

# Drilling in the Aegean: We do not fight for their Hydrocarbons!

## *Intensification of the Rivalry between Greece and Turkey*

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**Note of the Editorial Board:** Below we publish a statement of *Kokkino Nima*, a Trotskyist organization in Greece. The RCIT strongly supports this statement as it elaborates a revolutionary and internationalist position of opposition against the militarist and chauvinist policy of the Greek bourgeoisie. The RCIT has always shared such an approach (see e.g. our article by Max Bonham: On the Escalating Greek-Turkish

Tensions, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/escalating-greek-turkish-tensions/>)

## **The Turkish drilling in the Aegean**

With the recent beginning of the Turkish drilling in the west of Cyprus, the Greek-Turkish rivalry in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean has accelerated. The meeting of the Foreign and Defense Governmental Council (KYSEA) on 16/6/2019, the statements of the Greek, Cypriot, Turkish and French governments, the debate in Brussels to impose financial sanctions on Turkey on behalf of the European Union are only a few episodes of the “series” that has been playing over the past few years in the whole region.

Bourgeois media, the Greek and Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie, and part of the Greek left, are referring to the Turkish drills in the EEZ as “Turkish aggression” against which Greece ought to

“defend” itself. But is that the case? The events of the last few years, and especially the last few months, rather contradict this claim.

### **Greece as a “strategic ally” of the United States**

In recent years, with the role played by Greece in conditions such as the signing of the Greece-EU-Turkey Agreement that defines the role of NATO war ships in the Aegean, the agreement on the accession of North Macedonia to NATO, with the announcement of new bases of NATO in Greece by the former SYRIZA government and the common war exercises with Israel, it is clear that the “strategic ally” of the US and the major powers of the EU in the Eastern Mediterranean is no longer Turkey, but Greece.

The signing of the EastMed pipeline (to export gas to Europe via Greece) last March, from the tripartite Greece – Cyprus – Israel – in the presence of the US, further strengthened the axis of Greece – Cyprus – Israel – Egypt. This project, combined with discussions about the Greek-Bulgarian pipeline IGB and the TAP pipeline, practically exclude Turkey from the East-West energy play. It is a game of billions of dollars worth of money for all involved parties.

Together with moves such as the May agreement on the docking of French warships on Cypriot bases, it is clear that Turkey is financially and militarily trapped, which has also been highlighted the bourgeois media, former government officials as well as prominent political representatives of the Greek bourgeoisie and its allies. The “race” for the extraction of hydrocarbons in the Aegean is part of this “great game”.

### **The “race” for drilling**

The Greek government, together with the main allies of Cyprus – Egypt, Israel, France and the United States – “delimit in practice” the EEZ, by signing “unilateral” conditions for energy (see EastMed) and making their military presence felt

in the claimed areas of the Aegean.

Turkey, in fact, disputes the above “delimitation” by operating drilling and military ships in these areas.

The situation in the Aegean is out of control, especially since the profits of multinational giants such as ExxonMobil are at stake, on the one hand, and Turkey is excluded from the economic exploitation of energy resources in the Aegean, on the other.

Measures such as the purchase of Turkish S-400 from Turkey and the talk of imposing sanctions on Turkey in case it starts the drilling (including even exclusion Turkey from all “high-level dialogues” that hasn’t stopped till the moment these words are written) underline it. According to the Turkish Navtex drilling will begin by early September, despite the clear statements by France, Egypt and the State Department that this “illegal drilling” must stop.

It is clear that developments can become “hot” at any moment.

### **The attitude of the Left**

In such a situation, the attitude of the Left must clearly be the following:

1. a) *Against the extraction of hydrocarbons*: The billions of exploitation of the Aegean’s energy deposits will go exclusively into the pockets of the capitalist corporations and not of the laborers. The profit for capitalists does not mean a profit for the poor, as we have been experienced in Greece as the austerity continues despite the profits of the big Greek companies. Moreover, the Gulf monarchies are eloquent examples of the fact that under the domination of a bourgeoisie, petrodollars can very well be combined with extreme poverty and oppression. At the same time, the drilling in the Aegean poses massive dangers for

environmental destruction in the Aegean.

2. b) *Against war and against all imperialist powers*: Greece is by no means “defending itself”. This is apparent from the fact that the new government of *New Democracy* continues the aggressive language of the former SYRIZA government. The narrative about “defending the homeland” in the event of an attack by Turkey is misleading, since in reality it is Greece which is currently the “strong player” with the support of the United States, Israel and France. No, Greece is currently not in a “defensive position” but rather shows its “teeth” with having the highest spending on military equipment (as a share of GNP) of all NATO members and by expanding its military presence in the Aegean. An anti-imperialist position which refers exclusively to the “Turkish aggression” is misleading since that would conceal the Greek aggression (and at the same time the aggression of its allies such as the US and France).
3. c) *Against the own bourgeoisie at home*: The basic duty of the working class in each country is to oppose its national bourgeoisie since it alone can overthrow it. The left must not follow a policy of adapting to the interests of the Greek bourgeoisie in the name of a “Turkish danger”. Such a policy would essentially mean support for the increase of Greece’s capitalist profits as well as for its geopolitical adventures that could provoke military tensions or even war.
4. d) *International solidarity of the working class in each country*: Proposals from nationalist voices such as the “unilateral declaration” of the EEZ or the extension of territorial waters to 12 miles, which have recently embarked in public debates, are not only unscrupulous (the “Law of the Sea” international conventions do not actually support them, as if this were the case, the devotees of these views would have sought support from the International Court of Justice in The Hague long ago). Such chauvinist proposals are also detrimental to

the Greek working class and, at the same time, to the workers of Turkey. The proclamation of EEZs in the way supported by the most rabid voices of the Greek and Greek Cypriot right means virtually complete exclusion of Turkey from any economic exploitation of underwater resources, and a drastic limitation of the cruise of Turkish fishermen to the Aegean.

In the next period, the Left must take united initiatives for real mass actions against the war. They must state clearly that “we are not fighting for their oil and not for extracting hydrocarbons in the Aegean!”

<https://www.thecommunists.net/forum/kokkino-nima-greece-greek-turkey-rivalry-drilling-in-the-aegean/>