown by this “newspaper of record” over the detention centers where Kurdish militiamen stood guard over some 11,000 prisoners—some as young as 12—packed like sardines on the floors of makeshift cells and subjected to near starvation?

Or for that matter, what moral “shame” has been heaped upon the Obama administration for initiating a war for regime change, utilizing the same CIA-backed Islamist militias—then hailed as pro-democracy “rebels”—who are now fighting alongside the Turkish army against the Kurdish militia. That war has killed roughly 500,000 Syrians, displaced half the country’s population and sent millions into exile.

The violence that is being inflicted upon the Kurdish people of Syria is tragic. The role played by the Kurdish bourgeois nationalist leadership, however, has been shortsighted and criminal. Once again, they hitched their wagon to imperialism, hoping to gain its support for the carving out of an ethnic Kurdish state. The results were entirely predictable. As Henry Kissinger infamously stated after betraying the Kurds following a 1975 deal brokered between the Shah of Iran and Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, “Covert action should not be confused with missionary work.”

In its most despicable passage, the *New York Times* editorial places Trump’s action within the context of a US history that is “littered with instances of one-time allies abandoned to their fate—the Bay of Pigs invasion; the fall of South Vietnam ...”

For the *Times* to cast the Bay of Pigs or the fall of Saigon as an example of Washington’s “betrayals” testifies to the drastic rightward shift in the ex-liberal media.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy, having received assurances from the CIA that open US support would not be needed, signed off on the mercenary invasion of Cuba that had been planned by his predecessor, Dwight Eisenhower. However, as it became clear that the mercenaries were pinned down on the shore of the Bay of Pigs and that the invasion was a fiasco, the CIA pressured Kennedy to commit the US air force to save the invasion. The CIA’s director, the infamous Allen Dulles, assumed that Kennedy would submit to the agency’s blackmail to avoid a humiliating defeat. But Kennedy—fearful of triggering a Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union—decided not to transform an ill-planned adventure into a full-scale US war for regime change. At the time, Kennedy’s action was seen by liberal Democrats as a courageous rejection of the CIA’s dangerous brinkmanship. Now the *Times* presents Kennedy’s action as a betrayal.

In the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Kennedy was quoted as saying he wished he could “splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it into the winds.” Within two-and-a-half years of making this statement, he was assassinated. For many, this “betrayal” and Kennedy’s murder were no coincidence.

As for Vietnam, for the vast majority of the US population, the humiliating circumstances of the US flight from Saigon in April 1975 were a fitting end to a criminal war.

The rewriting of this history by the *Times* reflects the lurch to the right of the US ruling elite and that of the newspaper's own core readership among the affluent upper-middle class and the rich.

Today, the Democratic Party is the mouthpiece of the CIA, tailoring its closed-door impeachment investigations against Trump entirely to the intelligence agencies' concerns that the White House has adopted an overly conciliatory foreign policy toward Russia.

All of the pseudo-left organizations that emerged out of the middle-class protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s can be described without exaggeration as pro-imperialist, tailing behind the Democrats and justifying wars of aggression in the name of "human rights" and so-called "democratic revolutions."

Large sections of the working class and youth are hostile to the the Trump administration, but see no alternative within the camp of the pro-war Democrats.

If the fight against Trump is to succeed, it must be organized independently of and in opposition to the Democratic Party. Its aim cannot be the defense of "national security" as defined by the CIA and Wall Street, but, rather, the fight for socialism and the unity of the international working class.

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