

No to World War III! For the building of a socialist anti-war movement!

Statement of the World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board
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In the days since the US and NATO launched over 100 missiles at the Syrian cities of Damascus and Homs, it is clear that the imperialist powers have not been sated by the latest bloodletting. Within hours of the strikes, US and European newspapers began pumping out editorials demanding a further escalation of the war for regime-change in Syria.

The *Wall Street Journal*, speaking for sections of the ruling elite closely aligned with newly appointed US National Security Advisor John Bolton, declared: “One bombing won’t change the fundamentals of the Syrian battlefield, or the strategic reality that the Russia-Iran-Assad axis is winning.”

“If Mr. Trump also wants to deter Russian and Iranian imperialism... he needs a more ambitious strategy,” it continued. “Next time, the attack should be more punishing.”

The *Journal* concluded: “Only when Russia and Iran begin to pay a larger price in Syria” will the United States secure its aims in the region.

The implications of such statements are clear: while tactical considerations led the United States to stage a raid, and not a full-scale assault that would have led to a shooting war with Iranian and Russian forces, the launching of such an onslaught is only a matter of time. The fact that such a conflict could have cataclysmic consequences for humanity will not deter the imperialist powers from waging it.

Lost in the *Journal*’s talk of “regional domination” and demands for “turning Syria into the Ayatollah’s Vietnam” is the flimsy pretext used to justify the latest US attack: the supposed use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government in Douma on April 7.

The propaganda used to justify the strikes exhibited contempt for both the truth and the intelligence of the public. After 25 years of endless war, millions of people have become largely inured to the hysterical and

hypocritical allegations used by the imperialists to dress up their designs against weak countries as a saintly mission for the liberation of mankind.

Washington, London, Paris and Berlin proceed as if no one can remember the Bush administration’s lies about “weapons of mass destruction,” or Obama’s shoddy humanitarian pretexts for razing Libya to the ground and murdering Muammar Gaddafi.

Behind these shop-worn lies are deeper causes. Responding to the Syria crisis, a statement of the Weizsäcker Foundation, signed by high-level officials in the German government, declared: “None of the structural reasons which led to World War I have actually been vanquished.”

What are these “structural issues?” They are the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system, identified by the great Marxists of the 20th century: the relentless struggle among the imperialist powers for spheres of influence and the carve-up of the globe, stemming from the conflict between the nation-state and world economy.

In his landmark treatise *Imperialism* written just over 100 years ago, the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin wrote: “[T]he only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interests, colonies, etc. is a calculation of the *strength* of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength,” which is ultimately determined through military conflict. “Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars,” Lenin noted, “and in their turn grow out of wars.”

In order to secure their place in the imperialist carve-up and redivision of the world—what German Kaiser Wilhelm II called a “place in the sun”—the imperialist powers are driven to the most desperate and catastrophic militarist actions.

For the US, above all, whose world hegemony is crumbling through the loss of its economic preeminence,

there is no other path. Washington has, over a quarter-century, waged an endless series of bloody wars to offset its economic weakness. Increasingly, trade war measures against Russia and China and preparations for military conflict are blending into one another through the doctrine, announced by the Pentagon earlier this year, of “strategic competition.”

The European imperialist powers, whatever their tactical differences with each other and with the US, are spurred on by their determination to participate in the division of the world and to ensure that their corporations receive a share of the spoils.

The new epoch of imperialist war, which has been ongoing for more than a quarter-century, will not end with missile strikes in Syria. The imperialist powers are seeking the complete partition of Syria as the prelude to military operations against Iran, aiming at the installation of a puppet regime or the country’s dismemberment. The same treatment is ultimately in store for Russia and China.

Two years ago, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) warned in its February 18, 2016 statement, “Socialism and the Fight Against War”: “The world stands on the brink of a catastrophic global conflict.... As in the years that preceded the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and World War II in 1939, political leaders and military planners are approaching the conclusion that a war between major powers is not a remote possibility, but, rather, highly probable and, perhaps, even inevitable.”

The ICFI declared: “The drive to World War III must be stopped. A new international movement against war, uniting the great mass of working people and youth in opposition to capitalism and imperialism, must be built.”

In the ensuing two years, the prospect for the development of such a movement has been heightened by the emergence of a growing international movement in opposition to capitalism. From teachers in the United States to public-sector and airline workers in Germany, rail workers and students in France, and university lecturers in Great Britain, the working class is mobilizing.

The critical task is to merge the working class movement in opposition to social inequality with the struggle against imperialism itself.

This requires a fight against all those political tendencies, fraudulently claiming to be “left” and “socialist,” which have promoted and endorsed imperialist war. The foremost representatives of this reactionary, pro-imperialist pseudo-left are the various

factions of state capitalists and the remnants of the anti-Trotskyist Pabloite movement, which have all devoted themselves to legitimizing and endorsing the imperialist carve-up of Syria.

As the world witnesses a new upsurge of imperialist barbarism, the International Committee of the Fourth International reaffirms the critical principles it advanced in February 2016:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements of the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and put an end to the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.
- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.
- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

We call on all workers and young people around the world who are determined to undertake a fight against imperialism on this principled basis to contact the International Committee of the Fourth International and join the revolutionary struggle to prevent World War III.



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