US war provocations against Syria

Alex Lantier
6 February 2012

Washington and its imperialist allies in Europe are escalating preparations for a full-scale military intervention in Syria. Coming after last year's NATO war against Libya and threats of a sudden Israeli attack on Iran, Syria's main regional ally, it is clear that Washington aims to reshape the Middle East by forcibly installing pro-US regimes throughout the region.

US officials have denounced Saturday's veto by Russia and China of a UN Security Council resolution against Syria which sought to provide a pretext for military intervention. Beijing and Moscow, who did not veto a similar UN resolution against Libya last year, fear that the day when Washington tries to use these methods directly against them may not be far off.

US preparations for intervention against Syria are very far advanced, accompanied by levels of deceit and hypocrisy unseen since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq or the period of the Nazis. Trying to hide US policy under the worm-eaten label of a "humanitarian" intervention, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton denounced the UN Security Council vote as a "travesty," adding, "We will work with the friends of a democratic Syria around the world to support the opposition's peaceful political plans for change."

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé called the Russian and Chinese veto a "stain" on the UN, adding that French President Nicolas Sarkozy would soon present further initiatives against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

These are cynical lies aimed at lending moral legitimacy to a violent intervention in Syria and ignoring the profound opposition these policies provoke in the US and European working class. Even in the Western media it has been widely reported that pro-US powers, including Turkey and France, are providing arms and aid to Syrian opposition forces. The US and its allies are not acting "peacefully," but stoking the flames of a civil war while using the resulting bloodshed to denounce Assad and blunt popular opposition to a new war.

Washington is in no position to criticize Assad for fighting an armed insurgency. The US has bloodily suppressed insurgencies against its puppet regimes in occupied Iraq and Afghanistan—at the cost of an estimated 1.2 million lives in Iraq and hundreds of thousands in Afghanistan. The principal "stain" in this matter is on Washington and its allies, whose hands are covered with the blood of millions.

Nothing the Syrian regime has done can be compared to the 2004 US onslaught against the Iraqi city of Fallujah. Women and children were forcibly evacuated from the city, which was then leveled block by block as a reprisal for Fallujah's resistance to the US occupation.

In their campaign against Syria the imperialist powers are relying yet again on a compliant media, which functions as nothing more than a mouthpiece for state propaganda.

Typical in this respect was Friday's *New York Times* column by Robert Pape, brazenly titled "Why We Shouldn't Attack Syria (Yet)." Pape explains how the methods of last year's NATO war against Libya—in which NATO seized on Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's threats against insurgents in Benghazi as the pretext to bomb Libya and intervene to back the Benghazi-based opposition—could be used against Syria.

Pape writes that "the opposition to Syria's dictatorial president, Bashar al-Assad, has not achieved sustained control of any major population area." He continues: "So air power alone would probably not be sufficient to blunt the Assad loyalists entrenched in cities, and a heavy ground campaign would probably face stiff and bloody resistance. If a large region broke away from the regime en masse, international humanitarian intervention could well become viable. Until then,

© World Socialist Web Site

sadly, Syria is not another Libya."

This comment, by a supporter of the Syrian insurgency, speaks volumes about the class character of the insurgency. Lacking broad popular support, it is an instrument to give the imperialist powers a foothold inside Syria from which to launch a war against Assad.

The very fact that the *Times* asked a figure like Pape to contribute an Op-Ed comment speaks to the degeneration of the US media and academia. Blandly described by the *Times* as a "professor of political science" at the University of Chicago, Pape is a creature of the state. The author of *Bombing to Win*, he specializes in studying "coercive air power"—that is, how to terrorize states into submission by threatening mass murder from the air.

The practices of the current strategists of imperialist foreign policy are borrowed entirely from the methods of the Nazis in the lead-up to World War II. US plots to dismember and subjugate Syria under cover of denouncing Assad recall nothing so much as the Nazi policy of conquering Czechoslovakia by first occupying the Sudetenland, or the Nazis' claim that they were returning Polish fire as Hitler's tanks moved on Warsaw.

The task of dealing with the Assad regime belongs to the Syrian working class, not a right-wing armed opposition acting as a proxy for Washington and its European allies, who are preparing to unleash a bloodbath in the country. Assad must be overthrown as part of a struggle of the entire Arab and international working class—the initial stages of which were signaled by last year's mass uprisings against US-backed dictators in Egypt and Tunisia—directed first and foremost against imperialism.

Alex Lantier

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site