

US, UK and France threaten military intervention against Syria

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In citing “weapons of mass destruction” as a pretext for waging war against Syria, the Obama administration is treading a well-worn path.

When President Barack Obama threatened August 21 that the movement of chemical weapons inside Syria was a “red line” that could trigger US military intervention, he did nothing that was not pioneered by George W. Bush before the 2003 war against Iraq. Obama now has the backing of British Prime Minister David Cameron and, this week, France’s François Hollande. The French president said his government was already working with Turkey to establish no-fly zones “in co-ordination with our closest partners.”

The connection between Iraq and Syria is more than a repetition of Washington’s hyping of an alleged WMD threat and invocations of democracy and human rights.

Confronted with the explosion of working class opposition to its client regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and more broadly throughout the region in 2011, Washington is seeking to mobilize reactionary forces to suppress the working class while implementing plans for regional hegemony laid out after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. That invasion ended up strengthening Iran’s position by eliminating its main regional rival. Washington responded by seeking to undermine what it dubbed the “Shia arc of extremism”—which included the Alawite-dominated Baathist regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Iran itself.

The US responded to last year’s revolutionary working class struggles by deepening its reliance on Sunni Islamist forces tied to the Persian Gulf monarchies. Exploiting the political bankruptcy of the petty-bourgeois “left” forces, which opposed a struggle for power by the working class, Islamist parties have come to power in Tunisia and Egypt.

In Tunisia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia provided hundreds of millions of dollars to back the Islamist Ennahda (Renaissance) Movement, which won the October 2011 elections. In Egypt, Washington is cultivating the Muslim Brotherhood, led by US-trained academic Mohammed Mursi, as a civilian political partner for the army.

These forces, including Al Qaeda, have functioned as shock troops in Washington’s campaign to repress working class opposition and topple Middle Eastern regimes viewed as inimical to US interests.

The US and its NATO allies relied extensively on Islamist forces as they encouraged and armed a right-wing insurgency against the Libyan regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. This was the basis for a NATO-led campaign for regime-change that officially began on March 17, 2011—waged under the pretext of the United Nations “Responsibility to Protect” initiative first formulated in 2005.

The war threats against Syria represent a dramatic escalation of this campaign, with potentially devastating consequences for the peoples of the region and the entire world. The death toll in Syria of a military assault by Turkey and regional allies backed by US, French and British airpower has the potential to dwarf that in Libya.

Syria is now the destination of Sunni Islamist fighters from throughout the Middle East. As the US and its allies threaten military intervention against Syria, the ethnic and sectarian conflicts in the region are igniting violence throughout the region. Sunni-Shia violence has spread to Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan, and beyond.

Other ethno-religious tensions, most notably focusing on the Kurds, could open another front in a potential civil war stretching across Syria, Iraq and into Iran.

Workers and youth must reject all efforts to conceal

the plans for a new imperialist carve-up of the Middle East behind selective outrage over the crimes of the Assad regime. Whether such commentators are liberals or the representatives of the various pseudo-left groups that have rallied behind the Syrian National Congress and Free Syrian Army, they are perpetrating a political fraud in the service of Washington, London, and Paris.

Not just Assad, but all of the region's reactionary and despotic regimes deserve to fall. But this is a task for the working class, mobilizing behind it the rural poor and all oppressed social layers. Any Middle Eastern regime installed by US military power will be a tool of the corporate and strategic interests for which Washington, London and Paris speak, dedicated to the suppression of the masses' democratic and social aspirations for the benefit of world imperialism.

The petty-bourgeois "left" parties' attempts to dress up sectarian Sunni movements as revolutionary and democratic are a crime against the peoples of the region that will have long-term and bloody consequences.

Against all attempts to sow divisions along religious and ethnic lines, the International Committee of the Fourth International upholds the struggle for the international unity of the working class, an end to imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation, and the establishment of workers' governments across the Middle East.

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