

No to war in Syria!

Bill Van Auken
18 June 2013

The *World Socialist Web Site* categorically condemns the Obama administration's decision to directly arm the right-wing Islamist mercenaries conducting the Western-backed war for regime-change in Syria.

We denounce the meeting of the leaders of the G8 major powers in Northern Ireland as a gathering of criminal warmongers to plot Syria's dismemberment. As in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan before it, the Syrian intervention is a violent and predatory war to subjugate a former colonial country to the strategic and profit interests of imperialism.

The unrestrained lying by the Obama White House and the corporate media about the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad employing chemical weapons in the country's civil war convinces no one. It is an unmistakable echo of the discredited "weapons of mass destruction" propaganda manufactured as a pretext for invading Iraq a decade ago.

Yet there is a difference. In 2003, the Bush administration made its false charges of weapons of mass destruction and ties between Baghdad and Al Qaeda to manufacture a case that the US was threatened with attack and compelled to carry out a preemptive strike in self-defense.

Today, there is not even a suggestion that Syria poses a threat to the US. In fact—and it is no credit to the reactionary regime in Damascus—the Syrian government collaborated with the US in its "war on terror." US intervention is driven solely by Washington's strategic interests and is, therefore, under every doctrine of international law, a wholly criminal act of aggression.

The official explanations for the intervention are beset by howling contradictions. The US is supposedly defending "democracy" in alliance with the government of Turkey, which is in the midst of savagely repressing popular protest. And while justifying interventions in the name of a "war on

terror," Washington is intervening in Syria to further a US-instigated insurgency that is spearheaded by Al Qaeda elements.

The US is utilizing right-wing Sunni forces as its proxies in the Middle East. It is collaborating closely with the Islamist regimes in Turkey and Egypt and the reactionary Sunni monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf oil Emirates in promoting what amounts to a jihad against the Shia population of the region.

Stirring up savage sectarian divisions, this strategy has the potential of turning the Syrian intervention into a full-scale ethno-religious genocide, should the forces Washington is backing come to power.

This is not a new policy. During the postwar period, Washington cultivated right-wing Islamists to counter the growth of left-nationalist and socialist influences in the Middle East. In Indonesia, it used these forces as its shock troops in the 1965 CIA-backed coup that ended in the slaughter of half a million people.

In implementing its policy of military aggression against Syria, the Obama administration is pursuing plans that have been elaborated within US military, intelligence and political circles—and by Washington's principal NATO allies, Britain and France—for well over a decade.

As early as 1997, the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), the Washington think tank established by Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and other figures who would play leading roles in the US war of aggression against Iraq, called for "regime-change" in Syria as well.

In early 2004, Congress passed the Syria Accountability Act, imposing punishing economic sanctions on the country, whose government it declared an "extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States."

That same year, *Washington Quarterly*, the journal of the Center for Strategic and International Studies

(CSIS), a national security think tank that has close ties to the US military and intelligence agencies, published an article entitled “Bashar Al-Assad: In or Out of the New World Order?” While acknowledging Syrian collaboration with Washington in the so-called “war on terror,” it predicted that Assad would not be able to “overcome his deteriorating relations with the United States, which has come to see the Syrian regime as an antithesis to all that it is trying to achieve in the Middle East.”

The US was “trying to achieve” the violent imposition of US hegemony over the strategically vital and oil-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia. It demanded that the Syrian regime break its ties with Moscow, Iran and the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon, give its unconditional support to the US war in Iraq, and capitulate to Israel’s drive to annex the Golan Heights and south Lebanon. In other words, that it agree to turn Syria into a US semi-colonial protectorate. Assad could not meet these demands without committing political—and literal—suicide.

More recently, former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, during an interview with the French Parliamentary TV network, LCP, recounted that he was in Britain on other matters before the outbreak of violence in Syria. “I met with top British officials, who confessed to me that they were preparing something big in Syria,” he said.

He continued, “This was in Britain, not in America. Britain was organizing an invasion of rebels into Syria.”

Anthony Cordesman, one of the most ruthless US strategists on the Middle East, bluntly spelled out the real motives of US intervention in a June 14 article posted on the CSIS think tank’s web site.

Cordesman argued that a war was necessary to inflict a defeat upon Syria’s ally and Washington’s regional rival, Iran, and reverse a perception in the Middle East that, after the debacle in Iraq and confronted with “a weak US economy and a national fiscal crisis, war fatigue and defense cuts,” Washington was “losing” and Iran was “gaining.” A major bloodletting in Syria was needed to pursue “a far broader power struggle that now ties the Levant and Gulf together,” he wrote.

As Cordesman makes clear, direct shipment of arms is only the first step, to be followed by the deployment of the CIA and Special Forces inside Syria, the

imposition of a “no-fly zone” in Syrian airspace, and the transformation of the country into a “no-move zone” for pro-government forces—measures that entail a relentless bombing campaign and a vast increase in casualties.

What is outlined here is a massive war crime, similar in its planning and execution to the kind of aggressive war waged by the Nazis nearly three quarters of a century ago.

Make no mistake about it. The intervention in Syria will prove to be only the antechamber of far larger and more catastrophic wars, in the first instance for regime-change in Iran. It will serve as preparation for the fomenting of ethnic chauvinism in Russia. Moscow is in Washington’s crosshairs, and whatever concessions are extracted from Putin at the G8 meeting will only help prepare more effective aggression against Russia tomorrow.

For the fourth time in little more than a decade, the US is embarking on a new war. It is not just about the pursuit of global interests. Rather, unending war has become a crucial means of maintaining capitalist rule within the US itself by turning the immensely explosive contradictions of American society outward in the form of military violence. This policy is entirely bipartisan, with no significant opposition from any section of either party.

This crime is being facilitated by a layer of pseudo-left groups—such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the US, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) in France, and the Left Party in Germany. The attempts by these organizations to portray the violence of US-backed Islamists as a “revolution” are nothing short of obscene. These groups and their shadowy leaders serve as conduits for state propaganda to sell an illegal war organized by the Pentagon and the CIA.

American working people are overwhelmingly hostile to this war, as are workers all over the world. We call on all those who oppose the US intervention in Syria to join us in building a powerful movement against war.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact