

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5756>



Syria

The Syrian revolution and the failure of the “anti-imperialist” left

- Features -

Publication date: Monday 22 October 2018

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This article was written after the bombing of Syrian military installations carried out by US, UK and French military forces on April 14th 2018 and before the attack by the Assad regime against Dara’a began.

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The friend with the chemical weapons

At dawn on Saturday April 14th 2018 the United States, Britain and France carried out a joint missile attack against installations of the Syrian regime that allegedly manufactured chemical weapons. The missiles that were not intercepted by the Russian and Syrian defence systems partially or totally destroyed these facilities causing four injuries.

This attack provoked anxiety about an escalation of the Syrian civil war throughout the world and, in particular, regarding the rivalry between the great imperialist powers intervening in the region. There have been protests worldwide condemning this attack and demanding an end to the involvement of American imperialism in Syria. The argument of those against US aggression repeatedly echoes that used against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 when the United States and its allies justified the invasion maintaining that Saddam Hussein, then the dictator of Iraq, had chemical weapons. After the invasion and during the occupation that followed, none were ever found. Iraq did not have chemical weapons as the anti-war movement had asserted from the beginning.

The example of Iraq has been used for Syria today as a key criterion for the position the left has taken regarding the Syrian civil war: since it has been proven that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein did not have chemical weapons then consequently the Syrian dictator, Bashar al - Assad, does not have chemical weapons. Consequently if there are no chemical weapons then he can not make use of them either. Everything is quite clear. Simple logic.

Saddam’s “non-existent” chemical weapons and forgotten massacres

The problem with this rationale is the rather cynical indifference to the real connection between the Iraqi Ba’ath dictatorship and chemicals weapons and the totally cynical indifference to the testimonies - first and foremost of the victims themselves - concerning the use of chemicals by the Syrian Ba’ath dictatorship in order to eradicate any form of opposition i.e. against the majority of the Syrian people.

In 2003, Iraq did not have chemical weapons because they had been destroyed under the agreement the Iraqi regime had signed in 1991. Until then chemical weapons were on hand and had been used against the Kurds since 1987 [\[1\]](#). It is truly impressive that the Halabja massacre has been eliminated from all relevant discussions.

On March 17, 1988 the military forces of the Iraqi regime attacked the Kurdish city of Halabja with chemicals killing perhaps as many as 5,000 civilians and injuring around 8,000. Iran and Iraq were still at war and the demands of the Kurdish liberation movement constituted a serious threat to the Iraqi dictatorship which had launched this war and proceeded with the support of the United States. The repression of the Kurdish movement, the systematic oppression and extermination of the Kurdish population had been an unwavering tactic of Saddam Hussein for a considerable number of years. Beginning in April 1987 chemicals had been used in attacks against Kurdish civilians and were something like military exercises for the Iraqi forces. Their culmination was the slaughter in Halabja.

Although knowledge of the massacre – though not its horrendous magnitude – spread immediately and caused outrage worldwide, the UN merely issued a simple statement condemning the use of chemicals by Saddam. That was all it could do. Saddam Hussein was an ally of the western world in the war against Iran. Besides, the chemical weapons were supplied to him by the US and West Germany which was also accused by the Kurds of training Iraqi military personnel to use them.

A year before the West had been indifferent, had approved or even helped with the ethnic cleansing launched by Saddam Hussein (Operation “Anfal”) against the Kurds of Iraq and this continued after the massacre in Halabja. Thousands of Kurdish villages and dozens of cities were destroyed and thousands of Kurds were slaughtered. Hundreds of thousands were forced to leave their land and either displaced to southern Iraq or fled to Iran and Turkey.

The “non-existent” chemicals of Assad and invisible massacres

The argument that the Syrian chemical weapons are just a pretext for imperialist intervention and they do not exist appears to fly in the face of evidence supplied by the regime itself. In July 2012, Assad warned that in the event of a military intervention against Syria it would use its arsenal of chemicals [2]. A few days later, US President Barack Obama made the well-known statement that using chemical weapons, or even transporting them from Damascus, would be a “red line” for the US [3].

A year later, on August 21st 2013, the Syrian regime’s military forces attacked Eastern Ghouta using chemicals and killing some 1,400 people mostly civilians (including 426 children) [4].

Assad had passed the “red lines”, not only of the United States, but also those he had supposedly drawn himself - i.e. that he would not use chemicals against Syrians [5]. The whole world at that time considered that an American invasion of Syria was inevitable and could happen at any moment. But a few days later in Geneva, on September 18th, Russia and the US reached an agreement concerning the destruction of Assad’s chemical arsenal [6]. This agreement was also accepted by the Syrian regime which handed over 700 tonnes of chemical weapons to be destroyed, south of Crete, in accord with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

However, in the following years as the Syrian civil war was escalating, there were numerous reports of chemical attacks on civilians by the Syrian regime (and in a few cases by ISIS). The most recent, in Duma on April 7th, killed at least 70 people and injured more than 500, mainly civilians and children.

Obviously it was easy for the Syrian regime not to hand over the whole (or even the bulk) of the chemical arsenal as there was no way to force Assad to do so and it also there was no reason why he should. Furthermore chlorine was not included in the list of chemicals to be destroyed. Its use is allowed for military purposes but not as a weapon. However many of the attacks on the Syrian population have been made with chlorine-based chemical weapons.

But why did Assad use chemical weapons against civilian populations in the areas controlled by the opposition, risking a US hit, even a possible military invasion? It is a question posed by many – mainly by those who claim that Syrian chemicals are merely a pretext for the US to attack the Syrian regime. However there is another more significant question to be asked: why should Assad use chemical weapons when he has conventional weapons of much greater destructive power at his disposal and with which he has already killed hundreds of thousands of civilians and an equal number of fighters for the opposition?

Indeed, chemical attacks have caused very few deaths in proportion to the size of the slaughter of the Syrian people by their “President.” And in addition we must question why the US and NATO countries consider the use of chemicals as the most serious reason to intervene, albeit as a false “excuse for intervention”, instead of the massive slaughter committed by the regime and its allies for the past seven years?

Within a month in Eastern Ghouta, about 1,700 people (mainly civilians and children) were killed. There was no threat of attack by the US for this massacre, but they made a symbolic strike when there was evidence of chemicals causing the death of about 70 people in Duma.

The questions we have raised above show that the problem regarding the use of chemicals is quite complex.

The diplomacy of chemicals

As mentioned above, the first reference to chemical use was not made by the US, but by the Syrian regime itself in July 2012 when its spokesman stated that the regime would use chemical weapons in the case of an external military attack and not against Syrians. But who was threatening to attack? Up till then the US and Europe had not raised such an issue nor was it something they had even considered. The Obama threat (“red lines”) was formulated in response to this statement.

Although Turkey supported some of the political and military groups in the opposition (especially those related to the Muslim Brotherhood), it did not seem willing to engage in military operations in Syria as long as the Kurdish issue was still under control (negotiations were still going on between the Turkish state and PKK). Israel, of course, had targeted missile strikes before the outbreak of the Syrian revolution which were not aimed at overthrowing the Syrian regime but mainly to blackmail or intimidate it because of its support for Hezbollah. The Syrian regime had never responded to any of these attacks with even a symbolic round of fire let alone chemical weapons. And in any case Israel was not preparing to attack Syria.

So the Syrian regime’s reference to its chemical weapons was not to discourage (non-existent) aspiring intruders, but to bring about the results it did. That is to force the US to make open statements clarifying the terms and conditions that would force them to carry out an attack on Syria.

The report of the Syrian regime referring to its chemical arsenal forced the United States to react and remind everyone of their role as the global nuclear superpower which controls, approves or prohibits the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological and nuclear) all over the world, so that they will not be used against the US and their allies (in this case, especially against Israel). This was the real political meaning of Obama’s “red lines” and not a reason for intervention in Syria something which the Syrian dictator himself had put on the table.

In fact, in this way Assad had achieved this first indirect recognition of the “right” of the Syrian regime to repress its citizens by conventional weapons, since the reaction of the superpower was only concerned with the use of chemical

weapons.

At the same time the threat of an attack by the US was exploited by Assad, not only within Syria but also internationally, in order to appear the victim of imperialist aggression and move to the “anti-imperialism” camp. The anti-war movement in the West that had originally supported the Syrian revolution began shifting its position based on the reasoning that Assad’s crackdown was the lesser of the two evils when compared to a new intervention by western imperialist powers. This resulted in some sections of the movement openly supporting and regarding the Assad regime as “anti-imperialist”.

In addition, the threat of a US attack would turn the Syrian civil war into a US-Russian conflict as Russia should support its ally.

So the Syrian regime profited first of all by simply referring to the existence of a chemical arsenal and the gains would be even greater for the Ba’ath regime from the use of chemicals against the Syrian people.

On August 21st 2013 the first big assault with chemical weapons was made against areas controlled by the opposition. In Zamalka and Ain Tarma in the suburbs of Damascus more than 700 people died and in Moadamiya another suburb, there were more than 100 victims [\[7\]](#)

Assad had breached the US’s “red lines” in a spectacular and provocative way. It was assumed that there would be a tough US reaction: massive bombing (as in Libya) or perhaps even an invasion. The truth is that the US was thinking of a limited, targeted and, in reality, symbolic strike. Three years after the withdrawal of their troops from Iraq, they were extremely reluctant to re-engage in the chaos of a war in the Middle East.

At that time America’s plan for Syria was the removal of Bashar al-Assad from power, but the state structure would remain under the control of the Ba’ath dictatorship. The main fear of the US was that if the state structure (identified with the Ba’ath Party) collapsed, Syria would turn into a zone of increasingly more hostile forces that would be much more actively aggressive towards the Gulf monarchies and Israel.

Also the US did not want to take any action that would put them in conflict with Russia and for that reason they finally accepted an agreement with Russia to abolish Assad’s chemical arsenal knowing full well that there was no way for such an agreement to be enforced.

But the hostile situation that followed the strike on August 21st and the alleged threat of American attack gave Assad the opportunity to again present himself as an “anti-imperialist” and rebut international public opinion. It also gave him the chance, within the country, to exploit the fear of an American invasion - always an essential element of state propaganda.

At the same time, however, Assad also gave a threatening message to the rebels: he could exterminate the Syrian people without intervention from anyone. On the contrary, based on the US-Russia agreement the US not only officially recognized Assad’s “right” to exterminate the Syrians with conventional weapons but also to starve the besieged regions held by the revolutionaries. It was clear that the US and the West had no intention of overthrowing Assad. This meant that the opposition could no longer count on any foreign support.

The chemical attack and the terror it caused also contributed to further militarization of the internal conflict. Political solutions faded when faced with a dictator who did not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction openly therefore armed resistance became much more important. However it intensified the internal contradictions and political

weaknesses of the revolutionary camp as well as its divisions and splits.

The rebels needed armaments suitable for dealing with air strikes that had been unleashed by the regime so the various groups began to connect with different countries in the region, who promised to help. Consequently this turned the hostilities of the various forces in the region into internal confrontations in the revolutionary camp. In these circumstances Islamist organizations were able to play an increasingly decisive military role and Assad could now show the western world an adversary he had been after from the start: radical Islamist organizations with whom he could wage a war which even the West would consider acceptable or even necessary. [8]

The emergence of ISIS, its development and expansion has proved this perfectly. Terrified by the real possibility of political stability being threatened in all the Gulf countries the US began, in cooperation with the Kurdish YPG, to bomb areas controlled by ISIS initially causing hundreds and then thousands of civilian deaths. Subsequently they invaded Syria and 2,000 US soldiers and “specialists” are currently in regions under the control of the YPG where US military bases have been established [9]

However, the US still remained very cautious and did not hinder Assad who continued the slaughter sometimes even with chemicals. To which the US simply turned a blind eye [10]. Until the attack on Han Sheikhun, in Idlib, on April 4th 2017 in which 58 to 100 people were murdered [11].

After the fall of Aleppo, many of its inhabitants and fighters found shelter in Idlib as had people from other areas occupied by the pro-governmental military and paramilitary forces. These people had to receive a decisive blow to break their resistance. And again the regime had to demonstrate its own determination to carry out a total war for which there could be no agreement with parts of the moderate opposition.

However, there was also another serious reason for Assad’s show of power in going beyond the “red lines” that the US had (supposedly) set. It was necessary to test the ‘mood’ of the new American president and prove once again that the United States and the West were in no way inclined to intervene and challenge the power of Assad. And once again the Syrian regime came out on top. The United States carried out an extremely limited strike for which it had previously informed the Russians (and thus Assad implicitly) [12]. After this attack Assad continued the repression even using chemicals again a few days later – which, of course the Americans once again ignored [13].

The new American president often described Assad as “very bad man” both before and after April 4th, however he also made it clear that the US was not interested in overthrowing Assad but in defeating ISIS and leaving Syria [14].

The recent US attack on the 14th of April 2018 has resulted in the strengthening of relations between Assad and the Russians. There is a direct and real military reason for using chemicals against Duma. Jaysh al-Islam, the jihadist group that dominated Duma, had refused to abandon it as had the other guerrilla groups of Eastern Ghouta. Ultimately, the use of chemicals also forced Jaysh al-Islam to accept the withdrawal agreement.

Yet again the most important benefit for the regime is that with every chemical attack any possibility of an agreement with the opposition is becoming more and more difficult. Moreover, the threat of an American attack allowed the regime to put on a show of popular support by mobilizing its supporters in anti-American demonstrations in the centre of Damascus.

After the assault parody, the US hastened to redefine its Syrian policy: the crushing of ISIS, the non-use of chemicals and the possible control of Iran. Neither the overthrow of Assad nor help for their allies YPG are among the American goals for Syria [15].

Of course, they abandon those sections of the FSA in the south which had received limited military assistance from Jordan - with US approval, on the condition set by the United States, that there would be no attempt to help Eastern Ghouta or engage in conflict with regime-led military forces [16]. Now, after the collapse of Eastern Gut, Assad is probably preparing to launch an attack on the southern province of Dara'a and has already attacked the SDF in Eastern Syria [17].

Americans are... killers of the Syrian people?

[18]

For a very large part of the left (the “anti-imperialist” left) if somebody is slaughtered then the Americans have done it or there is no slaughter without American involvement. This simple deduction has become a starting point for the understanding of global, and consequently Syrian reality, and the criterion by which these American attacks – their causes and their consequences – are interpreted.

The most striking reaction of the anti-war movement is not its hypersensitivity to the threat of a US invasion of Syria, but exactly the opposite: the complete and cynical indifference to the already existing US invasion of Syria and the continued and extensive bombardments of Syrian civilians since September 7th, 2014. From then until July 2017, US bombers made about 90,000 attacks of which 90 per cent were against ISIS and the rest against Islamist groups in conflict with the regime: Jambhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sam, Liwa al-Haq and the Jaysh al-Islam. However, they also hit locations of the Free Syrian Army -attacks that were characterized as accidents– as well as civilian targets. The most notable case of these being the American bombing against the rebel stronghold Aleppo which had been under siege by Assad in 2016 [19].

Up to March 2018 US bombings in Syria have caused 2,673 civilian deaths, of which 817 were children and 702 were women [20]. No anti-war demonstration took place for these deaths; on the contrary, protests were held across Europe for the attacks on two warehouses!

All this time there have been no US attacks on the regime's forces or against the Iranian troops in Syria, the Hezbollah militias, the Iraqi Shiite militias and the Shiite mercenary troops (from Afghanistan and Pakistan) fighting alongside Assad and there have certainly been none against the Russian forces. The exception being some limited and targeted strikes aimed at deterring attacks by regime forces against the SDF (controlled by the Kurdish YPG) [21].

During this period there have been some Israeli attacks on Syrian territory which did not target Syrian regime forces but the positions of Iranian troops and Hezbollah militias. It should be noted that Israeli policy with regard to Syria focuses almost exclusively on preventing the Iranians and the Hezbollah from advancing into Syrian territory especially near the Israeli border. The overthrow of Assad and the possible political dominance of organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood would pose a threat to Israeli interests because if any group or coalition of opposition groups managed to seize power in Syria it would raise the question of the return of the Golan Heights [22].

America invaded Syria and murdered civilians several years before the destruction of the two warehouses on April 14th 2018 and there were no protests over these deaths. There have been no protests over the deaths of civilians caused by the massacres of the Syrian regime and its allies. The number of these deaths is approximately one hundred times the number of deaths caused by US bombs. For these deaths there were no murderers who should have been condemned by the “anti-imperialist” left.

“The imperialists redivide the earth” ... constantly!

This is another position that appears and reappears in the analyses of the “anti-imperialist” left. This is supposed to be the goal behind every (real or imaginary) imperialist intervention and especially Euro-Atlantic imperialism. Left-wing analyses during the US attack on Iraq in 2003 declared this to be the goal and formally validated this position in the months and years prior to the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

It is assumed that since Iraq had emerged as an “opponent” of imperialism, imperialism had no other way of controlling it other than dividing it into three pieces. The federal, religious-based constitution imposed by the occupation seemed to confirm this. On the other hand, the US was forced to accept co-operation with Iran which had taken political control of Iraq, even before the withdrawal of US troops, in order to prevent its disintegration.

This cooperation culminated in the US’s definitive refusal to accept the independence of its most loyal partner in Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan, even reaching the point of allowing Iraqi-Iranian militias to invade the lands laid claim to by the Iraqi government and to force the Kurdish leadership not to implement the results of the referendum for independence (25th September 2017) [23].

In fact, a single Iraqi state within which power is shared by three ethnic groups, is a lesser threat to the imperialist stability in the region compared with three states. The first –the Kurdish –would be a source of constant turmoil, the second -the Shiite- would be under the absolute control of Iran and the third -the Sunni – would be a source of conflict between the Gulf monarchs for its control and a hothouse for the uncontrolled development of Salafist and Jihadist forces.

Moreover, the initial political “vision” that accompanied the American invasion was the reconstruction of Iraq as a powerful proponent of neoliberalism in the Middle East and a stable ally of the United States [24] This “vision” was a non-starter but it is indicative of their imperialist intentions.

It should be pointed out, in fact, that the general tendency of imperialism is not the dissolution of states but rather the opposite. Imperialist stability arises rather from the retention of the borders imposed by imperialist rivalry and wars, and this applies much more to the Middle East where there was only one exception to the strict maintenance of the Sykes-Pico Agreement which oversaw the sharing out of the territories of the Ottoman Middle East by England and France after the First World War creating the current Middle East border. This was the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. [25]

And of course, the US and EU imperialists have no plans to “partition” Syria.

A Syria divided on the basis of the ethnic-religious differentiations of its population would lead to the creation of a weak Hezbollah and Iran controlled Alevitic/Shiite state (a prospect that would be horrifying to Israel and the US), a Sunni state, in which political control could be taken by Islamist organizations or secular organizations hostile to the US and Israel and a Kurdish state which Turkey, Iran and Iraq would work together to destroy. Any “partition plan” for Syria would lead to the expansion and exacerbation of hostilities and warfare from which there could be no easy way out.

The US has never even considered in a milder version of this scenario i.e. something similar to what they did in Iraq by helping their Kurds allies gain a form of autonomy. Instead, the US has declared its intention of abandoning the Kurdish movement to its fate – the highly probable coordinated attack by Turkey, Iran, the Assad militias, Hezbollah and the Russians. This is precisely what the US did in Afrin.

On the other hand, however, it is a mistake for the left to demand the inviolability of the border usually expressed as “no imperialist changes of the borders”. What would this slogan mean in the Middle East to the Palestinian or the Kurdish people? Quite simply, they have no right to their own state i.e. the right to national self-determination. The creation of an independent Kurdistan in Iraq is certainly in line with the interests of Israeli imperialism and Israel has supported the demand for Iraqi Kurdistan’s independence [26].

Possibly the same applies to an independent Kurdish state in Syria or Iran and even now in Turkey. But that is no reason to deny the Kurds this right. The fact that if at this moment an independent Palestinian state could be created its creation would be in line with the interests of Turkish imperialism (which supports the Palestinian movement), this would not justify denying the right of the Palestinians to national self-determination.

The “geostrategic” left

Often the analyses of the “anti-imperialist” left are restricted to the level of slogans that limit the problem of imperialism to some particular aspects of the Euro-Atlantic imperialist camp.

Apart from the slogans the “anti-imperialist” left is also used to thinking of world reality in terms of “geostrategy”. That is in terms of state power and the enmity of transnational forces. For the “anti-imperialist” left the term imperialism has an extremely diminished and one sided concept equating it with American aggression. Resistance to it or partial differentiation from the basic aspirations of US foreign policy is “anti-imperialism”.

Beginning with the distinction between enemy or friend an equally simplistic train of thought concludes that the strongest opponent of the enemy, i.e. American imperialism, is our closest friend and consequently the most powerful of the “objectively progressive” forces. “Objectively progressive,” means that whatever crimes this adversary has committed against the masses he will always play – as long as he remains an opponent of “objectively reactionary” imperialism – a positive role in the future developments in the region.

Accordingly Russia is the one at the top of the anti-imperialist pyramid, precisely because it is the only force that can challenge American power at a global level. Some of the “anti-imperialist” left think that Russian capitalism is not imperialist, some that it is imperialist but “objectively progressive” and others, or everyone, back this kind of analysis with fantasies of the survival of “Soviet” successes in the modern Russian state e.g. red flags in Russian military parades.

The very interesting issue of the survival of Stalinist structures for oppression in the modern Russian state will not be dealt here but it should be noted that this “geostrategic” perception of the modern world re-creates the pyramid organization of the “anti-imperialist forces” of the Cold War period but on a wider basis. Then the USSR was at the top and below that its satellite states, the states that emerged from the anti-colonialist movements, any state that was at some time an ally of the USSR, the various Communist parties of course and right at the bottom were the popular movements.

Of course there were exceptions: the French Communist Party fully participated in the attack that the French state launched against the Algerian revolution using the same arguments but simply making more flexible hierarchical levels. It said that the weakening of French, and subsequently of European, imperialism as a result of the collapse of French colonialism would lead to the strengthening of American imperialism reputedly the strongest and hence the “more reactionary”. The historic task of the French Communists was to support the massacre of the “objectively reactionary” Algerians.

Today, the “anti-imperialist” pyramid has a much more varied construction. We can find the remnants of the older pyramid at various levels: the carcass of the Ba’ath dictatorship in Syria is a typical example. The remnants of the communist parties or their mutations are another. Naturally, the satellite states of the USSR are gone and of course most of the countries that had emerged through the perverted aims of popular movements in Asia and Africa have been lost from the ranks but replaced by the various shades of pink governments of Latin America. Naturally the popular movements remain at the base with a much more platonic concept these days and with the prerequisite of being “anti-imperialist”.

The real expansion of this modern “anti-imperialist” pyramid is due to the world’s extreme right.

During the Cold War things were much clearer: the various forms of the extreme right were either friendly or hostile towards western imperialism however they were all certainly unequivocally hostile to the “communism” supposedly represented by the USSR and its alliances.

The collapse of the “Eastern Bloc” has complicated the situation. In eastern countries – in Russia in particular – nostalgia for the Stalinist empire emerged across the political spectrum. And ultimately the Russian far right managed to incorporate Stalinist grandeur into its political narratives thus converging with the Russian Stalinist left [27].

In the West, the disappearance of the “enemy” also eliminated the deep seated antagonism against it. The western extreme right now focused its hate on other targets: immigrants – especially Muslim immigrants, homosexuals, ethnic and religious minorities, etc. And of course it targeted democracy as the political context that allows all the phenomena that “threaten to distort the national identity of Western countries” to emerge.

But not only against every Western democracy, but also against the group (according to far-right accounts) of the hegemonic countries and supranational elites which process and impose this political model throughout the world. So “globalization” thus became a key enemy for the far-right just as it was for the “anti-imperialist” left. The two currents had to either compete with one another over the authenticity of their hostility towards “globalization” or to share it.

The decade of the economic crisis created the conditions for the “anti-imperialist” left to start fantasising about being able to share “anti-imperialism” with the extreme right. The far right itself had increasingly begun to adopt “anti-imperialist” rhetoric which was in fact no less genuine than that of the left. The economic crisis, besides widening the reach of the far-right to the lower middle classes hit by the crisis, or more correctly threatened by the crisis, also challenged the whole range of economic and political partnerships of Western countries redefining the positions they held in the imperialist chain.

The prospect of changing camp or renegotiating the conditions for staying in the western camp began to be – and still are – an alternative response to the crisis and its consequences, not only for the far right but also for the “anti-imperialist” left.

This paranoid fantasy, that the far-right and the “anti-imperialist” left could “march separately but strike together” against the same enemy – “imperialism” or to be more precise US “imperialism” – was actually acted out for the first time regarding the war in Ukraine. There left-wing “anti-imperialists” and right-wingers were united under the patriarchal wings of Russian capitalism to confront “imperialism” together in the same military formations [28].

The Syrian revolution and the failure of the “anti-imperialist” left

The paranoid elements of this left-wing “anti-imperialism” touched on the ridiculous when many left-wing “anti-imperialists” began to see Donald Trump as an “objectively progressive” enemy of American imperialism. The reason being that his far right position could redirect US imperialism towards cooperation, if not friendship, with Russian imperialism and against German economic imperialism. There was similar enthusiasm over the likelihood of Le Pen winning the French Presidential elections [29]. This concept was usually used by the “anti-imperialist” left to attribute its own sexism.

In the case of the Syrian Revolution, other factors have also contributed to furthering this convergence of “geostrategic” analyses. Starting from seemingly different points, the two currents met in their deadly hostility towards the Syrian Revolution and the Syrian people and in their fanatical defence of the Ba’ath dictatorship [30].

For both extreme right and left suppression of the revolution is a defensive battle against “globalization” and “imperialism”. For the far right this repression is of particular importance as it is a widespread application in tackling the “Islamic risk”. Basically the physical extermination of Muslims who “threaten” Europe. Moreover, the Ba’ath regime is also a version of a state organization that is very close to the political visions of the far-right.

The “anti-imperialist” left (which is not free from Islamophobia) has different criteria: uprisings of the popular masses can only be reactive if not conducted under the direct guidance of “communist” parties and not accountable to an “anti-imperialist” (ie anti-American and at the same time pro-Russian) and clearly defined as a “communist” perspective. That means anti-American and pro-Russian simultaneously and clearly defined as a “communist” prospect. Even when in each instance the existing Communist parties are key supporters of bourgeois and reactionary regimes as is the case with Syria.

Moreover, for the “anti-imperialist” left, the biggest sin of the Syrian people is that they wanted to overthrow a dictatorship which for decades had been a model of “anti-imperialism” in the Middle East for the left. The Baathist regime had really had all the characteristics consistent with the friends of the “anti-imperialist” left during the Cold War. It was a close ally of the USSR, supposedly a supporter of the Palestinian movement, an “enemy” of Israeli imperialism and in addition it had also implemented nationalisation.

â€¢ Fact: the Assad regime arose as a result of successive coups which crushed the Baathist left and the Syrian (and Iraqi) popular movement which had been expressed through the Baathian left [31].

â€¢ Fact: the Assad dictatorship slaughtered the Palestinian movement in Lebanon and the left Lebanese movement to help the pro-Israeli, Maronite, Lebanese far right prevail

â€¢ Fact: for decades Syria has been the most trustworthy “enemy” of Israel which never claimed the right to reoccupy the Golan Heights [32].

â€¢ Fact: the Syrian regime had supported the United States in their first war against Iraq, even sending an army; the fact that from 2000-2010 the whole of Syria had participated in the US illegal rendition programme where suspected terrorists were tortured on the CIA’s behalf.

None of these facts concern the analyses of the “anti-imperialist” left which view Assad, Iran, Hezbollah and Russia as an “axis of resistance” against imperialism.

And here is the crux of the problem. For the “anti-imperialist” left the emancipation of the oppressed peoples will emerge through proper alliances that their leaders will form with those states that have the power and resolve to

resist imperial imperialist powers. People’s movements – if there are any – could be said to only play a subsidiary, if not merely decorative, role. Obviously internationalist co-ordination and cooperation between popular movements cannot fit into this political logic.

All aspects of class struggle are reduced to conspiracies and agreements between states, governments and “dark centres”. Usually, the key role in such conspiracy scenarios is attributed to the “Jewish” lobby, to the “Zionist state”, or (for the far right) simply to the “Jews.”

Hence, this “anti-imperialist” left which supports the Palestinian movement – not because it supports the right of national self-determination for all oppressed people but because Israel is an ally of the United States – cannot understand that the Arab Spring and the Syrian Revolution in particular could, if they won, determine the conditions for a victory for the Palestinian movement too. That is precisely why the Palestinian people supported the Syrian revolution. That is also why Sissi, the butcher of the Egyptian revolution and a close associate of Saudi Arabia and Israel, stood in solidarity with Assad.

The revolutionary overthrow of “geostrategy”

The Syrian revolution is the historical setting in which “geostrategy” collapsed. The Syrian Revolution has led to a radical and complete dismantling and redeployment of the co-operation and rivalry between the global and regional imperialist powers.

The US, supposedly an enemy of Assad, attacked ISIS that was a threat to the Syrian regime and collaborated with the YPG that was not an enemy of the Syrian regime but a fanatical enemy of the Turkish state which is a key ally of the United States. Turkey itself, an ally of the Syrian regime prior to the Revolution, supported the conservative Islamist political movements of the opposition (Muslim Brotherhood) against Assad but accepted that Assad should remain in power. It also joined forces with US rivals Iran and Russia to crush the Kurdish movement.

The US made a historic agreement with Iran, recognizing its role in the region, in order to counter the expansion of ISIS and now supported the interests of the Iraqi state, a close partner of Iran. They no longer supported autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan their closest collaborator in the region, which also had the backing by Israel, another close partner of the US.

The US agreement annoyed its allies Saudi Arabia and Israel who were bothered by the strengthening of the role of Iran and Hezbollah in Syria in order to save the Assad regime. Israel is a close ally of Egypt (the Israel-Egypt-Greece-Cyprus axis) whose government has given Assad full political support however the other close ally of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, supports the conservative Islamist forces of the Syrian opposition against Assad. Russia meanwhile has developed relations with almost all the close US partners: Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey [\[33\]](#).

This is only a small part of this “geopolitical” chaos, i.e. the collapse of the former imperialist relations, which was a direct result of the Arab Spring and more specifically the Syrian Revolution. In this respect the international impact of the Syrian Revolution is much greater than that of the Russian Revolution.

But how has this process evolved?

When the Arab revolutions erupted, the US and the EU were totally incapable of intervening to protect the ruling

Middle East classes and their allied regimes. The American (and along with them European) imperialist plans for the Middle East had collapsed not only because of their inability to control the situation in Iraq, the pressing need for the US to turn all their attention on the Far East and the need for the EU to face the spread of Russian influence in Eastern Europe, but also because of the economic crisis which was to a large extent one of the main reasons for the outbreak of the Arab revolutions.

The inability of Euro-Atlantic imperialism to put forward a plan for the Middle East, through which the imperialist interests of the regional powers could be expressed, led the latter to strive – in competition with one another – to promote their own regional imperialist plans which were not always in line with those of their hegemonic ally the US.

Faced with this situation, the US and the EU were forced to abandon their loyal ally Ben Ali and their even more faithful and important ally Mubarak, as well as their associate Saleh in Yemen, when the masses rose up against them.

The US failed totally as a hegemonic imperialist force in that very area in which the capacity of imperialist hegemony is judged: the protection of the ruling classes of the imperialist alliance from the mass uprisings.

Russian imperialism attempted, quite successfully, to fill this leadership void in the Middle East. It offered the Assad regime, its basic ally, all the material means and political support to crush the revolution. Assad’s massacre of the Syrians was also the model followed by the Egyptian army to suppress the Egyptian revolution two years after its outbreak before setting up a dictatorship even more callous than the previous one.

So Russian imperialism spreads its influence in the Middle East and Eastern Europe mainly by offering protection to the countries of these regions from the “colour” revolutions, which, according to the official rhetoric of the Russian government, are Western “conspiracies”. Rhetoric very familiar to that of the “anti-imperialist left”.

A left glutted with democracy

The left doctrines of “objectively progressive” and “objectively reactionary” almost always result in a denunciation of democracy. Democracy is supposedly a means to reach a higher goal. It is not an end in itself and it can be replaced by other means if democracy itself is not a suitable means. Where popular masses demand democracy and rebel against anti-democratic regimes, rivals of the US, then democracy is certainly not an appropriate procedure. The masses themselves are unsuitable for the achievement of anti-imperialist ideals and ... they will probably have to be replaced by others.

The above lines could be an oversimplification of the positions of the “anti-imperialist” left for the Syrian Revolution of 2011. The Syrian dictator, also oversimplifying Brecht’s particular comment, does exactly that: he tries to wipe out the Syrian people who have risen up demanding democracy and if he can he will replace them [\[34\]](#)

There is supposedly a hard Leninist element at the core of the condemnation of democracy. After the Russian revolution, in his clashes with Kautsky, Lenin (and Trotsky too) denounced the bourgeois-democratic political system as a fraud set up against the workers’ interests. Of course, in these extremely problematic analyses of the Russian Marxists’ in regard to democracy – from which only the Stalinist bureaucracy gained anything – there is an attempt to prove the superiority of the democracy of the workers’ councils over the bourgeois democracy which is merely camouflage for the bourgeois domination. However, Lenin never argued that bourgeois democracy is the same or even worse than a bourgeois dictatorship in regard to the interests of the masses.

This relativisation, denunciation or even hatred of democracy is a symptom of the settled left. An example of this is the pro-government Syrian Left which, having been thrown a few crumbs of power and benefiting from the economic privileges granted by the regime, supports it in the massacre it has launched against the Syrian people.

But in the case of the western “anti-imperialist” left this position takes on a more cynical and particular form. This left which is settled in a democratic political system imposed in every country by the bloody sacrifices of the masses, denies the people of non-Western countries their right to democracy merely repeating what it was taught by its real theorists: the essential intellectuals of the western colonialist and imperialist system. This system constitutes a radical denial of democracy for non-Western countries frequently justified by the notion that their peoples are inherently incompetent or indifferent towards democratic ideals.

These leftists have the right and the opportunity to write an anti-governmental declaration and share it in a public square without the risk of being arrested, subjected to systematic torture and held for an indefinite time in prison while their families agonise over their fate. They do not run the risk of being executed and their mutilated bodies thrown into an unknown pit or being sent to their relatives. These leftists who are in no danger of being subjected to the treatment the Syrian regime administers to its dissidents denounce the Syrians as “objectively reactionary” because the Syrians claim the rights that they themselves enjoy [\[35\]](#).

“Anti-Imperialist” Defeatism

Many in the “anti-imperialist” left use a more politically sophisticated argument to support their refusal to condemn and oppose the criminal actions of the “weakest” imperialism, the opponent of “our” imperialism. Broadening the interpretation of the well-known phrase of Karl Liebknecht: “The enemy is within our own country” and by combining it with Lenin’s renowned phrase “the defeat of our own government is the lesser evil” (we may even pursue it) they conclude that the denunciation of rival imperialism is actually equivalent to social-chauvinism, that is the defence of our “own” bourgeoisie.

We will not deal with the problem that many of those who rely on these two catchphrases of “revolutionary defeatism” passionately support the aspirations of the Greek bourgeoisie to compete with the Turkish bourgeoisie and simply consider an alliance with Russian imperialism to be more beneficial for Greek capitalism.

This specific “anti-imperialist” defeatism is much more problematic.

When Liebknecht called on the German proletariat to recognize the German bourgeoisie as its only enemy he did it not only to direct it towards the subject of its hostility but also to where to should seek alliances. The same is true of Lenin’s phrase. Both of them tried to tell the working classes of their countries that their enemy was their “own” capitalism and their friends were the workers of rival capitalism which their “own” governments turned them against .

Deep internationalists, they both supplemented these slogans by supporting the fraternization of the soldiers of the rival camps that took place all along the front line – and it was precisely those partnerships that could have contributed to the defeat of their “own” government in the war. This would open the way for the workers’ revolution, the victory of which required internationalist solidarity and the cooperation of the working class of all the warring countries – and those who were opponents.

In fact, this was the concern of all the Bolsheviks in the discussions leading up to the Brest Litovsk Agreement: could they, in trying to rescue the Russian revolution, contribute to the hindrance of the emerging revolutionary outburst in

Germany. Lenin had responded then that if there was such a danger, they would *have to* sacrifice the Russian revolution for the success of the German.

We can therefore understand the problem of “anti-imperialist” defeatism with which a part of the “anti-imperialist” left denounces those who express their solidarity with the uprisings against the rival imperialist camp. In fact, they end up making the victory of our “own” working class dependent on the ability of rival imperialism to crush the resistances of its “own” working class.

In the case of the Syrian Revolution, the victory of the Russian-Iran-Hezbollah-Assad axis, which presupposes the quashing of the Syrian revolution, can only be considered as a defeat of our “own” imperialist camp. We could extend this view to its logical consequences: Turkish capitalism, the rival of Greek capitalism, is currently conducting a very tough battle to prevent the creation of an autonomous Syrian Kurdistan which would constitute a very serious loss of power in the wider region and would lead to the strengthening of the “geostrategic” position of Greek capitalism. So “we” should be indifferent or even wish that the Kurdish movement be quashed because the existence of an autonomous Kurdish state would in some way be a strengthening of our “own” government. (This issue will be revisited later.)

This is the culmination of “geopolitical” and “geostrategic” paranoia

. The duty of the left is no longer to connect and build internationalist co-operation between the movements in the rival camps in order to coordinate the fight of each against its own enemy and support one another’s struggle but to block any action which our “own” movement could take to help the movement that rival imperialism is crushing.

The reasoning of the “anti-imperialist” left cannot comprehend a process where the simultaneous development of the power of the imperialist camps is a result of the simultaneous destruction of the resistance they face from their popular masses. Nor do they understand the process of their weakening being concurrent with the development of the mass movements within the imperialist camps.

Islam, democracy and the “anti-imperialist” left

The question of political Islam (often not distinguished from the Islamic religion) is one of the basic factors in the “geostrategic” analyses of the “anti-imperialist” left, but its views on this issue are extremely contradictory and not an example of ordered political thinking.

Starting with the conviction that political Islam (or even the religion of Islam) is an archaic, authoritarian and undemocratic model of political and social life, the “anti-imperialist” left often seemed willing to consent to its repression or simply not denounce it. For example, it remained indifferent or even supported the assault on the Muslim Brotherhood by the Assad regime.

When currents or parties of political Islam emerge and prevail through processes involving the masses (whether elections or revolutions), the “anti-imperialist” left disputes the outcome of these processes, namely the right of the majority of the masses themselves to decide how to deal with the question of political Islam. An example is the denunciation of the Syrian revolution due to the emergence of various Islamist movements in its political and military leadership.

However, if a member of political Islam instigates the denial of this right, suppressing the masses, then the “anti-imperialist” left is willing to give its support as it did to Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran in their involvement in suppressing the Syrian revolution.

In fact, the cause of this confusion is again “geostrategic”: the relations that the various currents of political Islam have with the two imperialist camps. The current which can fit into the “anti-imperialist” pyramid topped by Russia can be considered a friend. If it does not fit into it then it is unquestionably an enemy, even if it is a current of political Islam totally hostile to western imperialism. In this latter case, the “anti-imperialist” left brings out all its theoretical forces to discover and reveal “hidden” dealings of mutual support between these Islamic currents and western imperialism.

What is absent here is an understanding of the phenomenon of political Islam in terms of class struggle, popular mobilization and political representation of the social classes. The category “political Islam” is actually composed of many contradictory subcategories, each of which is compiled of different class correlations and proportions, different historical experiences and political conditions.

Also, each sub-category is grouped around a huge variety of political objectives. What we would be tempted to consider as a common characteristic, namely their supposed “archaism”, is something that is in fact a secondary element and should always be interpreted on the basis of the structural features of each particular case. The main common structural element that can be identified in most organizations and currents of political Islam is the social strata which form their social basis. Though it should be pointed out from the beginning that there are exceptions of particular importance here.

Starting at the bottom we almost always have parts of the lower classes made up of the unemployed, the sub-proletariat and the parts of a fragmented working class; then parts of the traditional middle class (merchant class) and on top the new, educated bourgeoisie (lawyers, engineers, doctors, business executives) and parts of the lower and middle bourgeoisie which often overlap with the upper merchant classes. The correlation of the size and the specific political weight of each of these stratum are key factors in shaping the particular political profile of each Islamist organization or current.

The second common structural feature is their political conservatism which opposes an authoritarian power that uses “secularism” as the basic ideological-political element that interlink the process of domination by the bourgeoisie apparatus. “Secularism” becomes the basic criterion of an apparent distinction between the supposedly secular upper classes and the supposedly religious lower ones.

As it forms itself in opposition to an authoritarian state this political conservatism, perversely encompassing diverse and contradictory class demands, usually incorporates political characteristics that can be traced to a large area of the political spectrum between right-wing social democracy and the far right where “anti-imperialism” is generally their core element. Indeed, with the exception of Afghanistan in the 1980s where there was cooperation between Islamists and the West against the Soviet occupation, it is an “anti-imperialism” which is directed against both Western and Russian imperialism.

“Anti-imperialism” as a basic element of the ideology of both political Islam and the “anti-imperialist” left is also one of the most important keys to understanding the process by which political Islam has managed to attract the lower classes often drawing them away from the influence of the “anti-imperialist” left.

The “anti-imperialist” left in the Middle East also identifies imperialism solely with American aggression. It has either supported “anti-imperialist” dictatorial regimes, leaving political Islam as the only political space where popular dissatisfaction against state oppression can be expressed, or backed “anti-imperialist” Islamic political currents – i.e. anti-Western – as in the case of Iran.

The peoples supported by the “anti-imperialist” left

In the Middle East two peoples have been judged by the “anti-imperialist” left worthy of its support. The Kurds and the Palestinians. As was noted before the main reason that the “anti-imperialist” left support the Palestinians is the fact that they are oppressed by an ally of American imperialism.

However in the case of the Kurds things are more complicated. There has certainly been support for the Kurds in Turkey for many years and recently for the Syrian Kurds but the “anti-imperialist” left does not support the Kurds of Iraq or Iran. For the Greek “anti-imperialist” left its support for the Kurds is determined mainly by the stance of the Turkish state towards them. Quite simply, the Turkish Kurds are “our friends” because they would supposedly be our allies in the event of Greek-Turkish war and recently the Syrian Kurds were added to this Greek-Kurdish “alliance” imagined by the “anti-imperialist” left.

And paradoxically the prospect of such an alliance relativizes, even negates, its basic prerequisite of being an “anti-imperialist”, namely anti-American. The fact that the Syrian Kurds are openly supported by the USA and their leadership is working closely with US military forces has not been criticised by the “anti-imperialist” left whose most deadly enemy is Turkey. The US is an enemy only to the extent that they help Turkey or more correctly because they do not help “us” against Turkey.

This “solidarity” with the Kurds is repeatedly expressed in terms of incredible cynicism in articles written by the “anti-imperialist” left that focus on the consequences of the occupation of Afrin by Turkey on our “national” interests [[36](#)]

. These are obviously more important for the Greek “anti-imperialist” left than the lives of the Kurdish people.

The Kurds of Turkey and Syria may receive some support from the “anti-imperialist” left but the Kurds of Iraq and Iran are not so fortunate. They fall into the category of countries that cannot be justified as aligning with the objectives of “anti-imperialism” but that threaten the power of the “anti-imperialist axis”.

For the global “anti-imperialist” left the main reason for defending the Kurds of Syria and Turkey is that somehow they are considered the exception that confirms the Orientalist concept regarding the brutality of Islam.

The Kurds, though Muslims in the overwhelming majority, are considered different from other Muslims who are usually identified with the Arabs. For the left in the West, the Kurds are somehow the “White” Muslims and superior to the “Black” Muslims who are mostly Arabs and portrayed using all the racist and Orientalist stereotypes about Islam that were bequeathed to the left by the colonialist intellectuals.

The fact that the leadership of the Kurdish movement in Turkey, and more recently in Syria, is also part of the “anti-imperialist” left has also played a role in shaping this image of Kurds as “White Muslims”. It exaggerates its secularity, i.e. its opposition to Islam, not so much from a Stalinism and Maoist standpoint but essentially inherited from Kemalism.

This geostrategic “solidarity” of the “anti-imperialist” left towards the Kurds of Syria which manifested after ISIS’s assault on Kobani in 2014 demonstrates its limited understanding. It cannot comprehend the struggle of the Kurdish liberation movements in their true historical dimensions and real dynamics. It perceives the liberation of the Kurds, only in Syria and Turkey, as a gift that would be given to them by higher state powers because they had made the

right geopolitical alliances.

Neither the “anti-imperialist” left nor the leadership of the Kurdish movements in Syria and Turkey understand that the right of self-determination for the Kurds can *only* be won by overthrowing the dictatorships and authoritarian regimes of the Middle East and the democratization of its societies can *only* be achieved with the Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Kurds and other ethnic and religious minorities fighting together.

The Arab Spring and, more specifically, the Syrian Revolution so denigrated by the “anti-imperialist” left created these preconditions. The Rojava democracy is the Kurdish version of the Syrian revolution and whose devastation will also mean the crushing of the Kurdish liberation movement.

“Anti-imperialist” or revolutionary-internationalist left?

This question seems to be meaningless since the struggle against imperialism should be identical to the struggle against capitalism - and vice versa. But far from it. For the “anti-imperialist” left imperialism is always something outside of the structure of the capitalist system: either its aggressiveness which can be dealt with without questioning its structure (for the western “anti-imperialist” left) or something external and hostile to our “own” capitalism who could also exist without “imperialism” (for the Greek “anti-imperialist” left in particular).

It is not simply a disastrous division of the anti-imperialist struggle from the struggle against capitalism but something even worse. The “anti-imperialist” left imagines the decisive culmination of the anti-imperialist struggle as being the clash of imperialism with “anti-imperialist” capitalism and adopts a hostile position towards the rebellious popular masses who are struggling for their class interests against the capitalism that is in conflict with “imperialism”.

Despite a decade of tough class clashes, uprisings (including the tragic outcome of the Arab Spring) and revolutions which have taken on global dimensions the left could not become that political force that would unify and coordinate these movements internationally and direct them towards an anti-capitalist revolution and socialist future.

Often with the pretext that these struggles were not carried out under left leadership, the “anti-imperialist” left refused to see that the grass-root dynamics developing within the insurgent masses themselves could be the strongest foundations of a socialist orientation. It should not be forgotten that this left wing is known to the world masses and the political void created by the indifference or hostility of this “anti-imperialist” left wing towards the popular movements was, of course, covered in each case by forces that wanted to exploit the popular movements for their own class interests different or contrary to the class interests of the masses.

But the Arab Spring and especially the Syrian Revolution, whatever its outcome, is already a huge political lesson which will have to be studied by every fighter who does not think that history ends with capitalism.

The first lesson to be learnt will certainly be the need for radical and creative self-criticism regarding the fact that we have not been wholeheartedly in solidarity with the revolutionaries who have been slaughtered for the past seven years but continue to fight, inside and outside their own country, for democracy, freedom, dignity and social justice.

The second lesson will be the necessity to build a revolutionary left which will be the platform from which the voice of the suppressed rebels will be heard and it will promote their desires and their claims until their “objective” goal, according to Lenin, which is to overthrow the power of the capitalists and to create the immediate democracy of the

workers and all the oppressed.

The third lesson will require us to stop seeing our own struggles through the narrow prism of the nation state. Our struggles can inspire and trigger races in other countries just as our struggles are inspired by those of others. In order to win, each in his own country, these struggles, movements, uprisings and revolutions must be co-ordinated across borders and opposing imperialist camps. This will be the answer for the masses in their fight against the counter-revolutionary collaboration of the national bourgeoisie who are even willing to overcome the differences between imperialist camps to hold on to their supremacy and crush the popular movements that challenge it.

[37]

Translation: Athena Moss Sipsa

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[30] Christos Kefalis, “Assad, Neo-Nazis and Iskra”, [in Greek] Xekinima, January 23, 2017, <http://net.xekinima.org/x-kefalios-o...> Athens Indymedia, December 15, 2016, <https://athens.indymedia.org/post/1566763/> and e la liberta, December 2016, <https://www.elaliberta.gr/%CE%B4%CE...>

[31] For a concise description of internal conflicts in the Baathist parties of Iraq and Syria: Tariq Ali, Bush in Babylonia. The new colonization of Iraq, [in Greek] Agras, Athens 2004, pp. 134-143

[32] Joseph Daher, “Interview with e la liberta (Greece): Origins, dynamics and developments of the revolutionary process in Syria”, Syria Freedom Forever – ????? ??????, February 17, 2016, <https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/interview-with-ela-liberta-greece-origins-dynamics-and-developments-of-the-revolutionary-process-in-syria/> ([in Greek] Joseph Daher, “From the Middle East to Europe: the struggle is one and it is against the capitalist system”, e la liberta, February 17, 2016, <https://www.elaliberta.gr/%CE%B4%CE...>

[33] See Michael Karadjis, “Reply to a Friend: How much can geopolitics tell us about Syria?”, Syrian Revolution Commentary and Analysis, April 21, 2018, <https://mkaradjis.wordpress.com/201...>

[34] From the poem by Bertolt Brecht, “The Solution”, which he wrote after the bloody repression of the workers’ mobilizations that broke out in East Germany in 1953:
After the uprising of the 17th of June

The Secretary of the Writers Union

Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee

Stating that the people

Had forfeited the confidence of the government

And could win it back only

By redoubled efforts.

Would it not be easier

In that case for the government

To dissolve the people

And elect another?

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[35] See Yassin al-Haj Saleh, “The Syrian Cause and Anti-Imperialism”, Al-Jumhuriya, February 24, 2017, <https://www.aljumhuriya.net/en/cont...> and Yassin al-Haj Saleh, May 5, 2017, <http://www.yassinhs.com/2017/05/05/...>

[36] Kyriacos Kyriakopoulos, “The Occupation of Afrin opens the way for the complete collapse of International Law”, [in Greek] Iskra, March 24, 2018, <https://iskra.gr/%CE%B7-%CE%BA%CE%B...>

[37] The Greek version of this article was posted on 7/5/2018 on the anti-capitalist Greek website e la libertÃ :
(Par 1:
<https://www.elaliberta.gr/%CE%B4%CE...>

and Part 2:
<https://www.elaliberta.gr/%CE%B4%CE...>