

# Oppose U.S. Imperialism, Practice Proletarian Internationalism, Build up the Anti-War Movement.

2018-04-19 00:42:22 -0400

“There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is—working whole-heartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in *one’s own* country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy, and material aid) *this struggle*, this, and *only this* line, in *every* country without exception.”

Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*.

Mass Proletariat condemns the recent attack by the U.S. imperialists and their allies in France and the U.K. on Syria. The attack represents a dangerous escalation of the present inter-imperialist competition that has engulfed the country and resulted in mass death and destruction for the Syrian people. This indicates that the U.S. and its allies have an interest in more aggressive military, economic, and political showdowns in an effort to counter the growing influence of rival imperialists. This escalation has been coupled with efforts by the U.S. state to portray its involvement in the Syrian Civil War and the recent missile strikes as a politically neutral endeavor that serves the interests of all Americans.

The U.S., France, and the U.K. have justified these attacks on the grounds that Bashar al-Assad’s government used chemical weapons to attack people in the town of Douma on April 7. The motive for such an attack has been publicly questioned by U.K. Major General Jonathan Shaw, given Assad’s commanding military position in the region.<sup>1</sup> The missile strikes were launched before the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was able to conduct on the ground surveys to verify that the chemical attacks had occurred and, if so, who was responsible.

This itself is a familiar pattern. In the buildup to the Iraq War in 2002, the Bush administration promoted conveniently tailored and edited information about the nature of the Iraqi regime and their weapons supplies to justify an invasion. The

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/tv-news-interview-former-army-12358938>.  
When making these comments on Sky News he was suddenly cut off by the anchor.

prospect that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction—especially in the form of an alleged shipment of uranium-rich yellowcake from Niger—was an important part of an effort to gain support for the invasion. These claims have since been exposed as outright fabrications by the U.S. state.<sup>2</sup>

This familiar pattern, which is now being used to justify further military intervention in Syria, reveals the twisted logic of U.S. imperialism. No state has used more chemical weapons in recent years than the U.S. Most recently, white phosphorous and depleted uranium were used in the U.S.'s military activity in Iraq, with depleted uranium in particular leading to a massive increase in cancer rates and an epidemic of horrific birth defects. Napalm, agent orange, and other weapons designed to terrorize civilian populations were deployed on a mass scale in the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S.'s wars in Southeast Asia. The U.S. also used biological weapons against the Korean people and Chinese volunteers during the Korean War. Use of chemical weapons is not restricted to the U.S. but extends to its closest allies as well. The U.S.'s key ally in the region, Israel, used white phosphorous in its attacks on the Gaza Strip in 2009.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the shaky foundations of the justification for military action in Syria, the U.S. and its allies have invoked Assad's purported use of chemical weapons as a cover for escalating their intervention in the Syrian Civil War. This war itself is a proxy war in which various imperialist powers—in coordination with expansionist states and other allies—are competing with each other to redivide the world and its markets. The U.S. state has somewhat successfully portrayed its recent strikes in Syria—and even its earlier efforts to repartition Syria with the aid of Syrian Kurdish forces—as a just cause, especially in domestic media within the U.S. This speaks to the low level of mass political resistance in the country at present, a situation which revolutionaries must transform.

Syria has been the site of intensifying inter-imperialist conflict since 2011 Arab Spring. The country sits at a crucial crossroads between the Middle East and Europe. Bashar al-Assad's government has repeatedly impeded and prevented the construction of oil and gas pipelines that would supply Europe with fossil fuels from the Middle East. If constructed, these pipelines would challenge Russian interests in the gas markets in Europe, where Russian companies such as Gazprom control a significant market share.<sup>4</sup>

What's more, as a neocolony largely aligned with Russian, Iranian, and Chinese state interests, Syria is a key country in the region through which they can pursue their interests and project power. The increasingly fierce competition between these three countries and the U.S.-led imperialist bloc has manifested in Syria in the form of a proxy-war. On the one side are the Syrian state forces, Hezbollah, Iranian forces and militias, and Russian mercenaries. The Russian military has also provided air support, arms, equipment, training, and logistical

---

<sup>2</sup><https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/12/leadup-iraq-war-timeline/>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/LIES-HYPOCRISY-AND-USE-OF-CHEMICAL-WARfare-148698.html>

<sup>4</sup>For more on this see the details in our document *Russia is an Imperialist Country*.

coordination. On the other side are the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces (YPG/J) and the related Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which have been supplied, trained, and directed by U.S., French, and British special forces.<sup>5</sup> These two competing forces have largely re-partitioned Syrian through the war against ISIS—which itself arose due to a series of acts of covert support and blunders by the U.S. state.

The rise of the YPG/J and SDF as U.S. proxies is a relatively recent phenomenon, and is related to the U.S. state’s decision to pivot away from supporting Islamist forces such as the erstwhile al-Nusra Front (now Hayat Tahrir al-Sham).<sup>6</sup> This itself is related to growing contradictions between the U.S. state and their NATO ally, Turkey. U.S. aligned proxy forces currently control a significant portion of Syrian territory (~25%).<sup>7</sup> However, sharpening contradictions with Turkey have threatened the U.S.’s long-term plans in the country and the region. Turkey recently decided to launch Operation Euphrates Shield, an attack on the YPG’s position in Afrin province in Northern Syria.<sup>8</sup> Turkey has threatened to extend this operation to U.S. positions in Manbij, and has also made a series of overtures to Russian imperialism, including a decision to purchase a number of Russian S-400 anti-aircraft units. Turkey’s conflicts with European Union members such as Germany, Greece, and the Netherlands have also increased in recent years. U.S. worries about the stability of its relations with Turkey have been exacerbated by the political trajectory of the present ruling party in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Misgivings about the AKP were reflected in the U.S. State Department’s initial characterization of the 2016 Gülenist coup attempt against the AKP as an “uprising,” a characterization which was subsequently retracted after the coup failed. Even after the coup, the U.S. refused to extradite Gülen, despite repeated requests by the AKP government, underscoring the U.S. state’s conflicts with the current regime.

These contradictions, in conjunction with the Syrian military’s ongoing victories against various rebel forces—many of which are aligned with particular interests

---

<sup>5</sup>The U.S. has even adopted the practice of embedding military personnel within the SDF to deter rivals from directly attacking this U.S. proxy. Russia adopted a similar tactic with the YPG in the Afrin region of Syria, until it recently agreed to withdraw military personnel and allow Turkey to proceed with its military assault on Afrin, called *Operation Euphrates Shield*.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n01/seymour-m-hersh/military-to-military>

<sup>7</sup>This figure is somewhat deceptive, as the territory that the U.S.-aligned SDF controls includes some of the best arable land in the country, the Tabqa Dam which produces ~50% of the country’s electricity, and the oil fields and pipelines surrounding Deir ez-Zor.

<sup>8</sup>Some have pointed to Operation Euphrates Shield, and the U.S.’s willingness to allow Turkey to proceed with this offensive as evidence that the alliance between the NATO allies trumps the U.S.’s alliance with the YPG. This view represents a narrow and empiricist understanding of the situation. The YPG troops in Afrin did not work with the U.S., but rather were working with the Russian military. Prior to the attack Turkey reached an agreement with the Russian military that it would pull out its troops embedded in the YPG forces stationed in Afrin, and thereby allow the attack to proceed without risk of harm to Russian soldiers and the possible diplomatic crisis that could follow.

of the U.S. state—has led to concerns within the U.S. state about the viability of their existing proxy forces in the region. There is worry that these forces cannot secure U.S. interests and cannot combat the combined forces of the Syrian government, Hezbollah, Iran, and Russian mercenaries. Such concerns have been magnified in the face of increased military aggression from Turkey, and the AKP's related overtures to Russia. The U.S., France, and the U.K. have invested significant amounts of capital in long-term projects in the SDF-controlled sections of Syria, and hope to expand their control of territory, resources, and markets in the coming years. However, they fear that this will not be possible if the Assad government remains in power, and especially if it is able to forcibly remove the SDF from the land which it has captured.

Russia has long standing ties with Assad, and has provided his government with arms, training, air support, and other supplies. Russia also has strategic interests in ensuring his continued rule in Syria to prevent the development of various oil and gas pipelines that would cut into Russian market share in European markets. Iran has poured billions of dollars into the Syrian Civil War, mobilized and trained militias throughout the country, directly involved its own military, built military installations throughout the country to challenge Israel, and constructed an over-land shipping corridor to the Mediterranean through Syria. China has avoided direct military involvement in the war, but has negotiated billions of dollars in loans and investment to profit from the reconstruction of Syria after the civil war. Syria is also a crucial crossroads in China's Belt and Road Initiative, and the planned projects there would help to secure Chinese capital interests in the region.

If Assad remains in power, this would further strengthen the position of China, Russia, and Iran in the region, and weaken the ability of the U.S. and its allies to project power and control markets. It would also have various downstream effects. Economically it would strengthen the Russian market share in the European gas markets. Politically it could encourage Turkey to pivot further into the camp of Russian and Chinese imperialism. Militarily it would result in the growth of bases and missile facilities in the region that would challenge Israel's position and regional strength.

All of this has contributed to a situation in which the U.S.-led imperialist bloc is increasingly concerned over the trajectory of developments in Syria and thus has decided to escalate its direct military involvement in the region. This is evident in the recent joint missile strikes by the U.S., French, and British militaries, as well as the increasing—in number and intensity—Israeli attacks on various military installations throughout Syria.

The U.S.-led attack itself did not appear to do significant damage to Assad's government or military. However, it does set a precedent for further escalation, and for more direct intervention in Syria. In the wake of the strike, the U.S., France, and the U.K. have put forward United Nations (UN) security council draft resolution which would authorize a joint UN-OPCW investigation into the

chemical weapons attacks in Syria.<sup>9</sup> Russia and China, both members on the security council, are unlikely to allow such an investigation to proceed. This itself is part of the larger public relations war by these competing imperialist blocs to frame the other as the real culprits and aggressors in this instance, and in the war overall.

A Maoist perspective shows there is no such thing as a “less-evil” imperialist power. They are all competing to redivide the world in the interests of the monopoly-capitalist class of their country and bloc. These interests are in contradiction to the masses of the world, who the imperialists oppress and exploit to grow their wealth and power. This is particularly evident in the Syrian civil war, where at least half of the pre-war population of 22 million have become refugees. This does not include those who have been slaughtered in war, labeled “collateral damage” by the imperialist aggressors. The situation is likely to worsen, as contradictions between rival imperialist powers are sharpening, and open warfare between them, or a larger regional war, could break out in the near future.

Given these circumstances, it is incumbent upon us in the U.S. to work to build a strong anti-war movement. This sort of work requires a broad united front approach which brings together the masses of various class-backgrounds under proletarian leadership aimed at opposition to the U.S.’s imperialist policies, and in solidarity with the masses of oppressed nations. The anti-war movement in this country is almost non-existent, and what little that does exist is under the leadership of various petty-bourgeois reformers and revisionist groups. These forces are not opposed to capitalist-imperialism but rather seek to funnel the masses’ resistance into liberal reforms and support for rival imperialist powers respectively.

Under such leadership the anti-war movement will not be able to mount vibrant and effective mass resistance to U.S. imperialism. This country does not have a strong living legacy of anti-war activism. Even the key lessons from the opposition to the Vietnam War have not been preserved on a mass level. The movement against the Vietnam War was not built overnight, but rather required principled work by revolutionaries. Through this work, revolutionaries were able to link the protests against the war to the struggles at home such as the movement for Black Liberation, for example in the “Free Huey” campaign, and to struggles abroad through communication with and awareness of the Vietnamese resistance. U.S. imperialist policies and wars abroad have a close connection to oppression and exploitation at home.

Building an anti-war movement in this country does not mean attending a revisionist “Hands Off Syria” rally once every few months, nor does it mean posting a few memes on Facebook. Solidarity with the oppressed peoples around the world cannot be reduced to a formalistic march and a “revolutionary” posture

---

<sup>9</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/15/western-allies-launch-diplomatic-offensive-in-wake-of-syria-strikes>

online or within liberal groups. It requires patient, diligent, and methodical work among the broad masses of this country to form the organizational basis for resistance. As contradictions and competition between imperialist powers intensify we are rapidly approaching a major regional war in the Middle East, and potentially another world war. The imperialists of this country and the world will gladly slaughter tens and even hundreds of millions of people to preserve their own interests and weaken their rivals. We must seize the time and build up the anti-war movement in this country.