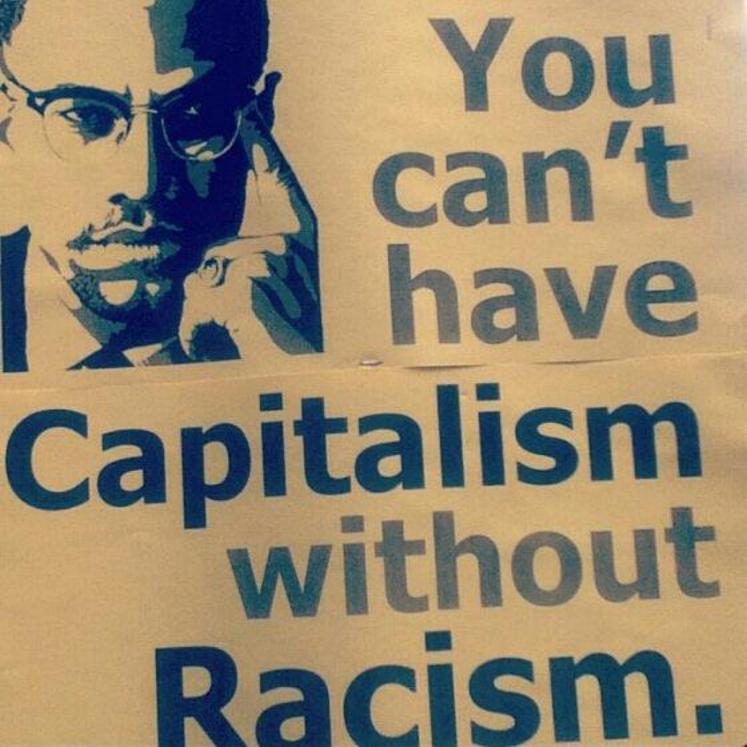
NewPolitics



parliament



US vs Free Syrian Army vs Jabhat al-Nusra (and ISIS)

The US administration has annexed the Syrian conflict to its own war on terror. It has tried to impose its battle on Syrians so that they will abandon their own battle against the tyrannical discriminatory Assadist junta. ... [but] the war on terror is centred around the state; it is a statist conception of the world order which strengthens states and weakens communities, political organizations, social movements, and individuals... In the record of this endless fight against terrorism there has not been a single success, and thus far three countries have been devastated over its course (Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria)."

- Yassin al-Haj Saleh, former Syrian Communist dissident who spent 16 years in Assad's dungeons

Introduction



This article deals with a specific aspect of the US role in the Syrian conflict: its drive to co-opt the Free Syrian Army (FSA) into a proxy force to fight only the jihadist forces of Jabhat al-Nusra (now Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, or JFS) and the Islamic State (ISIS/Daesh), while giving up their fight against the Assad regime.

This reality sharply contrasts with the comic-book view widely expressed in tabloid journals of the mainstream, left and

right, that alleges the Syrian rebellion against the dictatorship of Bashar Assad is a conspiracy involving both the US, al-Qaida, the Gulf states, Turkey, Israel, George Soros and many others.

In reality, the US and the al-Qaida spin-offs have been involved in Syria on opposite sides from the outset. It is a particularly bad case of "alternative news" when the US is depicted as "supporting" the forces it bombs in Syria — the Islamic State and Nusra/JFS (and often mainstream rebel

groups^[2]) — while supposedly "trying to overthrow" the Assad regime which is untouched by US bombing.

Both the US and Nusra/JFS are enemies of the Syrian revolution and the FSA; yet both act to undermine it through maintaining some kind of relationship with it. In this they play a different tactical role to the direct counterrevolutionary role of Russian imperialism and Iran, and also of the Islamic State.

But in this process of "soft" undermining of the revolution from within, the US and Nusra/JFS have been in radical conflict with each other, forcing the FSA and other rebels to walk a fine line, given the overwhelming military superiority of their enemy.

Overview: US policy on Syria

This story of deceit, conflict and betrayal involving the triangle US-FSA-Nusra is only one aspect of the US role in the Syrian conflict, so an overview of general US policy on Syria will be presented first.

Fundamentally, the US has always been hostile to the revolution, for the same reason imperialist powers generally oppose people's uprisings against "stable" capitalist regimes that serve their interests. The starting point needs to be an

understanding that the long-term, multi-faceted, all-encompassing Syrian uprising is a revolution, regardless of the limitations of political leadership; and even more so, when looking at where the revolution has been at its strongest, that class has been the more decisive factor than sect and other issues that often appear to superficially dominate.

Yassin al-Haj Saleh sums up the regime as "an obscenely wealthy and atrociously brutal neo-bourgeoisie, which has proved itself ready to destroy the country in order to remain in power forever". Moreover, "in its relationship with its subjects, this regime reproduces the structure of imperial domination" which "is a thousand times more telling than any anti-imperialist rhetoric". [3]

This is central to understanding the American view, which was highlighted when US State Secretary Hilary Clinton's asserted that Bashar Assad was a "reformer" as Assad was gunning down peaceful protest in early 2011.

At the same time, the US has no special love for particular representatives of such a "brutal neo-bourgeoisie", if in destroying its country it cannot crush the masses and instead only intensifies the revolutionary instability — the US assassination of its client, South Vietnamese dictator Ngo Diem in 1963 being a case in point. So eight months and thousands of deaths later, President Obama finally called on Assad to "step aside".

This "Yemeni solution" — named after the arrangement in Yemen whereby former dictator Saleh ceded power to his deputy to preserve a cosmetically 'reformed' regime — was spelled out when US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta, in July 2012, stressed that when Assad leaves, "the best way to preserve stability is to maintain as much of the military and police as you can, along with security forces, and hope that they will transition

to a democratic form of government". This has been US policy from Geneva I and II through recent rounds in close cooperation with Russia, in which even Assad himself could remain in a "transitional" government. (6)

US leaders understood that Assad cannot completely crush the uprising, and if the FSA were crushed it could only lead to further growth of Islamist and jihadist formations to absorb the dispossessed Sunni majority, given the real divisions among the population and the exploitation of them by the regime.

For a reformed capitalist regime to stabilise the country for capitalist rule would therefore, in this context, require it to incorporate some conservative sections of opposition leadership. Therefore, the more ideologically heterogeneous sections of the opposition, such as the FSA, should not be crushed, but weakened enough to be susceptible to co-optation; the search was on for a Syrian Abbas.

Thus bare survival for the FSA was the purpose of US aid: and the minimal level of this aid demonstrated this: it was never even remotely of the quantity or quality necessary for the FSA to win even tactical victories on the ground (let alone win outright), or to allow a permanent "balance" with the regime.

Till late 2013, the US only provided non-lethal aid (which was regularly cut off), such as binoculars, radios, "ready-meals" and tents. When the CIA arrived on the Turkish and Jordanian borders in mid-2012, its role was blocking others from supplying the advanced weapons that the FSA needed, especially anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons; often the US blocked any weapons getting to the FSA.

The US embargo on anti-aircraft weapons remains today; given that Assad has been waging an air war since 2012, this is a fundamental aspect of US intervention; even when FSA groups tried to buy portable anti-aircraft missiles (manpads) on the black market, "somehow, the Americans found out and our purchase was blocked". [12]

When the US finally began providing some "vetted" rebels with light arms in late 2013 — i.e. the kind of weaponry which they already manufactured or captured — reports of rebels being supplied 16 bullets a month exemplified the limited objectives of this "support". As for the concurrent CIA training program, many rebels who already knew how to fight felt the main American interest was surveillance.

The rest of the essay will look at the main purpose of this "aid" to some Syrian rebels: the main US aim has been to try to re-direct them away from fighting Assad into its own "war on terror" as a deliberate counter-revolutionary strategy.

Some background: the US-FSA-Nusra triangle of conflict

Two lines on the question of dealing with jihadism have been in conflict throughout the war.

The first is the Syrian revolutionary line. The rebels see the Assad regime as their main enemy, and believe attempting to defeat the jihadists without defeating Assad would be unsuccessful, because the regime is responsible for conditions leading to jihadism. However, they have clashed with Nusra/JFS throughout the conflict on their own terms, defending themselves or their communities against Nusra/JFS attacks. At the same time, they often cooperate militarily against the massively more powerful regime; and have refused US prodding

to launch a frontal attack on Nusra/JFS, which they see as suicidal for the anti-Assad forces. However, the dramatically more violent terror against the Syrian people launched by ISIS led the rebels to make their own decision in late 2013 to launch an all-out frontal attack on it; but did not view this war as taking precedence over their war against the regime: they fight the dual counterrevolution.

The opposing US-backed line was the imperialist-Sawhat line, named after the Sunni militias recruited by the US in 2006-07 to defeat al-Qaida in Iraq. Mobilising Sunni fighters to fight Sunni jihadists was a positive step for the US compared to its previous reliance on Iranian-backed Shiites, which encouraged sectarian slaughter. However, the US-Iranian backed Shia-led regime dropped its promises to incorporate Sunni into the regime once al-Qaida was defeated, hence its negative connotations. In Syria, the Sawhat's key differences with the revolutionary position are that, firstly, the US has pushed the FSA to launch a full frontal attack on Nusra as well as ISIS, and secondly, to gain US support even for their own war against ISIS, the US demands the rebels fight ISIS only and end their fight against the regime.

For most part the FSA has walked this fine line successfully — defensively fighting Nusra attacks, while rejecting US demands to launch a frontal offensive on Nusra, launching its own war against ISIS while rejecting US demands to stop fighting the regime — highlighting the absurdity of claims that the FSA is either a CIA or an al-Qaida front.

The FSA is the armed expression of the 2011 uprising, composed of troops who decided to protect fellow Syrians rather than killing them, and popular forces who armed themselves for protection against Assad's violence. Its main goal is the overthrow of the Assad dictatorship. But the Islamic State set up its own murderous dictatorship which also must be overthrown. The problem with the US line — of fighting ISIS only — is that the very conditions that led to the rise

of ISIS in eastern Syria and western Iraq — the large-scale political and social dispossession of Sunni Arabs by the Assad regime and its allied, US-backed Iraqi sectarian regime — are thereby entrenched. Syrian revolutionaries therefore see the overthrow of Assad as a prerequisite for the destruction of ISIS — the very reverse of the US strategy.

Sporadic early FSA clashes with Jabhat al-Nusra

To demonstrate this, we will first review the early clashes between the FSA and Nusra. The first main cause was when Nusra tried to capture FSA-controlled regions. In March 2013, for example, fighting broke out between the FSA-aligned Farouk Brigades and Nusra in Tal Abyad, as the latter attempted to seize the Turkish border post from the FSA.

The other reason for clashes was to defend communities from Nusra, accompanied by popular demonstrations against theocratic repression. In Idlib, protests and clashes began in late 2012. In Raqqa, liberated in March 2013, demonstrations broke out against Nusra, including women's demonstrations; heated discussions between FSA and Nusra cadres highlighted the tensions, but also the fact that Nusra was unable to forcibly impose its rule. When Nusra executed three captured military officers, local coordination

three captured military officers, local coordination committees organised demonstrations, chanting "Not Sunni and not Alawite, our revolution is for civil freedom". In Kafranbel in Idlib, demonstrators raised a banner reading "Executions in Raqqa, and lashing in Saraqib. Who's given you legitimacy to rule the people?" In Aleppo they chanted "The Sharia Committee has become the Air Force Intelligence", or "What a shame, what a shame, shabbiha have become

revolutionaries".

FSA units often went to the aid of protestors. In June 2013, in the Jabal al-Wastani region of Idlib, Nusra assassinated two civilians, accusing them of owning a bar, and tried to arrest someone they accused of working for the regime. Fighters from the National Unity Brigade of the FSA prevented them, and seven FSA battalions forced Nusra out. When Nusra tried to force a checkpoint in another village, they were arrested and barred them from the region. [22]

During a battle in the Damascus region, an FSA soldier got angry and cursed God. When a Nusra chief demanded he be charged with blasphemy, the local FSA battalion kicked Nusra out of the area. An FSA activist stated "If Nusra are going to be extremist, their services are not wanted". In the village of Museifra in Daraa, Nusra executed a local man they accused of working for the regime. Civilians "surrounded the al-Nusra court with heavy weapons and forced the jihadists out of the village". In in the village of Medineh, when a local was ordered to appear before a Nusra "sharia council", he "drove his car by the relevant building and threw a bomb inside, killing five Nusra militants".

In September 2013, FSA units defeated Nusra in the eastern city of Abu Kamal. The ceasefire forced Nusra to expel foreign fighters, established that security would be handled by FSA-affiliated groups, prohibited Nusra checkpoints, and stipulated that a court order was required for house-raids, which could only be performed by FSA brigades. These clashes make nonsense of assertions that the FSA is part of a "jihadi" conspiracy. But they also revealed that Nusra was unable to impose its full control, and that it could be defeated. Following the Abu Kamal events, Nusra issued a two-

page apology to the people of Abu Kamal!

This was the start of a softening of Nusra views and actions. Nusra leader al-Jouliani "denounced transgressions by al-Nusra

fighters and called for redressing how the civilians in Nusra-controlled areas are dealt with". The context was the split between Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) around mid-2013. Nusra's most reactionary elements, and most foreign fighters, went with ISIS. Nusra's relative moderation reflected the pressure of its mostly Syrian base, many of whom only joined Nusra due to its superior funds, arms and organisation compared to the FSA, rather than due to ideological commitment; many quit FSA units to join Nusra for these reasons. "If you join al-Nusra, there is always a gun for you but many of the FSA brigades can't even provide bullets for their fighters", according to a fighter in Idlib. [78]

In September 2013, the entire 11th Division of the FSA, based in Raqqa, joined the smaller, but better-armed Nusra branch, to better resist ISIS. When a rebel coalition led by this "Nusra", stuffed with FSA ranks, briefly liberated Raqqa from ISIS in January 2014, they removed the black flags which ISIS had placed on the spires of Christian churches. In April 2014, this Raqqa Revolutionaries Brigade re-emerged from "Nusra", and became the main FSA ally of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) defending Kobani against ISIS.

This highlights the contradiction between the sectarian Nusra leadership and many of its ranks.

From mid-2013 until late 2014, FSA-Nusra clashes virtually ceased; both focused on fighting the regime, alongside various mainstream Islamist brigades.

US drive to turn FSA into the 'Sawhat' against Jabhat al-Nusra

These sporadic clashes with Nusra demonstrate that the FSA is

not some "jihadi" organisation. But the other side of this equation was the policy being pushed by the US.

As shown above, the limited US "support" to the FSA demonstrated its hostility to the latter's revolutionary objectives, but the US is also hostile to the jihadist forces. However, this hostility to the latter is used as cover for its hostility to the whole revolution. "We can't send arms to the FSA because they might end up with the jihadists." Yet when this becomes "we need to send some arms to FSA moderates to boost them against the jihadists", such arms are severely inadequate.

What better way to deal with both than to prematurely set the "moderate" FSA against the jihadists, and let them kill each other, in the face of the regime's overwhelming power, sapping the FSA's revolutionary potential by turning it into a Syrian "Sawhat"?

When rebel commanders met US intelligence officers in late 2012 to discuss getting US arms, the US officers were only interested in discussing drone strikes on Nusra, and enlisting the rebels to join the attack. When the FSA members said that unity against Assad's more powerful forces was paramount at present, the US officers replied: "We'd prefer you fight Al

Nusra now, and then fight Assad's army" [later]. This has been the main condition on which the US has offered to send a few guns to select FSA units ever since.

The G8 communique in June 2013 made no mention of the regime but called for the expulsion from Syria of "al Qaida and any other non-state actors linked to terrorism", while French president Francois Hollande demanded rebels expel "extremist"

groups as a condition for getting any French arms. [180]

So, if the FSA's clashes with Nusra showed it was not a "jihadist" organ, was it a "CIA" organ willing to carry out

these US orders? Not at all: FSA clashes with Nusra had been on their own terms, and defensive in nature. According to FSA Colonel Akaidi, from the Aleppo military council, if the US wants to turn the FSA "into the Sahwat" and thus "help us so that we kill each other, then we don't want their help". [31]

The FSA wanted to avoid full-scale war with Nusra to prevent anti-Assad fighters killing each other in the context of Assad's massive military superiority; the contradictory nature of many of Nusra's anti-Assad ranks was another reason. It was Nusra that was provoking conflict with its reactionary consequences, while the US, from the opposite side, was also pushing for a full-scale confrontation.

Even when the US first listed Nusra as a "terrorist organisation" in December 2012, many Syrians took to the streets claiming "There is no terrorism in Syria except that

of Assad", sthough other revolution activists disapproved of slogans which could imply sympathy for Nusra. But their message was that, given Assad's greater terror, the US could not tell them who their enemy was: hardly the message of CIA proxies.

Thus the imaginary US-FSA-al-Qaida conspiracy against Assad collapses on both sides.

The FSA and rebel war on ISIS

But the period of relative peace with Nusra was not the end of the FSA's war on jihadism. While Nusra's Syrian base acted to partially moderate its behaviour, the split had the opposite effect on ISIS, whose base among foreign jihadi fighters, whose very presence in Syria was dependent on their sponsor, facilitated its imposition of open terror.

While Nusra focused on fighting the regime, ISIS and the regime largely ignored each otherto concentrate their fire on

the rebels. The second half of 2013 saw a growing war as the FSA acted to defend the masses in liberated zones from ISIS attempts to impose theocratic tyranny.

From the outset, ISIS was far more brutal than Nusra, firing into demonstrations with live ammunition and brutally killing rebels. When ISIS assassinated senior FSA leader Kamal al-Hamami in Latakia on July 11 2013, the FSA declared "war" on ISIS. When it seized control of Raqqa, ISIS acted with wanton violence, leading the FSA Raqqa Revolutionaries Front to launch resistance. In August, ISIS drove the Ahfad al-Rasoul brigades out of Raqqa by destroying their headquarters with car bombs, and in September launched a campaign of "Purification of Filth" aimed at destroying the FSA. Clashes erupted in Deir Ezzor; in Aleppo, where 44 fighters were killed in October; in Azaz, where the FSA Northern Storm resisted an ISIS drive to seize the border; and throughout the country.

The survival of the revolution required decisive action. On January 2014, the major FSA and Islamist brigades launched a full-frontal war on ISIS throughout Syria, Significantly, this was triggered by nation-wide demonstrations against ISIS on January 3, calling ISIS "alien invaders" and demanding their expulsion. This was evidence of a continued link between the civil uprising and its military reflection.

Within weeks, the rebels had driven ISIS entirely from Idlib, Hama, Latakia and most of Aleppo, then in the east from Deir Ezzor and briefly even Raqqa, the biggest and most rapid defeat suffered by ISIS any time in the war. Western Syria has remained free of ISIS ever since.

Not only did the rebels achieve this without US air support,

the Assad regime bombed them in support of ISIS, even helping ISIS reconquer towns it had been driven from. Areas that were untouched by regime bombs while under ISIS control were immediately subjected to regime bombing once under rebel control. (42)

After refusing to arm the FSA because jihadists who fight alongside the FSA might get their hands on the arms, now the US refused to arm the FSA because these jihadists might get their hands on the arms while fighting against the FSA! Although the FSA attacked ISIS with its own agenda, one might assume US leaders would be pleased it was doing what they had been demanding, yet the US was reluctant "to boost assistance to moderate groups battling ISIS until the fighting in northern Syria ends". [43]

The *New York Times* explained that "neither of the two sides in the rebel fighting presents a particularly attractive face to Western policy makers", while James Clapper, US director of national intelligence, asserted that Nusra, then aiding the rebels against ISIS, had aspirations to attack the US — an

An explanation more in keeping with US policy was that the US refused to aid the rebels *even against ISIS* unless the rebels dropped the fight against the regime.

This same pattern — Assad bombing to help ISIS against the rebels and the US refusing to aid the rebels against ISIS — continued when ISIS made a comeback in eastern Syria following its windfall of advanced US weaponry seized in Mosul in June. In June-July, rebels held out in the city of Deir Ezzor for weeks against an ISIS siege, during which the Assad regime bombed the rebels in tandem with ISIS, helping it seize the

absurd proposition. $^{[45]}$

The US, already bombing ISIS in Iraq, refused to aid the Deir Ezzor rebels against ISIS. Yet, from the time conflict between the regime and ISIS over Deir Ezzor began in November 2014, the US has been bombing on the side of the regime. [47]

The myth that the CIA and Pentagon programs were in conflict

The secret CIA program of supplying light arms and "training" to "vetted" FSA groups from late 2013 is often contrasted to the \$500 million Pentagon program, launched later in 2014, to equip an armed force to fight ISIS only and not the regime.

As we will see, the Pentagon's "full Sawhat" collapsed: attracting anti-Assad fighters to a force banned from fighting Assad was a logical disaster.

The CIA program, by contrast, is usually presented as anti-Assad, aimed at helping the rebels exert military pressure on the regime. We even read that the CIA and Pentagon were working at cross purposes.

However, a closer look shows that this was façade: not only because the weapons were grossly inadequate for the purpose of pressuring a regime with such massively superior killing equipment, or for defending already held positions; but also because the purpose of the CIA's co-optation was for a more round-about, yet more effective, route to the same destination as the absurd Pentagon program. The CIA understood the need to "sweeten up" viable rebel groups first before bending them into a viable Sawhat.

CIA's TOW program: Helping fight

Assad or same old Sawhat?

Once the rebel war on ISIS had reached its limits, the US did begin a program of tightly controlled delivery of "TOW" antitank guided missiles (ATGMs) to several of the "vetted" FSA groups who had defeated ISIS.

The delivery of TOWs does not prove the US is supplying them; most are supplied by Saudi Arabia from its own stocks. However, it is understood that the Saudis must have US permission to deliver US-made weapons, though the reality may be more tug-o-war at times.

This followed a two-year CIA-enforced embargo on US allies supplying anti-tank weapons to the rebels (meanwhile, the US has continued to vigorously maintain its embargo on anti-aircraft weapons). But the rebels increasing ability to capture anti-tank weapons from the regime anyway, and use them effectively, pushed the US to change direction and instead try to take some control of this supply as a co-option tool (and the TOWs were less efficient than Russian-made Konkurs and Kornets which the rebels have captured).

The first TOWs were delivered in April 2014, and the number of groups receiving TOWs soon spread to nine, though they only received a few dozen TOW antitank missiles between them, resulting in a minimal effect on the battlefield. By the end of the year it was down to only four groups, with few weapons actually being delivered to anyone. What occurred in between?

The large Idlib-based FSA coalition, the Syrian Revolutionaries Front (SRF), is often referred to as one of

the "US-backed" TOW recipients. However, it was not on the initial list of groups receiving TOWs, and its leader, Jamal Maarouf, claimed "We have received lots of promises from the US, but so far nothing more". The SRF, which had successfully driven ISIS from Idlib, was also dedicated to overthrowing Assad.

But while Maarouf's "immediate group of fighters" did not receive TOWs, "some of the other factions who pledged allegiance to his front did". An April video depicting cadre from an SRF component, the Ghab Wolves Brigade, training in the use of TOWs, helps explain why, when a fighter reveals: "The weapons are sent by the Americans...and they only give weapons to those who specifically fight ISIS. They are not giving us weapons to fight Assad, they give us weapons to fight ISIS". "

In June 2014 Nusra suddenly ended the year-long truce and launched a murderous attack on the SRF in Idlib. In response, the SRF, Harakat Hazm and other local FSA groups (Division 13, Division 101, Fursan al-Haq, etc.) decided to "suspend any and all forms of cooperation and coordination with the Jabhat al Nusra". [59]

However, there was a difference between not cooperating with Nusra and the US demand to wage war against it. The SRF stressed that "despite al-Nusra's atrocities, the SRF has no intention to carry weapons against al-Nusra, as it is busy fighting the Syrian regime", thus refusing to become a Sawhat brigade.

The US initially had more faith in another northern FSA coalition, Harakat Hazm (some of whose member groups had quit the SRF), to which the first TOWs were delivered in April 2014. But the TOWs were few and far between, with shipments containing "only three or four missiles", which were "no

better than the Russian weapons" they captured from the SAA. Hazm leaders admitted to still fighting alongside Nusra, despite the declaration ending cooperation, since "the failure of the U.S. to deliver adequate weapons leaves them unable to refuse whatever allies come their way, including those with opposing politics". [61]

Hazm was caught in a vice: the paucity of US support forced them to maintain some cooperation with Nusra; yet this cooperation was used by the US to wind down support.

The real goal of this US "support" was explained by a former Hazm member: "by September 2014 the United States started to pressure us to leave the battle field against Assad and to send all our forces to fight ISIS. We had no problem to go fight ISIS, but wouldn't agree to stop fighting Assad. From then on, our relations with the Americans went from bad to worse and eventually they stopped backing us. When Jabhat al-Nusra attacked us, we had already lost all foreign support…because we dared to disobey the Americans". [62]

US launches war on ISIS and Nusra and dumps FSA

The test came when the US-led Coalition started bombing ISIS in September; the US also bombed Nusra from the first day, even though Nusra, with all its faults and crimes, was not engaged in the kinds of near-genocidal activities that ISIS and the regime were. Since Nusra was based in many of the same regions as the rebels, US bombs hit other rebels, especially

Ahrar al-Sham, and killed numerous civilians. The regime was untouched by US bombs, and welcomed the US intervention, collaborating with it via intelligence sharing and coordinated bombing. 665

Now was the time for "US-backed" groups who had received handfuls of TOWs to aid the US in destroying the jihadists. Yet despite their own war against ISIS, and conflict with Nusra, they refused to endorse a campaign that targeted only these groups but not the regime.

Harakat Hazm issued a powerful statement condemning the US bombing as "a violation of national sovereignty and an attack on the revolution". The SRF joined a dozen large FSA-linked and Islamist brigades and denounced the US air strikes as aiding Assad. Most FSA and rebel brigades denounced the US intervention.

Failing this US proxy test, the FSA was excluded from the start from any voice in the US-led coalition to fight ISIS; John Allen, the general in charge of the coalition, confirmed that "there is no formal coordination with the FSA", while Pentagon spokesman John Kirby declared the US does not "have a willing, capable, effective partner" in Syria. This lack of coordination led to near-strikes against the FSA.

This was the background to the reports by late 2014 showing the US had virtually halted all support to the FSA. [74]

Nusra launches war on the FSA, US throws them under a bus

The US attack on Nusra also provides background to Nusra's destruction of the SRF in Idlib in November and Harakat Hazm in in Aleppo in January 2015. Most Nusra cadres in Deir Ezzor had fled to Idlib following their defeat by ISIS in July; battle-hardened fighters, weapons and experience flooded in,

suddenly making Idlib a new Nusra stronghold. But the SRF was a competitor in Idlib, and Nusra does not like competition.

The bombing led to a surge in support for Nusra, seen as the martyr of an unjust US attack that benefited Assad. In mass demonstrations throughout Aleppo, Idlib, and Homs, demonstrators chanted "We are all Nusra" or "Nusra came to support us when the world abandoned us".

Nusra used this surge in moral authority to turn on the SRF and Hazm. Its propaganda claimed that any groups that had accepted US weapons were US proxies. Despite their refusal to be the Sawhat, Nusra's case was helped by the very vocal way in which the US advocated the FSA use its weapons against Nusra.

Demonstrations in support of the SRF broke out in the SRF heartland, with a strong role played by women, but Nusra's martyr status neutralised opposition to Nusra's attack elsewhere in Idlib. It also militated against the SRF putting up stiff resistance; it maintained its established policy to avoid soaking the province in fratricidal bloodshed.

Meanwhile, the winding down of US support meant that the SRF, Hazm and the FSA were in a weaker military position had they wanted to confront Nusra, while in a weaker position politically due to Nusra being bombed by what was seen as their US backer. As one FSA official put it, "We have a huge

American flag our back but not a gun in our hand"."

Faysal Itani sums up this US policy:

US airstrikes on JAN immediately produced a new and powerful rival to already vulnerable moderate forces. By striking JAN without sufficiently strengthening its moderate counterparts first, and promising (publicly, no less) to use them to fight JAN and not the regime, the United States made the opposition

appear just threatening enough to provoke JAN, but not so threatening as to deter the jihadist group.

State of the Free Syrian Army at the outset of 2015

Nusra's crushing of the SRF and Harakat Hazm did not end the FSA in the north. There were other large FSA units in the Idlib and Aleppo regions (e.g. Division 13, Fursan al-Haq and others who formed the 5th Brigade coalition) and countless smaller units. In addition, there were various rebel groups with some kind of "Islamist" reference but were not "Salafist", such as Jaysh al-Mujahideen, Jabhat al-Shamiya and the MB-linked Faylaq al-Sham.

The 10-20,000 SRF and Hazm troops did not just disappear. Many went to these other FSA groups; many Hazm cadre in Aleppo joined Jabhat al-Shamiya; some SRF cadre in Idlib joined an expanded Ahrar al-Sham (Nusra's aggression against the SRF was

condemned by Ahrar al-Sham leaders). Some SRF cadre deserted to Nusra at the outset, but even some cadre who had opposed Nusra's takeover subsequently fought under Nusra purely as a powerful vehicle to keep fighting the regime, another

indication of the fluidity of group membership. [***]

Relative strengths led to markedly different military coalitions. In Aleppo, the Fatah Halab (Aleppo Conquest) coalition of over 30 major brigades — FSA, soft-Islamist, and Ahrar al-Sham — excluded Nusra from membership. Nusra's disagreements with other rebels led it to largely withdraw

from northern Aleppo province and Aleppo city. Nusra remained in a strong position in south-west Aleppo bordering Idlib, but even there was continually challenged by popular protest,

especially in towns such as al-Atarib. [82]

In contrast, Idlib now became Nusra's main base. While it did not "rule" Idlib, the exclusion it faced in Aleppo was impossible. The new military coalition, Jaysh al-Fatah (Army of Conquest), comprised eight groups, of which Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham were the two largest. Others (Faylaq al-Sham, Ajnad al-Sham) were part of the 'soft-Islamist' middle; while Jaysh

al-Sunna was a "non-ideological" brigade of Homsi exiles. In the string of major victories in early 2015 (Idlib city, Jush al-Shugr, etc.), the major FSA Idlib brigades (Division 13, Fursan al-Haq) fought alongside Jaysh al-Fatah, but were not members.

South of Idlib, FSA brigades were more prominent: in northern Latakia province, the FSA First Coastal brigade; in northern Hama, the FSA Nasr Brigades; in Homs, the new Homs Liberation Front.

US allies and proxies against ISIS: whoever does not fight Assad

When the US ground down its support to northern FSA groups in late 2014, it shifted its support in several directions. What these different forces had in common was that they did not fight Assad.

In the north, the Pentagon announced its \$500 million plan to train and equip "vetted" individual rebels (rather than FSA

units) to form a new force from scratch to fight ISIS. [184] It collapsed in a heap. The vetting process reduced the initial 1200 fighters interested to 125, the rest either rejected by the US or quit. While more than willing to fight ISIS, they rejected the US demand that they sign a declaration pledging that their weapons would *only* be used against ISIS

and *not* against the regime. [85]

Even worse, the Pentagon first engaged in a week of bombing Nusra in northern Syria before dispatching the first 54

fighters of "Division 30" into that very region. Not surprisingly, they were captured by Nusra. In a statement concerning the attack on Division 30, Nusra claimed the captured fighters admitted that their job was to fight Nusra "and other terrorist groups", and accused them of spotting for the US air strikes. [87]

Of course, "confessing" while Nusra captives is hardly reliable, but the context makes these assertions plausible. They also blend with suspicions among Syrian rebels; several weeks earlier, the MB-connected Liwa al Haqq warned that "all the checkpoints need to inspect those coming from Turkey. There are stray dogs the Americans have finished training that will enter Syria soon. Their mission is spying and assassinations".

Whether this disaster was US incompetence or malice was the only question. One local activist noted that "sending in the 54 and then bombing JAN a few miles away from their positions — implying the 54 acted as spotters for the US Air Force — looks like constructing a case that "See, all our well-meant support is hopeless", justifying the US abandonment of the

FSA even for Sawhat purposes. [89]

Meanwhile, in the south, the US cobbled together the New Syrian Army. In November 2015, the NSA, backed by US air strikes, expelled ISIS from the al-Tanf border crossing with Iraq, releasing a video showing copious US weaponry. Later it launched a failed raid on Abu Kamal, where the going was tough, because many Deir Ezzor rebels "distrust its American backers", especially because the NSA's introductory video made

no mention of fighting the regime. [10]

Meanwhile, while backing these toothless ventures, the Pentagon refused to provide air cover the FSA and allied rebel forces in their ongoing conflict with ISIS east of the strategic frontline rebel-held towns Mare and Tal Rifaat in northern Aleppo province. In June 2015, the Syrian air force bombed the rebels "assisting an Islamic State offensive on rebel-held areas". [93]

Explaining why the US did not aid the rebels against ISIS, Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steven Warren said the rebels are not a "willing partner on the ground". But according to the Syrian American Council, US officials gave "the astounding reason that aiding the rebels in Aleppo would hurt Assad, which would anger the Iranians, who might then turn up the heat on U.S. troops in Iraq". [93]

However, a year later, the US did launch several air strikes in support of a new north Aleppo rebel brigade attacking ISIS. The Mu'tasim Brigade also became the first ever rebel brigade in Syria to receive airdropped weapons from the US, insignificant quantities. This US support is explained by the views of the brigade's leader, Mu'tasim Abbas: "When extremist groups started festering in our society... We redirected our battles just to fighting ISIS and other extremists ... Once we get rid of ISIS, then the regime will crumble". [94]

However, by late 2014 the main US ally on the ground had shifted to the Kurdish-based Peoples Protection Units (YPG), led by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), already involved in its own war against ISIS in northeast Syria. In 2015, the US helped hammer together the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), consisting overwhelmingly of the YPG alongside small numbers of Arab fighters from rebel or non-rebel groups in northeast

Syria.

Since late 2014, every YPG (and SDF) offensive against ISIS has been heavily backed by fully coordinated US air strikes; the YPG/SDF is the only group in Syria with the right to call in US air strikes; US arms have been dropped directly to them in the field; hundreds of US special forces have been sent in to work with them; [95] and several US air bases have been built in their territory. [96]

The YPG/SDF are not US proxies. They have their own goals, centred around a Kurdish autonomy expanded into what they call a 'democratic confederalist' entity that incorporates non-Kurds and promises a revolutionary model for post-Assad Syria. It is not the aim of this essay to assess the realities of this project. The point is merely that the US and the YPG/SDF are currently allied as their interests have converged.

Spokespeople for both sides claim that the US provides air cover for the YPG/SDF because they are the "most effective" fighters against ISIS. They were indeed effective, especially when fighting to liberate Kurdish-populated territory from ISIS tyranny. However, as we saw above, the FSA/rebels drove ISIS out of the whole of western Syria without any US air strikes to aid them.

Thus both the FSA/rebels and the YPG/SDF have been effective fighters against ISIS, due to their real roots among the populations they represent. Both have done a much better job than the Assad regime, whose only victory against ISIS was the reconquest of Palmyra (after spectacularly losing it), with the aid of Russian air strikes; Assad then *lost it again*, and the second reconquest was carried out with the aid of both

Russian and US air strikes. (97)

Rather, the issue is what the YPG/SDF has in common with the US proxy forces: it fights only ISIS, and not the Assad

regime. In its case, this is their own decision; the Assad regime made a pragmatic deal with the PYD in 2012 to withdraw its forces from the three main concentrations of Kurdishmajority territory, leaving them to the PYD. This was not due to Assad's love for Kurdish autonomy; it merely enabled Assad to concentrate his fire on revolutionary forces elsewhere; nor to any PYD love for Assad —not getting barrel-bombed like everyone else has its advantages.

Nevertheless, this policy of not fighting the Assad regime meant that the US condition imposed on ex-rebel proxies was already met by this far more significant fighting force of its own accord. Thus the US-PYD alliance makes war on ISIS in eastern Syria, while both can ignore Assad and Russia bombing the revolutionary populations in western Syria.

US subversion of the Southern Front

Though the main US shift, when it dumped the FSA in the north, went towards proxies or the YPG, another subtle shift was towards the real FSA in the south, the Southern Front, based in Daraa province. With 35,000 troops in over 50 brigades, the SF carried out a string of victories in in late 2014 and early 2015.

The SF's democratic, secularist anti-sectarian politics, alongside its dominance over jihadist groups in the south, is often cited as the reason for this new US support, as the numbers of TOWs increased among SF groups, as they were drying up in the north.

However, like the abandoned SRF and Hazm, and unlike the YPG and the Pentagon proxies, the SF's main enemy was the regime. Did this indicate actual US support for anti-Assad resistance in the south?

In mid-2015, the SF released a declaration rejecting "any

military or [ideological] cooperation or rapprochement with the Al-Nusra Front or any takfiri [ideology] adopted by any

group among the ranks of the Syrian rebels", provoked by Nusra claiming "victories" that had been made by the SF. Like all Syrian rebels, the SF vigorously condemned the massacre of some 20 Druze in Idlib by a Nusra unit and announced "its readiness to protect Druze villages".

However, this was well within FSA-revolution, rather than 'Sawhat', parameters. The SF made clear that ceasing cooperation with Nusra "is not a declaration of war" and would

not "face off" with Nusra. So, like the SRF-Hazm-FSA non-cooperation statement in Idlib, and the exclusion of Nusra from Fatah Halab in Aleppo, this highlights the fine line the FSA tries to walk between the demands of the jihad and the demands of the Sawhat.

US support to the southern FSA, coordinated via the Military Operations Centre (MOC) in Amman, consisting mostly of US, Jordanian and Saudi intelligence officers, had not always been forthcoming. In May 2013, for example, MOC deliberately held back arms to rebels facing a strategic battle in the southern town Khirbet Ghazaleh, leading to its capture by

Assad. Throughout summer 2013, the US failed to supply "a single rifle or bullet to the FSA in Daraa", and "actively

prevented deliveries" of Saudi arms and ammunition. It also involved training a group of people to maintain order in the event of a catastrophic collapse of the Assad regime, rather

than to fight Assad. [103]

The new US interest in arming the SF was connected to the war on ISIS. Unlike the Pentagon shambles, the CIA wanted to work through viable military organisations, all of which were fighting the regime. The US strategy appears to have been to allow the SF to feel some victories, then once a level of

dependence was created, turn on the screws.

After the SF's string of victories in early 2015 (taking the Jordanian border crossing at Nasib, Sheik Miskeen, Nawa, the historic town of Bushra al-Sham, and regime base 52), the US and MOC imposed a series of "red lines", where the SF was not

to go. These included the central area of Daraa city, the neighbouring province Suweida, north towards the city of Sasa, and any attempt to link up with the rebel-held suburbs of Damascus.

SF offensives to take Daraa city, and the Thala airbase, were unsupported, or blocked. According to some reports, if the SF violated the "red line" against advancing towards Damascus, it would come under US attack. [187]

By mid-2015 the MOC had scaled back support for the SF, and use of TOWs trickled off in late 2015 "and totally vanished in the first two weeks of 2016", though SF spokesman Isam El Rayyes denied this was new; rather "MOC-licensed resupplies"

have remained as low as they ever were". Reports in early 2016 indicated that Jordan had "forced the Southern Front to halt all military actions". The context included Jordan's acquiescence with the Russian invasion, and indications that Jordan would be happy with the Assad regime re-taking the entire region from the SF.

When the US and Russia jointly tasked Jordan with listing "terrorist" organisations to be excluded from talks, Jordan's list included some 160 rebel groups.

However, a full regime reconquest of Daraa would be a major undertaking; as long as the SF is held back by red lines and arms freezes, it posed no problem to the regime's aim of destroying the main revolutionary centres there (East Ghouta, Moadamiya, Darayya, etc.).

The US-Jordan strategy involved the familiar Sawhat: in January 2016, MOC officials told the SF to stop attacking regime forces and instead focus their efforts on the jihadists, and fighting Nusra was even more important than fighting ISIS. If they did as demanded, they were promised new weaponry. [112]

In May, the MOC tasked some 4500 SF troops with driving ISIS-connected militia out of some pockets around Daraa, telling the SF it was "tired of your excuses" for "delaying" these operations, and warning it would cut cash flows until they scored victories over ISIS.

In March 2016, the SF took part in the US-Russia facilitated nation-wide ceasefire. In reality, however, it was only a *lull in bombing:* so while the regime continued bombing at lower intensity — particularly in Aleppo and Darayya in the Damascus suburbs — "maintaining the ceasefire" became the new rationale for holding back the SF.

In May 2016, new US/MOC "red-lines" were set in a meeting with rebel groups from around the country, deeming the "destruction of military and security structures" in Syria a "red line", and called on rebels, as part of a peace process, to "join the ranks of the Syrian Army in its fight against Jabhat al-Nusra

and all armed groups that refuse to join the Army".

The betrayal of Darayya

In mid-2016 Assad's troops marched into the iconic revolutionary town of Darayya, one of the key centres remaining wedded to the ideals of the 2011 uprising. Thousands of residents still remaining after years of bombing, starvation and dispossession, but also heroic resistance, were

deported to other parts of Syria.

While 748 barrel bombs were dropped on Darayya in June 2016 alone, and the other Damascus suburbs were also being furiously bombed, besieged and starved, just a little to the south the once mighty Southern Front was forced to abide by the "ceasefire".

Many popular forces demanded the SF reactivate the fronts against Assad. According to one pro-Islamist rebel declaration, "conspiracies against the Revolution can't be foiled except by opening up the Damascus front. ... And Deraa [i.e. the SF] won't act except with a "white/soft coup" against the MOC". [136]

How this US/MOC intervention against the SF betrayed Darayya is explained by this piece that appeared just a few weeks before the surrender:

[T]he MOC summoned leaders in the Southern Front for an emergency meeting in which they were warned against launching an offensive to seize Sheikh Maskin, a town lies along a motorway that run northward from Daraa's provincial capital toward Damascus... The same month that the town fell into government hands, the MOC ordered the Southern Front to halt its operations against the Syrian regime in the Daraa province in order to focus its fight on ISIS-affiliated groups in the region.

[A]n official in Ahrar al-Sham issued a fiery warning to Free Syrian Army-affiliated rebels in southern Syria, saying they were culpable for the regime's recent advances into the besieged western Damascus suburb of Darayya.

Conclusion: CIA and Pentagon programs had same goal

To sum up, therefore, as with the CIA-program and the delivery of TOWs in the north, the much heralded CIA "support" to the once magnificent Southern Front turned out to be a long way round to the same goal as the Pentagon program: to end the rebel war against Assad and turn them into US proxies against the jihadists only. With results such as the crushing of two large FSA coalitions in the north, the demobilisation of the Southern Front, and the crushing of Darayya, the CIA program was more effectively counterrevolutionary than the Pentagon program, precisely because the latter could mobilise no significant forces (except the YPG) from the start.

So let's lay to rest the myth of the "anti-Assad" CIA program being at odds with the anti-ISIS Pentagon program.

Return to the north: How does Euphrates Shield fit this picture?

Between the crushing of Darayya and the crushing of eastern Aleppo later that year, attention must swing back to the north. Does Turkey's Euphrates Shield operation fall within the "Sawhat" strategy?

Turkey's Erdogan regime had been one of the strongest supporters of the anti-Assad rebellion. While Turkey's anti-Kurdish policy is usually given as a main objective of its intervention in Syria, this explains little. Erdogan had a very strong relationship with Assad until 2011, and Assad could be relied upon to crush Kurdish Rojava once he crushed the rest of the rebellion; and until mid-2015, Erdogan had been involved in a half-hearted "peace process" with the PKK anyway.

But Turkey could not sit by as millions of refugees from Assad's slaughter poured across the border. Overwhelmed, Turkey's government eventually decided that the cause of this massive instability needed to be removed. And a regime pushing a soft-Islamist discourse at home and regionally allied to the Muslim Brotherhood would lose credibility if it ignored Assad's wholesale slaughter of mostly Syrian Sunnis.

Turkey initially put forward its plan to evict ISIS from Azaz to Jarablus in the northern Aleppo border region and set up a "safe zone" in mid-2015. Erdogan's plan was partly to relieve the refugee burden by allowing refugees to settle, safe from air strikes, in northern Syria. However, his alliance with the rebels, who were to patrol the zone, meant that Turkey's intervention threatened to go beyond its border issues, and provide back-up for the rebels war against the regime. Therefore this was rejected by the US, which insisted "there are no U.S. plans for a safe zone, a no-fly zone, an air-exclusionary zone, a humanitarian buffer zone or any other protected zone of any kind".

Yet in mid-2016, when Turkey launched the Euphrates Shield operation in alliance with FSA and Islamist militia to evict ISIS from the Azaz to Jarablus strip, it was supported by both US and even Russian airstrikes, even though its theoretically resolute anti-Assad policy clashed with both US and Russian objectives. [139]

Ironically, it was YPG actions that laid the basis of this US/Russian. In February 2016, the YPG seized a chunk of Arabmajority northern rural Aleppo from the FSA and rebel groups with the direct aid of Russian air cover, including the iconic revolutionary town of Tal Rifaat. This cut rebel-held eastern Aleppo city off from rebel-held northern Aleppo regions around Mare and Azaz and from the Turkish border.

So the Azaz-Mare rebels, squeezed between the Turkish border,

the YPG to the west and south and ISIS-held northeast rural Aleppo, attacked east and seized the border town of al-Rai from ISIS. Turkey meanwhile had been gathering rebels across the border to drive ISIS from Jarablus. Turkey's decision to evict ISIS from this zone thus coincided with the need of the Azaz-Mare rebels to break their isolation.

However, because the YPG was occupying Tal Rifaat, and ISIS held al-Bab, there was no route for the Turkey-FSA offensive to link up with and help defend fellow rebels in Aleppo city from Assad.

Therefore, as it had no way of fighting Assad, this FSA operation against ISIS could gain both US and Russian support, regardless of the rebels' desires; they could support an "unintentional Sawhat".

However, for Erdogan it may have been less unintentional. Following the botched coup attempt in mid-2016, the AKP began moving in a more conventional Turkish nationalist direction, symbolised by its new alliance with the far-right Turkish-chauvinist MHP. This push into northern Syria offered this nationalist consensus an influence in this heavily Turkmen-populated region, an opportunity to block the YPG's threat to "link" its Kurdish cantons of Kobane and Afrin by seizing this non-Kurdish zone in between, and a potential zone to push

Syrian refugees into Halle offering no danger of a clash with Assad.

This new Turkish policy made it easier for Erdogan to reconcile with Putin, and Turkey became a key partner, with Russia and Iran, in a new "peace process" launched in the Kazak capital Astana. For Russia, ensuring the process worked in the regime's favour involved facilitating Assad's victory in Aleppo, meaning the rebels entered the process drastically weakened.

The question then was whether Euphrates Shield weakened the rebels in the face of the decisive Aleppo showdown. One might argue that, given the Azaz-Mare rebels were already cut off from Aleppo, driving back ISIS was the best they could do, and did no harm to the Aleppo front.

However, Euphrates Shield not only involved the Azaz-Mare rebels, but also several thousand rebels Turkey had recruited from across its northwest border, from rebel-held Idlib and southwest rural Aleppo, while "60 percent of Turkmen fighters pulled out of Aleppo [city] in August to take part in

Euphrates Shield". This left east Aleppo drastically weakened when Assad reimposed total siege.

Accusations of Turkish betrayal came from various quarters. Abu Abd, the final leader of rebel forces in Aleppo city claimed that due to "the orders of the sponsor a lot of fighters from Aleppo left it to fight in the northern countryside;" Ahmed Hussein, from Ahrar al-Sham, noted that despite the regime's "worst attack so far ... we have not received any significant support to counter them;" while Abdul Ilah al-Fahed, the opposition National Coalition, claimed that "Aleppo's fall was facilitated in an international agreement".

Possibly some of the rebels who moved north imagined that expelling ISIS from northeast Aleppo could open the front against Assad from the north. This would have required Euphrates Shield seizing al-Bab from ISIS, yet that operation only began once Aleppo was crushed. Whatever the subjective intentions of the rebels or Turkey, the effect was the same: Aleppo was abandoned.

Turkey was also abandoning traditional positions. Turkish leaders now stated their agreement with the US position that

Assad could play a role in the "transitional government", a point on which they had previously differed. During the siege, Turkish leaders repeated the demand made by the US and Russia that the rebels "separate themselves" from JFS and expel it from Aleppo. Yet there were only 8-900 JFS fighters of the rebel force ten times that number in Aleppo, and were only inside the city at all due to their role in breaking Assad's first siege of Aleppo from the outside. In the context of apocalyptic regime and Russia bombing, the demand to expel

Clashes between Syrian rebels and HTS jihadists early 2017

JFS was a demand on the rebels to weaken their own defences.

In this context of Euphrates Shield, the crushing of Aleppo, Astana, the intensified US war on Nusra, and Donald Trump's new pro-Putin US administration, new clashes erupted between different groups of rebels in Idlib and western Aleppo in early 2017. On one side was the new Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) alliance, formed by JFS (which split from al-Qaida in mid-2016) and four small rebel groups. On the other were the majority of rebel groups, including Ahrar al-Sham, which expanded as six moderate Islamist brigades joined it, and the FSA.

These clashes did not last long; the need to avoid all-out conflict, in order to focus on Assad, the Russian and Iranian invaders and ISIS, reasserted itself. At the time, however, analyses of this conflict ranged from the idea that it represented a "new revolution against al-Qaida", to the claim that HTS was leading a struggle against rebel leaderships trying to end the revolution in the service of Turkey, Russia and the US. [133]

As we have seen, the struggle against Nusra/JFS in Idlib both by the FSA/rebels and popular struggle has been ongoing, sharpening with Nusra attacks on demonstrations bearing the flag of the revolution and on FSA Division 13 early in 2016. This legacy lends legitimacy to the "new revolution" discourse.

Complicating this picture, however, was that Turkey's Euphrates Shield operation was allied to a range of rebel groups most of whose Idlib chapters were in conflict with JFS, while Turkey was involved with the Astana process with Russia and Iran. Astana aimed to trap the opposition into accepting a "transitional" role for the Assad regime, while pushing them to turn all their guns against both ISIS and JFS: classic Sawhat.

After the Astana meeting of January 23-24, Russia, Turkey and Iran released a statement that "reiterate[d] their determination to fight jointly against ISIL/DAESH and Al-Nusra [i.e. JFS] and to separate from them armed opposition groups". According to one source, this clause "transformed the positions held by al-Nusra into a cake that the regime forces and opposition factions are trying to annex". [136]

However, while taking part in the discussions, the rebel leadership resisted capitulation at Astana. Stressing they "were not party to this agreement", the FSA's Osama Abu Zaid noted that the "three countries can sign any agreements they want to". [137]

The opposition delegation "refused to talk about confrontation with Jabhat Fateh al-Sham in Syria, before removing the foreign, "Iraqi, Afghan and Iranian" militias from Syria". Likewise, the Syrian Coalition stressed that only "areas controlled by the ISIS extremist group", should be

excluded from the ceasefire, i.e., not areas with JFS presence. [139]

The rebels also continued to reject any role for Assad in a "transitional" regime, and declared their aims at Astana were to achieve basic preconditions for real negotiations, including the release of captives and an end to regime sieges.

However, caught in a bind, the rebels abided by the ceasefire for the sake of the civilian population, despite its terms legitimising regime, Russian and US attacks on JFS-controlled territory; yet the Assad regime refused to abide by any ceasefire, and continued to furiously bomb East Ghouta and Wadi Barada. [142]

Furthermore, some statements from the exile-based Syrian Coalition were less principled than the rebels' positions. For example, in one statement the Coalition called for "the formation of an international coalition to oust all terrorist organizations from Syria". [143]

JFS began its attacks on rebel groups that very week; either JFS believed it had to pre-emptively attack the rebels before they coveted its territory, or could use this clause as a pretext to attack its adversaries.

Astana was in full accord with the US position. Over December 2016 and January 2017 the US stepped up its war against JFS, killing hundreds their cadres, as well as allied fighters from the Nour ed-Din al-Zinki brigade, and plenty of civilians, though it also bombed Ahrar al-Sham, JFS's main opponent.

Along with being the main target of US bombing, JFS was also the only significant armed group that opposed the Turkish intervention and Astana process. Together with a small degree of moderation which has crept into its governance and its discourse since breaking with al-Qaida, this has allowed JFS to project itself as the only true "resistance" to Astana and capitulation.

Trump continues and intensifies the Obama-Kerry legacy

While Trump's Syria policy shows much continuity with the Obama legacy, his open praise for Putin's and Assad's alleged "fight against ISIS" suggested an even greater counterrevolutionary role for the US. [150]

Under Trump, the bombing of JFS in Idlib and western Aleppo reached its most horrific point with the slaughter of some 57 worshippers in a mosque in western Aleppo "- which Trump's Russian friends defended as aimed at "terrorists", while the nature of the "war on ISIS" was highlighted with massacre of dozens of displaced people in a school in Raqqa, sand the mass killing of hundreds of civilians in Mosul. Heanwhile, the US role alongside Assad, Russia and Iran in the latest reconquest of Palmyra was widely reported; and a calculation US bombings in February from CentCom (i.e. the US-led Coalition bombing Syria) shows that while 60 percent were carried out in coordination with the SDF, most of the other 40 percent was in alliance with Assad in Deir Ezzor, Palmyra and Idlib, some 195 of the 548 strikes.

Then in the very days before Assad's chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun, three prominent US leaders announced that the US was "no longer" (sic) focused on removing Assad, whose "longer term status will be decided by the Syrian people", but is for now "a political reality that we have to accept".

Assad mistook this encouragement to mean that even the use of sarin would pass, resulting in the first ever US strike on the regime, on the airfield from where the sarin was launched. After this singular US "credibility" strike on Assad — following 7,899 strikes on anti-Assad targets — all wings of the US leadership scrambled to emphasise that it was a one-off, that "we're not going into Syria", that it was only in response to sarin, that the US had no interest in Assad's continued use of his other weapons of mass destruction, that defeating ISIS remains the priority, that tensions with Russia would "not spiral out of control", " and that there was "no change in US policy". "

National Security Advisor HR McMaster clarified that if there were any "regime change" it would be carried out by Russia, and that the US goal was limited to "a significant change in the nature of the Assad regime and its behavior in particular". [160]

Conclusion

It is not surprising that key revolutionary centres that continually resist the jihadists — Ma'arrat al-

Numan, Atareb, Kafranbel, Darayya and so on — centres where revolutionary councils have been most successful, have been continually targeted by regime airstrikes.

It is also not surprising that the US again cut off its meagre "support" to the rebels when the latest conflict erupted with

JFS, allegedly "to ensure that supplies do not fall into extremist hands". This may seem counterintuitive, given US pressure on the rebels to fight Nusra, but is logical when we remember that the rebels refused to drop the fight against Assad.

These facts indicate that both the US and Assad see the real revolution as the main threat, with "anti-jihadism" a useful propaganda device. But this regime, Russian and US bombing boosts the standing of JFS amid false 'ceasefire' processes. As Felix Legrand points out, "the very inverse dynamic" from that intended has resulted from these ceasefires, as Nusra/JFS "emerged indisputably strengthened from the failure of the agreement between the regime and the non-jihadist opposition". Because Assad continues to slaughter through the 'ceasefires', when the rebels try, for good reason, to respect them, JFS gains points as the "true resistance".

A genuine ceasefire, especially one based on a more positive relationship of forces than at present, would aid the democratic revolutionary forces, because the jihadists thrive on military struggle; every time there is some lull in the fighting, the masses return to the streets with the flag and slogans of the revolution. A revival of the civil movement would provide a chance to overcome the sectarian atmosphere; massive slaughter is not conducive to rebuilding harmony.

At this point, the military side of the struggle appears to be largely lost; the long-term US drive to divert the revolution to the "war on terror" and other forms of sabotage, and the undermining of the struggle by other alleged foreign "friends", alongside the massive Russian and Iranian intervention and the rise of ISIS, have all led to this point.

Of course, there is no military "solution" (and the arguments that some Syrians fear certain rebel formations "taking power" in Damascus are as unreal as fears of Hamas emerging from Gaza to rule in Tel Aviv). However, the military balance on the ground is a decisive factor: it is the difference between a ceasefire leading to a political arrangement in which the opposition can demand the release of political prisoners, the end of sieges, keeping their weapons, providing security and democratic governance to the areas they control and so on, compared to one in which the regime is able to deny these basics: in other words, the difference between a ceasefire that leaves the door open to non-military revolutionary possibilities and one that slams it fully shut.

At the same time, the severe political limitations of the opposition leaderships are also crucial factors; the issue is not merely military. But it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse this question; the point here, however, is that the sabotage of the FSA's military position has also had profoundly negative impacts on the relationship of political forces within the Syrian opposition. It imposes a false choice between total capitulation, dressed up as the only acceptable form of "moderate" politics (so reminiscent of Palestine), and nihilistic rejectionism and jihadism as the as the face of "continuing the struggle".

Such an evolution of the political situation within the anti-Assad camp does not bode well for the revolutionary possibilities of a genuine ceasefire, even one based on a more favourable military balance than at present. However, from afar, we can do little but provide solidarity with both the military and political struggles that do presently continue, and not give up on the revolution while its sparks continue to rage throughout Syria, in some cases to amaze.

Read more on Syria by Michael Karadjis at his Syrian Revolution Commentary and Analysisblog.

Notes

- [1] Yassin al-Haj Saleh, "The Syrian Cause and Anti Imperialism", Al-Jumhuriya, 5 May 2017, http://aljumhuriya.net/en/critical-thought/the-syrian-cause-and-anti-imperialism.
- [2] Michael Karadjis, "Who Has the US Bombed, Bombed For and Bombed Within Syria?", Syrian Revolution Commentary and Analysis, 3 September 2015, https://mkaradjis.wordpress.com/2015/09/03/who-has-the-us-bombed-for-in-syria/.
- [3] Yassin al-Haj Saleh, "The Syrian Cause and Anti Imperialism", Al-Jumhuriya, 5 May 2017, http://aljumhuriya.net/en/critical-thought/the-syrian-cause-and-anti-imperialism.
- [4] Patrick Goodenough, "Syrian President Assad Regarded As a 'Reformer,' Clinton Says", *CNSNews*, 28 March 2011, http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/syrian-president-assad-regarded-reformer-clinton-says.
- [5] "U.S. defense chief: Syria military must remain intact when Assad goes", *Reuters*, 30 July 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-syria-crisis-usa-idUK BRE86T1KF20120730.
- [6] "US sees Assad staying in Syria until March 2017", *The Daily Star*, 6 January 2016, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-06/330448-us-sees-assad-staying-in-syria-until-march-2017.ashx.
- [7] Serene Assir, "Western-backed Syria rebels in disarray as aid halted", *The Daily Star*, 12 December

- 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Dec-12/240840-syrian-rebel-spokesman-decries-us-uk-aid-decision.ashx#ixzz2oVu4wg8J.
- [8] Lauren Williams, "U.S. to tighten mechanisms for FSA aid delivery", *The Daily Star*, 25 November, 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Nov-25/238779-us-to-tighten-mechanisms-for-fsa-aid-delivery.ashx#axzz2lSxxMMwy.
- [9] Nour Malas, "Syrian Rebels Get Missiles; Fears Rise That Portable Antiaircraft Weapons Could Wind Up With Terrorists", *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 October 2012, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000087239639044368410457 8062842929673074.
- [10] John Follain and Tony Allen-Mills, "CIA polices weapons entry to Syria as spooks invade Turkey", *The Australian*, 13 August
- 2012, http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/cia-polices-weapons-entry-to-syria-as-spooks-invade-turkey/story-fnb64oi6-1226448705909.
- [11] Joanna Paraszczuk, "The US-Saudi Conflict over Arms to Insurgents", *EA Worldview*, 23 June 2013, http://eaworldview.com/2013/06/syria-special-the-us-saudi-conflict-over-arms-to-insurgents/.
- [12] Charles Lister, "Russia's Intervention in Syria: Protracting an Already Endless Conflict", *The Huffington Post* 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/russias-intervention-in-s b 8350266.html.
- [13] Caitlin Hu, "Syrian rebels' homemade weapons are getting bigger", *Quartz Media*, 19 March 2015; Marlin Dick, "Syria's 'Western-Backed' Rebels? Not in Weapons", *The Daily Star*, 31 May
- 2014, https://qz.com/365934/syrian-rebels-homemade-weapons-are-getting-bigger/.

- [14] Adam Entous, "Covert CIA Mission to Arm Syrian Rebels Goes Awry", *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 January 2015, https://www.wsj.com/articles/covert-cia-mission-to-arm-syrian-rebels-goes-awry-1422329582.
- [15] Raja Abdulrahim, "Syria rebels, once hopeful of U.S. weapons, lament lack of firepower", *Los Angeles Times*, 7 September
- 2014, http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-syria-hara kat-hazm-20140907-story.html#page=1.
- [16] David Enders, "Islamists, secular rebels battle in Syria over Nusra Front's call for Islamic state", *The Miami Herald*, 26 March 2013, http://www.miamiherald.com/latest-news/article1948577.ht ml.
- [17] Hanna Mourtada and Anne Barnard, "Jihadists and Secular Activists Clash in Syria", *The New York Times*, 26 January 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/world/middleeast/syria-war-developments.html.
- [18] "Raqqa: Women against Al-Nusra front", *Syria Untold*, http://www.syriauntold.com/en/2013/07/raqqa-women-against-al-nusra-front/.
- [19] Rania Abouzeid, "A Black Flag in Raqqa", *The New Yorker*, 2 April 2013, http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/a-black-flag-in-raqqa.
- [20] Joseph Daher, "Syria or elsewhere, there are no pure revolutions, just revolutions", *Syria Freedom Forever*, 7 June 2013, https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/06/07/syriaor-elsewhere-there-are-no-pure-revolutions-just-revolutions/.
- [21] Bassma Kodmani and Felix Legrand, *Empowering the Democratic Resistance in Syria*, (pdf), Arab Reform Initiative,

- Beirut-Paris, September 2013, pp26-27, http://www.arab-reform.net/en/node/593.
- [22] Michael Weiss, "The Southern Front, Part I", Now, 15 August
- 2013, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/the-southern-front.
- [23] Hassan Hassan, "Rebel Vs. Rebel", Foreign Policy, 18 September
- 2013, http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/18/rebel-vs-rebel/.
- [24] Tareq Al-Abed, "The Impending Battle Between FSA, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria", *Al-Monitor*, 31 July 2013, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2013/07/syria-possible-battle-fsa-islamic-state-iraq-syria.html.
- [25] Vera Mironova, Loubna Mrie and Sam Whitt, "Islamists at a Glance: Why Do Syria's Rebel Fighters Join Islamist Groups? (The Reasons May Have Less to Do With Religiosity Than You Might Think)", Political Violence At a Glance, 13 August 2014, http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2014/08/13/islamis ts-at-a-glance-why-do-syrias-rebel-fighters-join-islamist-groups-the-reasons-may-have-less-to-do-with-religiosity-than-you-might-think/.
- [26] Mona Mahmood and Ian Black, "Free Syrian Army rebels defect to Islamist group Jabhat al-Nusra", *The Guardian*, 9 May 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/08/free-syrian-army-rebels-defect-islamist-group.
- [27] Alison Tahmizian Meuse, "Raqqa's FSA Brigades Join Jabhat al-Nusra", *Syria Deeply*, 20 September 2013, https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2013/09/20/raq qas-fsa-brigades-join-jabhat-al-nusra.
- [28] Robin Yassin-Kassab, "The rise and fall of ISIL in Syria", Al Jazeera, 19 January 2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/01/rise-fa

- ll-isil-syria-201411572925799732.html.
- [29] Phil Sands, "America's hidden agenda in Syria's war", *The National*, 9 May 2013, http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/americas-hidden-agenda-in-syrias-war.
- [30] "Hollande urges Syria rebels to retake extremist zones", *The Daily Star*, 23 June 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Jun-23/221321-hollande-urges-syria-rebels-to-retake-extremist-held-zones.ashx#axzz2X5dwF4Mo.
- [31] Roula Khalaf, "The west is losing friends who will matter after Assad", *Financial Times*, 27 April 2013, https://www.ft.com71e492d0-acdd-11e2-9454-00144feabdc0.
- [32] "Syrian protesters slam U.S. blacklisting of jihadist group", *The Daily Star*, 14 December 2012, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Dec-14/198527-syrian-protesters-slam-us-blacklisting-of-jihadist-group.ashx#axzz2F62w5Yns.
- [33] Ammar Cheikh Omar, and Cassandra Vinograd, "Syria, ISIS Have Been 'Ignoring' Each Other on Battlefield, Data Suggests", NBC News, 11 December 2014, http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/syria-isis-have-been-ignoring-each-other-battlefield-data-suggests-n264551.
- [34] Bassma Kodmani and Felix Legrand, *Empowering the Democratic Resistance in Syria*, (pdf), Arab Reform Initiative, Beirut-Paris, September 2013, p27, http://www.arab-reform.net/en/node/593.
- [35] "FSA 'at war' with Al-Qaeda militants following assassination", Now, 12 July 2013, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/nowsyrialatestnews/new-front-opens-in-syria-as-rebels-say-al-qaeda-attack-means-war.

- [36] Bassma Kodmani and Felix Legrand, *Empowering the Democratic Resistance in Syria*, (pdf), Arab Reform Initiative, Beirut-Paris, September 2013, p28, http://www.arab-reform.net/empowering-democratic-resistan ce-syria.
- [37] Michael Weiss, "Islamists Assemble", Now, 25 September 2013, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/islamists -assemble.
- [38] Leila Al-Shami, "Syria: Revolution within the revolution: The battle against ISIS", *Tahrir-ICN*, 7 January 2014, https://tahriricn.wordpress.com/2014/01/07/syria-the-battle-against-isis/.
- [39] Joseph Daher, "Protests against ISIS January 3 2014", Syrian Freedom Forever, 3 January 2014, http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2014/01/03/prot ests-against-isis-january-3-2014/.
- [40] Joanna Paraszczuk, "ISIS Are Alien Invaders Say Kafranbel Activists", *EA WorldView*, 4 January 2014, http://eaworldview.com/2014/01/syria-isis-alien-invaders-say-kafranbel-activists/.
- [41] Leila Al-Shami, "Syria: Revolution within the revolution: The battle against ISIS", *Tahrir-ICN*, 7 January, https://tahriricn.wordpress.com/2014/01/07/syria-the-battle-against-isis/.
- [42] Kyle Orton, "The Assad Regime's Collusion With ISIS and al-Qaeda: Assessing The Evidence", 24 March 2014, https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2014/03/24/assessing -the-evidence-of-collusion-between-the-assad-regime-and-the-wahhabi-jihadists-part-1/.
- [43] Sam Dagher and Maria Abi-Habibin, "Fighting Among Rebels Boosts Syrian Regime", *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 January 2014, https://www.wsj.com/articles/fighting-among-rebels-boost

- s-syrian-regime-1389651944?mg=reno64wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB100014240527 02303819704579318732940300704.html&tesla=y.
- [44] Ben Hubbard, "Syrian Rebels Deal Qaeda-Linked Group a Reversal", *The New York Times*, 8 January 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/09/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-said-to-oust-qaeda-linked-group-from-its-aleppoheadquarters.html?_r=0.
- [45] Spencer Ackerman, "Al-Qaida faction in Syria contemplating US attack, intelligence officials warn", The Guardian, 30 January 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/29/al-qaida-syria-nusra-front-intelligence-threat.
- [46] "ISIS, regime close in on Deir e-Zor rebels", *Syria Direct*, 18 January 2014, http://syriadirect.org/news/isis-regime-close-in-on-deir-e-zor-rebels/.
- [47] US Embassy o f Syria, December 5 2014, https://twitter.com/usembassysyria/status/54097270474122 0352; Leith Fadel, "Nowhere to Retreat for ISIS Militants in Deir Ezzor; Syrian Army Intensifies Their Attacks in the West", Al-Masdar News, 26 September 2014, https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/nowhere-retreat-isi s-militants-deir-ezzor-syrian-army-intensifies-attacks-west/.
- [48] Arabi Souri, "Anti tanks technology fsa hands", Syria
 News, 18 April
 2014, http://www.syrianews.cc/anti-tanks-technolgy-fsa-hands/.
- [49] John Follain and Tony Allen-Mills, "CIA polices weapons entry to Syria as spooks invade Turkey", 13 August 2012, *The Australian*, http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/cia-polices-weapons-entry-to-syria-as-spooks-invade-turkey/story-fnb64oi6-1226448705909

- [50] Charles Lister, "Russia's Intervention in Syria: Protracting an Already Endless Conflict", *The Huffington Post*, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/russias-intervention-in-s_b_8350266.html?ir=Australia.
- [51] David Axe, "How to Take Out 1,800 Tanks in Two Years", War is Boring, 18 November 2013, https://medium.com/war-is-boring/how-to-take-out-1-800-t anks-in-two-years-74ecd413cb93.
- [52] Michael Weiss and Pierre Vaux, "Are U.S. Missiles Taking Out High-Ranking Russian Military Officials?", *Daily Beast*, 2 May
- 2016, http://www.thedailybeast.com/are-us-missiles-taking-out-high-ranking-russian-military-officials.
- [53] Scott Lucas, "Syria: The 9 Insurgent Groups with US-Made TOW Anti-Tank Missiles", *EA Worldview*, 9 May 2014, http://eaworldview.com/2014/05/syria-9-insurgent-groups-us-made-tow-anti-tank-missiles/.
- [54] Raja Abdulrahim, "Syria rebels, once hopeful of U.S. weapons, lament lack of firepower", *Los Angeles Times*, 7 September
- 2014, http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-syria-harakat-hazm-20140907-story.html#page=1.
- [55] "FSA North's New Vids Show US TOWs Still Arriving", 17 December
- 2014, https://notgeorgesabra.tumblr.com/post/105371128803/fsa-norths-new-vids-show-us-tows-still-arriving.
- [56] Josh Rogin, "Syrian Rebels See U.S. Abandoning Them", 13 December
- 2014, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2014-12-12/syria n-rebels-see-us-abandoning-them.
- [57] Ari Soffer, "'Moderate' Rebel Leader Says 'Al Qaeda is Not Our Problem'", Arutz Sheva, 2 April

- 2014, http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/179200.
- [58] "Syria's Unending Rebel Conflict: Wolves of the Valley", Vice News, 25 April 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=9Cb30URdl3g.
- [59] "Hazm Movement and Syrian Revolutionary Front: Suspending All Forms of Cooperation with Nusra", *Democratic Revolution Syrian*Style,

 21

 July

 2014, https://notgeorgesabra.wordpress.com/2014/07/22/hazm-mov ement-and-syrian-revolutionary-front-suspending-all-forms-of-cooperation-with-nusra/.
- [60] "After ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra announces Islamic Emirate in Syria", Ara News, 22 July 2014, http://aranews.net/2014/07/isil-jabhat-al-nusra-announce s-second-islamic-emirate-syria/.
- [61] Raja Abdulrahim, "Syria rebels, once hopeful of U.S. weapons, lament lack of firepower", *Los Angeles Times,* 7 September
- 2014, http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-syria-hara kat-hazm-20140907-story.html#page=1.
- [62] Felix Legrand, Foreign Backers and the Marginalization of the Free Syrian Army, Arab Reform Initiative, 13 November 2016, http://www.arab-reform.net/en/node/1007.
- [63] Michael Karadjis, "Who Has the US Bombed, Bombed For and Bombed Within Syria?", Syrian Revolution Commentary and Analysis,

 3 September 2015, https://mkaradjis.wordpress.com/2015/09/03/who-has-the-us-bombed-for-in-syria/.
- [64] "Syria Direct: News Update", *Syria Direct*, 24 September 2014, http://syriadirect.org/news/syria-direct-news-update-9-2 4-14/.

- [65] Jack Khoury, "Report: U.S. Providing Assad Regime With anti-Islamic State Intelligence", *Haaretz*, 15 September 2014, http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-1.61589 2.
- [66] Kellie Strom, "Raqqa: to appease Iran, Obama gives Assad's air force a free pass for slaughter", Left Foot Forward,

 1 December 2014, http://leftfootforward.org/2014/12/raqqa-to-appease-iran-obama-gives-assads-air-force-a-free-pass-for-slaughter/.
- [67] Harakat Hazm statement: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByPSsxMIYAQy2Wt.jpg.
- [68] https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByUiHcTIMAAmTDF.jpg.
- [69] Michael Karadjis, "Syrian rebels overwhelmingly condemn US bombing as an attack on revolution", *Syrian Revolution Commentary* and *Analysis*, 25 September 2014, https://mkaradjis.wordpress.com/2014/09/25/syrian-rebels overwhelmingly condemn us bombing as an attack on revolution/.
- [70] Josh Rogin, "No Syrian Rebels Allowed at ISIS War Conference", Daily Beast, 14 October 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/no-syrian-rebels-allowed-at-isis-war-conference.
- [71] Hannah Allam, "U.S. won't work with current Syrian rebel groups to battle Islamic State", *The News & Observer*, 15 October
- 2014, http://www.newsobserver.com/news/nation-world/world/article10097267.html.
- [72] Josh Rogin, "No Syrian Rebels Allowed at ISIS War Conference", Daily Beast, 14 October 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/no-syrian-rebels-allowed-at-isis-war-conference.

- [73] Josh Rogin, "Exclusive: America's Allies Almost Bombed in Syrian Airstrikes", *Daily Beast*, 30 September 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/exclusive-americas-allies-a lmost-bombed-in-syrian-airstrikes.
- [74] Josh Rogin, "Syrian Rebels See U.S. Abandoning Them", 13 December
- 2014, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2014-12-12/syria n-rebels-see-us-abandoning-them.
- [75] https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByTcYjYCcAEeOnA.jpg:large; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww2LT-Wcpcc&feature=youtu.be; https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ByTtNQkIYA ETWtU.jpg:large.
- [76] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcCu6uw4G40&feature=youtu.be; https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=DBpCqoisCp0.
- [77] Josh Rogin, "Syrian Rebels See U.S. Abandoning Them", 13 December
- 2014, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2014-12-12/syria n-rebels-see-us-abandoning-them.
- [78] Faysal Itani, "What Went Wrong in Idlib?", Atlantic
 Council,

 4 November
- 2014, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/what-went-wrong-in-
- idlib?utm_content=buffer5ecba&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twi
 tter.com&utm_campaign=buffer#.VFjjW_oeG2c.twitter.
- [79] Aron Lund, "'Our Enemy Is Bashar al-Assad': An Interview With Ahrar al-Sham's Mohammed Talal Bazerbashi", *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 12 November 2014, http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/57201?lang=en.
- [80] https://twitter.com/archicivilians/status/546782618503499
 776; Anne Barnard, "As Syria's Revolution Sputters, a Chaotic
 Stalemate", New York Times, 27 December

- 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/28/world/as-syrias-revolution-sputters-a-chaotic-stalemate.html?smid=tw-share& r=3.
- [81] "Nusra withdraws from Turkey border", *Now*, 10 August 2015, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/565709-nusra-withdraws-from-turkey-border.
- [82] Joseph Daher, "Demonstrations in al-Atareb, Aleppo countryside, against attempts by jihadist group of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham to take over the oven of the town", *Syria Freedom Forever*, 3 February 2017, https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2017/02/03/dem onstrations-in-al-atareb-aleppo-countryside-against-attempts-by-jihadist-group-of-jabhat-fateh-al-sham-to-take-over-the-oven-of-the-town-مظاهرة-في/.
- [83] Scott Lucas, "Why Southern Rebels Distanced Themselves from Jabhat al-Nusra", *EA Worldview*, 16 April 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/04/syria-interview-why-south ern-rebels-distanced-themselves-from-jabhat-al-nusra/.
- [84] Josh Rogin, "No Syrian Rebels Allowed at ISIS War Conference", Daily Beast, 14 October 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/no-syrian-rebels-allowed-at-isis-war-conference.
- [85] Scott Lucas, "Did the US Abandon Its 54 Trained Rebels?", *EA Worldview*, 31 July 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/07/syria-daily-did-the-us-ab andon-its-54-trained-rebels/.
- [86] "U.S.-led air strikes kill 8 people, including 4 Nusra Front fighters, in Idlib", Zaman Al Wasl, 29 July 2015, https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/10948.html?utm_campaign=s hareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork.
- [87] https://justpaste.it/mpnr.
- [88] https://twitter.com/AbuJamajem/status/617780767540834308.

- [89] Scott Lucas, "Did the US Abandon Its 54 Trained Rebels?", *EA Worldview*, 31 July 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/07/syria-daily-did-the-us-ab andon-its-54-trained-rebels/.
- [90] Sam Heller, "Syria's Newest Rebel Army Has Its Sights on the Islamic State", *Vice News*, 1 December 2015, https://news.vice.com/article/syrias-newest-rebel-army-has-its-sights-on-the-islamic-state.
- [91] Scott Lucas, "Assad's Bombs Aid Islamic State Offensive in Aleppo Province", *EA Worldview*, 2 June 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/06/syria-daily-assads-bombs-aid-islamic-state-offensive-in-aleppo-province/.
- [92] Roy Gutman and Mousab Alhamadee, "Rebels call for U.S. airstrikes as Islamic State advances near Aleppo", *Miami Herald*, 1 June 2015, http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/article22838910.html#storylink=cpy.
- [93] Michael Weiss, "Exclusive: Syrian Rebels Backing Out of U.S. Fight Vs. ISIS", *Daily Beast*, 31 May 2015, http://www.thedailybeast.com/exclusive-syrian-rebels-backing-out-of-us-fight-vs-isis.
- [94] Michael Weiss, "They've Got U.S. Guns. Can They Stop ISIS?" Daily Beast, 22 June 2016, http://www.thedailybeast.com/theyve-got-us-guns-can-they-stop-isis.
- [95] Scott Lucas, "US Puts More Troops Into North", EA
 Worldview, 10 March
 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/03/syria-daily-us-puts-moretroops-into-north/.
- [96] "US Sets up New Military Base in Syrian Kurdistan", Basnews, 22 January 2017, http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/middle-east/325

- [97] Scott Lucas, "With Russian & US Help, Regime Takes Palmyra from ISIS", *EA Worldview*, 3 March 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/03/syria-daily-regime-with-russian-us-help-retakes-palmyra-from-isis/.
- [98] The Free Syrian Army Southern Front, "Statement No. 4: The Transition Phase", RFS Media Office, 10 December 2014, https://rfsmediaoffice.com/en/2014/12/15/the-free-syrian-army-southern-front-transitional-phase/.
- [99] "FSA moves against Nusra in south Syria", *Now*, 15 April 2015, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/565114-fsa-moves -against-nusra-in-south-syria.
- [100] Scott Lucas, "Why Southern Rebels Distanced Themselves from Jabhat al-Nusra", *EA Worldview*, 16 April 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/04/syria-interview-why-south ern-rebels-distanced-themselves-from-jabhat-al-nusra/.
- [101] Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Assad's forces capture strategic town in southern Syria", *Reuters*, 7 May 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-town-idUS BRE94703H20130508.
- [102] Joanna Paraszczuk, "The US-Saudi Conflict over Arms to Insurgents", *EA Worldview*, 23 June 2013, http://eaworldview.com/2013/06/syria-special-the-us-saudi-conflict-over-arms-to-insurgents/.
- [103] Julian Borger and Nick Hopkins, "West training Syrian rebels in Jordan", *The Guardian*, 9 March 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/08/west-training-syrian-rebels-jordan.
- [104] Scott Lucas, "Report: US Restricting Rebel Offensive in Daraa City", *EA Worldview*, 23 August 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/08/syria-daily-regime-carrie

- s-out-another-mass-killing-in-douma/#daraa.
- [105] Mohanad Mezghiche, "Why is Operation Southern Storm failing?"

 11

 July
 2015, http://syria4rev.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/why-is-operation-southern-storm-failing.html.
- [106] Scott Lucas, "Joint Operations Room in Jordan Halted Rebel Assault on Key Regime Airbase", *EA Worldview*, 17 June 2015, http://eaworldview.com/2015/06/syria-feature-joint-operations-room-in-jordan-halted-rebel-assault-on-key-regime-airbase/.
- [107] @FreeDaraal1 "Unconfirmed We have Been Warned in the south by USA not to advance to Damascus otherwise they will attack FSA", July 2015, http://imgur.com/a/oTwnu.
- [108] "Daraa rebels ordered to stop fighting Syria regime: report", Now, 22 January 2016, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/566514-daraa-rebels-ordered-to-stop-fighting-syria-regime-report.
- [109] Michael Weiss and Pierre Vaux, "Are U.S. Missiles Taking Out High-Ranking Russian Military Officials?", Daily Beast, 2 May
- 2016, http://www.thedailybeast.com/are-us-missiles-taking-out-high-ranking-russian-military-officials.
- [110] Osama Al Sharif, "Has Jordan Acquiesced to Assad Regime Offensive in Southern Syria?" *Middle East Institute*, 12 January
- 2016, http://www.mei.eduarticle/has-jordan-acquiesced-assad-regime-offensive-southern-syria.
- [111] Linah Alsaafin, "Syria talks face mounting pressure as rebels refuse to negotiate with Assad", *Middle East Eye*, 18 December
- 2015, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/jordan-presents-list-1 60-terrorist-groups-syria-international-council-2106399989.

- [112] "Daraa rebels ordered to stop fighting Syria regime: report", Now, 22 January 2016, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/566514-daraa-rebels-ordered-to-stop-fighting-syria-regime-report.
- [113] Phil Sands and Suha Maayeh, "Far from Raqqa and Fallujah, Syria rebels open new front against ISIL in the south", The National, 28 May 2016, http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/far-from-raq qa-and-fallujah-syria-rebels-open-new-front-against-isil-in-the-south#full.
- [114] Scott Lucas, "Claim US-Led Operations Center Sets Conditions on Support for Rebels", *EA Worldview*, 2 May 2016, http://eaworldview.com/2016/05/syria-feature-us-operations-center-conditions-support-rebels/.
- [115] "748 TNT barrels on Daraya on June 2016", Yallasouriya, 2 July, 2016, https://yallasouriya.wordpress.com/2016/07/01/syria-748-tnt-barrels-on-daraya-on-june-2016/.
- [116] https://pbs.twimg.com/media/ClQ0WUnWMAApGrz.jpg.
- [117] Albin Szakola, "South Syria rebels ordered to not attack regime-held town: report", *Now*, 17 August 2016, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/567284-south-syria-rebels-ordered-to-not-attack-regime-held-town-report.
- [119] Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "Airstrikes by Russia Buttress Turkey in Battle vs. ISIS", New York Times, 8 January
- 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/08/us/politics/russia-turkey-syria-airstrikes-isis.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0.

- [120] https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CqEul-NVMAAg6E6.jpg.
- [121] "Syria: Rebels, Kurds 'racing' to retake IS-held border town", *The New Arab*, 22 August 2016, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2016/8/22/syria-rebels-kurds-racing-to-retake-is-held-border-town.
- [122] "Turkey to build refugee cities on security zone vacated by Daesh", Yeni Şafak, 26 August 2016, http://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/turkey-to-build-refugee -cities-on-security-zone-vacated-by-daesh-2517694.
- [123] Humevra Pamuk and Nick Tattersall, "As Syrian rebels squeezed in Aleppo, Turkish backers' eyes are elsewhere", *Reuters*, 29 November 2016, http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUKKBN130294.
- [124] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKFzwR5w1FE.
- [125] Haid Haid, "Did Turkey abandon Aleppo to fight Syrian Kurds?" Now, 4 October 2016, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/567401-did-turkey-abandon-aleppo-to-fight-the-syrian-kurds.
- [126] "Opposition secretary says Aleppo collapse was 'regional deal': Interview" Zaman Al Wasl, 4 January 2017, https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/21880.html.
- [127] "'No longer realistic': Turkey admits U-turn on policy to rid Syria of Assad", *Middle East Eye*, 20 January 2017, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-confirms-u-turn-policy-rid-syria-assad-165657783.
- [128] Patrick Wintour, "Aleppo could be 'bombed into smithereens', warns John Kerry", *The Guardian*, 1 November 2016,
- , https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/31/aleppo-syria-j
 ohn-kerry-russia-diplomacy.

- [129] "Erdoğan, Putin agree to clear Aleppo of Nusra" *Hurriyet Daily* News, 13 June 2017, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-putin-agree-to-clear-aleppo-of-nusra.aspx?pageID=238&nid=105125.
- [130] Scott Lucas, "Rebel Battle v. Jihadists of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham in Northwest", *EA Worldview*, 24 January 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/01/syria-developing-rebels-fighting-v-jihadists-of-jabhat-fatah-al-sham-in-northwest/.
- [131] Alex MacDonald, "Analysis: Why Fateh al-Sham is lashing out at Syrian rebels", *Middle East Eye*, 26 January 2017, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/why-jabhat-fateh-al-sham-fighting-other-rebels-syria-1902636393.
- [132] Leila Alwan, "Anti-Nusra Front demo in Idlib 'start of new revolution'", *Al Arabiya*, 4 February 2017 https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2017/02/04/Activist-says-anti-Nusra-Front-demo-in-Idlib-beginning-of-new-revolution-.html.
- [133] https://justpaste.it/JFS_Balance.
- [134] Sadik Abdul-Rahman, "Rebel Idlib's 100 Days of Protest Against Al Qaeda", *Al-Jumhuriyah*, 16 August 2016, accessed at *isqatannizam* blog, https://isqatannizam.wordpress.com/2016/08/16/rebel-idlibs-100-days-of-protest-against-al-qaeda/.
- [135] "Joint Statement by Iran, Russia, Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria in Astana, January 23-24, 2017", Al Jazeera, 25 January 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/astana-joint-state ment-iran-russia-turkey-full-170124133951063.html.
- [136] Paula Astih and Nazeer Rida, "Nusra Confronts Syrian Factions in Response to 'Secret' Astana Clause", Asharq Al Awsat,

 25

 January 2017, https://english.aawsat.com/paula-astih-and-nazeer-rida/news-middle-east/nusra-confronts-syrian-factions-response-

secret-astana-clause.

- [137] Scott Lucas, "Russia-Turkey-Iran Pledge Ceasefire, But Assad Regime Says No", *EA Worldview*, 25 January 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/01/syria-daily-russia-turkey-iran-pledge-ceasefire-assad-regime-no/.
- [138] "The Opposition Delegation in Astana refuses to talk about "JFS" till Iran-backed militias Get out of #Syria", *Eldorar Alshamia*, 23 January 2017, http://en.eldorar.com/node/4536.
- [139] National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, "Nirabiya: We Reject Iran as Guarantor of Ceasefire Agreement",

 23

 January 2017, http://en.etilaf.org/all-news/news/nirabiya-we-reject-iran-as-guarantor-of-ceasefire-agreement.html.
- [140] "Jaysh Al-Mujahideen: We will not accept of al-Assad in a transitional phase", *Eldorar Alshamia*, 10 January, 2017, http://en.eldorar.com/node/4375.
- [141] Adham Kako, "Syrian opposition negotiator speaks to Anadolu Agency", Anadolu Agency, 20 January 2017, http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syrian-opposition-negotiator-speaks-to-anadolu-agency/731380.
- [142] Scott Lucas, "Russia-Turkey-Iran Pledge Ceasefire, But Assad Regime Says No", *EA Worldview*, 25 January 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/01/syria-daily-russia-turkey-iran-pledge-ceasefire-assad-regime-no/.
- [143] National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, "We Call on our People to Denounce Terror and Support Establishment of One Legitimate Military Front", 27 January 2017, http://en.etilaf.org/press/we-call-on-our-people-to-deno unce-terror-and-support-establishment-of-one-legitimate-military-front.html.

- [144] "Pentagon: We killed 250 members of al-Qaeda in Idlib since the beginning of this year", *Eldorar Alshamia*, 21 January 2017, http://en.eldorar.com/node/4506.
- [145] Scott Lucas, "US Claims Airstrike Killed 100+ Jihadists and Rebels", *EA Worldview*, 21 January 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/01/syria-daily-us-claims-air strike-killed-100-jihadists-and-rebels/.
- [146] Scott Lucas, "Report: US-Led Airstrike Kills Ahrar al-Sham Commander", *EA Worldview*5 February 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/02/syria-daily-the-race-to-capture-al-bab-from-islamic-state/#almasri.
- [147] Alex MacDonald, "Former al-Qaeda affiliate urges Syrian rebels to oppose Turkish invasion", *Middle East Eye*, 23 September
- 2016, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/former-al-qaeda-affili ate-calls-opposition-oppose-turkish-invasion-324667843.
- [148] Ammar Shawki and Roy Gutman, "A Letter From Rebel Controlled Idlib, Syria", *The Nation*, 1 December 2016, https://www.thenation.com/article/letter-from-rebel-cont rolled-idlib-syria/.
- [149] Murtaza Hussain, "Militant Leader Talks About Break With Al Qaeda and Possible Syrian Rebel Merger", *The Intercept*, 24 August
- 2016, https://theintercept.com/2016/08/23/militant-leader-talks-about-break-with-al-qaeda-and-possible-syrian-rebel-merger/.
- [150] Bethan McKernan, "Donald Trump signifies he will end US support for Syrian rebels despite their pleas to him for help", The Independent, 12 November 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/us-president-elect-donald-trump-support-assad-putin-syria-remove-rebel-backing-a7413346.html.
- [151] Christiaan Triebert, "Confirmed: US Responsible for

- Aleppo Mosque Bombing", *Bellingcat*, 16 March 2017, https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2017/03/16/us-missile-remains-reportedly-recovered-from-site-of-aleppo-mosque-bombing/.
- [152] "Russian Foreign Ministry No doubt US airstrikes in Syrian village targeted terrorists", *Tass*, 17 March 2017, http://tass.com/politics/936193.
- [153] "Dozens dead in US-led north Syria airstrike as coalition meets", *Daily Star*, 22 March 2017, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2017/Mar-22/398618-33-dead-in-us-led-airstrike-on-north-syria-activists.ashx.
- [154] Alessandro Accorsi, "US coalition 'kills hundreds' of Mosul civilians in one week: Report", *Middle East Eye*, 8 March 2017, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-led-coalition-alrea dy-killed-hundreds-civilians-west-mosul-one-week-march-1271386570.
- [155] Scott Lucas, "With Russia & US Help, Regime Takes Palmyra from ISIS", *EA Worldview*, 3 March 2017, http://eaworldview.com/2017/03/syria-daily-regime-with-russian-us-help-retakes-palmyra-from-isis/.
- [156] https://pbs.twimg.com/media/C5619fCXQAEPKTn.jpg.
- [157] Michael Gordon, "White House Accepts 'Political Reality' of Assad's Grip on Power in Syria", *The New York Times*, 31 March
- 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/us/politics/trump-bas har-assad-syria.html; Michelle Nichols, "U.S. priority on Syria no longer focused on 'getting Assad out': Haley", 30 March 2017, http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1712QL; "Tillerson says Assad's fate up to Syrian people", *Daily Mail*, 31
- 2017, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4364592/Tillerson-says-Assads-long-term-status-Syrian-people.html.

- [158] Varghese K. George, "Mattis No danger of conflict with Russia; Defeating ISIS still main priority", *The Hindu*, April 12
- 2017, http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/no-danger-of-conflict-with-russia-mattis/article17957314.ece.
- [159] Brooke Seipel, "Tillerson: Strikes don't signal change in military action policy in Syria", *The Hill* blog, 6 April 2017, http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/327741-tillerson-strikes-dont-mean-weve-changed-our-policy-posture-on.
- [160] Colin Wilhelm, "McMaster: U.S. eager for regime change in Syria", 9 April 2017, http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/hr-mcmaster-syria-regime-change-237038.
- [161] Sadik Abdul-Rahman, "Rebel Idlib's 100 Days of Protest Against Al Qaeda", *Al-Jumhuriyah*, 16 August 2016, accessed at *isqatannizam* blog, https://isqatannizam.wordpress.com/2016/08/16/rebel-idlibs-100-days-of-protest-against-al-qaeda/
- [162] Joseph Daher, "Demonstrations in al-Atareb, Aleppo countryside, against attempts by jihadist group of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham to take over the oven of the town", *Syria Freedom Forever*, 3 February 2017, https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2017/02/03/dem onstrations-in-al-atareb-aleppo-countryside-against-attempts-by-jihadist-group-of-jabhat-fateh-al-sham-to-take-over-the-oven-of-the-town-مظاهرة-في/
- [163] Liz Sly and Zakaria Zakaria, "'Al-Qaeda is eating us': Syrian rebels are losing out to extremists", Washington Post, 23 February 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-is-eating-us-syrian-rebels-are-losing-out-to-extremists/2017/02/23/f9c6d1d4-f885-11e6-aale-5f735ee31334_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-more-top-

stories_syriarebels-705pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.137d0bd80880.

[164] Felix Legrand, "The strategy of Jabhat Al-Nusra / Jabhat Fath Al-Sham in regarding the truces in Syria", 2 October 2016, *Noria*, http://www.noria-research.com/strategy-regarding-truces-in-syria/.

Originally posted at Marxist Left Review.



This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Licence.

Liberal Red-Baiting



The Sanders campaign has certainly sharpened the contradictions, hasn't it? It's been very clarifying to see Hillary Clinton and her surrogates running against single-payer and free college, with intellectual cover coming from Paul Krugman and Vox. Expectations, having been systematically beaten down for 35 years, must be beaten down further, whether it's Hillary saying that to go to college one needs some "skin in the game," or Rep. John Lewis reminding us that nothing is free in America. A challenge from the left has forced centrist Democrats to reveal themselves as proud capitalist tools.

Latest to step up is Paul Starr, co-founder of *The American Prospect*. Normally the dull embodiment of tepid liberalism, Starr has unleashed a redbaiting philippic— a frothing one, even, by his usual standards—aimed at Bernie Sanders. Sanders is no liberal, Starr reveals—he's a socialist. He may call himself a democratic socialist to assure us that he's no Bolshevik—Starr actually says this—but that doesn't stop Starr from stoking fears of state ownership and central planning. Thankfully the word "gulag" doesn't appear, but that was probably an oversight.

Starr does have one substantial point—Sanders' tax proposals wouldn't be up to financing a Scandinavian-style welfare state. Taxing the rich more could raise substantial revenue, but nowhere near enough. And part of the point of steepening the progressivity of the tax system is hindering great fortunes from developing and being passed on. A good part of

the reason that CEO incomes have gone up so much since the early 1980s is that taxes on them have gone down; stiffen the tax on them, and there's far less incentive to pay überbosses so much in the first place. It's like taxing tobacco or carbon—you can raise revenue by doing it, but you're also trying to make the toxic things go away.

But, really, you don't need a Swedish or Danish tax structure to pay for free college tuition and single-payer health care, which are highly achievable first steps of a Sanderista political revolution. As I wrote back in 2010:

It would not be hard at all to make higher education completely free in the USA. It accounts for not quite 2% of GDP. The personal share, about 1% of GDP, is a third of the income of the richest 10,000 households in the U.S., or three months of Pentagon spending. It's less than four months of what we waste on administrative costs by not having a single-payer health care finance system. But introduce such a proposal into an election campaign and you would be regarded as suicidally insane.

That last sentence turned out to be not a bad prophecy.

Starr really loses contact with earth when he writes about single-payer.* In one sense, this is surprising, since he wrote a fat book on the history of medicine in America, and, although it was 34 years ago, is presumably still familiar with the territory. But the pressures of a political campaign often dislodge an apologist's higher cerebral functions. That's the only plausible explanation for why he wrote this:

Sanders' single-payer health plan shows the same indifference to real-world consequences. The plan calls for eliminating all patient cost sharing and promises to cover the full range of services, including long-term care. With health care running at 17.5 percent of gross

domestic product, Sanders' plan would sweep a huge share of economic activity into the federal government and invite that share to grow. Another way of looking at single payer is that it would make Washington the sole checkpoint, removing the incentive for anyone else-patients, providers, employers or state governments-even to monitor, much less hold back, excessive costs. It would leave no alternative except federal management of the health sector.

Where to start with this? Why, as a matter of principle, should patients "share costs"? They're already paying for the services with their tax dollars. According to Hillary's "skin-in-the-game" theory, forcing patients to pay up will reduce demand, thereby keeping spending down, but this is a brutal form of cost-control. Co-pays often force people to forego needed care, resulting in higher costs down the road, and more importantly, needless suffering. (See this Gallup poll, and references 6, 7, and 8 here.)

A far more effective form of cost control is having the government use its buying power to demand lower prices from hospitals and drug companies. That's the way it works in civilized countries, though that fact looks to have passed Starr by, probably because he was too busy trying to make precisely the opposite, and wrong, argument: single-payer would "invite that share to grow" by "removing the incentive for anyone else…even to monitor, much less hold back, excessive costs." Just what is wrong with "federal management of the health sector"? Medicare does it for the Over-65 portion of the population; it works very well and is enormously popular.

Starr cites the 17.5% of GDP we devote to health care without putting that figure into any reasonable context—the sort of move that is supposed to provoke a "gee-whiz" moment of surrender. There's an interesting graph based on data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),

a Paris-based quasi-official think tank for the world's rich countries. It shows the share of GDP devoted to health care for a subset of the OECD's 34 members, divided into public and private. (Put them together and you get the total.)

There are several striking features in this graph:

- Most striking of all is how far ahead of the pack the U.S. is: we spend 16.4% of GDP on health care, compared to a 10.1% average for all the other countries shown. (That's the dotted vertical line on the right.) And recall that all those other countries cover almost their entire populations, unlike the U.S., where a tenth of the population is uninsured (and many of the insured have terrible coverage), with little change since the drop when Obamacare first took effect. (Gallup has 12% of the population uninsured, slightly higher than the Census Bureau, though with a similar trajectory of initial decline followed by flatlining.)
- Another striking, though less obvious, thing is that U.S. public spending alone, 7.9% of GDP, is just 0.1 point below the average of 8.0%. In other words, the government already spends as much as many other countries do while accomplishing far less. That 7.9% is also not much less than the entire health bill for Italy, Australia, and Britain, public and private combined.
- Yet another striking thing is the outlandishly large share of private spending on health care: 8.5% of GDP, more than four times the average of the other countries and almost three times Canada's private share.
- Does all that spending produce better outcomes? Seems not: our life expectancy, 78.8 years, is three years shorter than the average of all the other countries.

So just about everything in Starr's quoted mini-lecture about the real world is at odds with the real world. There's a perverse form of American exceptionalism circulating around the Clinton camp: just because things work in other countries doesn't mean they can work here. As Hillary herself put it, "We are not Denmark. I love Denmark, but we are the United States of America." True enough, but that has no bearing on why single-payer couldn't work here. The only obstacles are political—elites, which include Hillary and Starr, don't want it.

The rest of Starr's piece is a highly unsubtle rant about socialism and how bad it is, even though Sanders isn't really a socialist. That sort of thing may resonate with people who grew up during the Cold War—though not with all of us!—but it seems not to move the younger portion of the population, many of whom seem charmed by socialism. It's not like capitalism has been treating them all that well. But Starr doesn't want to hear about that.

Starr also finds the style of Sanders' politics in bad taste: "Sanders is also doing what populists on both sides of the political spectrum do so well: the mobilization of resentment. The attacks on billionaires and Wall Street are a way of eliciting a roar of approval from angry audiences without necessarily having good solutions for the problems that caused that anger in the first place."

But people have a lot to resent—why shouldn't it be mobilized politically? And free tuition and single-payer are pretty good solutions for some of those problems. Starr just doesn't like them. Best leave the tuition issue to some vague, incomprehensible scheme (that apparently involves lots of work—study and online learning) and health care to a lightly regulated and generously subsidized insurance industry.

Establishment Democrats haven't merely gone post-hope—they've declared war on it.

*Single-payer is just one way of organizing a public health insurance system. Under such a model, providers remain private and the government pays the bills. That is, only the insurance function is socialized. This is how it works in Canada. Under Britain's National Health Service, everything is socialized: doctors are public employees and hospitals are government-owned. Sanders is proposing the former, even though the British system is cheaper to run than the Canadian, as the graph shows.

LBO News by Doug Henwood is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.

Doug Henwood edits the Left Business Observer, a newsletter he founded in 1986, He also hosts Behind the News, a weekly radio show covering economics and politics on KPFA, Berkeley, that is rebroadcast on several other stations across the U.S., and has a worldwide audience via its Internet archive. His book Wall Street is now available for free download here.

Older Archives

NewPolitics

About Contact Us

The Third Camp, Socialism From Below, and the First Principle of Revolutionary Socialism By: Daniel Randall Winter 2018 (New Politics Vol. XVI No. 4, Whole Number 64)

Current Issue

Back Issues

f y 🖂 "The socialists consider it their principal, perhaps even their only, duty to promote the growth of this consciousness among the proletariat, which for short they call its class consciousness. The whole success of the socialist movement is measured for them in terms of the growth in class consciousness of the proletariat. Everything that helps this growth they see as useful to their cause; everything that slows it down as harmful."

—George Plekhanov An old Jewish story tells of a student who visited the great rabbis of the day and asked each to tell him the entire Torah while standing on one leg. All dismissed him, insisting the task was impossible, except for Rabbi Hillel, who said, "Do not do unto others that which is hateful to you.' That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now, go and study." With all the necessary qualifications about the differences between a religious text and a necessarily materialist and critical politics, might it be possible to distill revolutionary socialism down in a similar way? Of course, it is not; but then "do not do unto others that which is hateful to you" isn't really "the whole Torah"; it's a literary exercise for Hillel to communicate the golden rule, or first principle, that he considers to be the essence of Jewish faith. One can argue, convincingly, that revolutionary socialism has two such principles: first, that value in capitalist society, and wealth in all societies, derives from labor. From this we get the foundational and irreplaceable focus on class. Second, and more significant for this article, the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. This idea, that liberation from the exploitation and oppression that are necessarily integral to capitalism cannot be carried out for us by any external force, handed down from above, or done on our behalf, but rather must be our own act, consciously and independently organized by our class—this is our first principle, our

golden rule, if we have one. It is this golden rule that underpins the two related but distinct concepts this article explores: the third camp and socialism from below.

The Third Camp "Even those of us who consider ourselves partisans of the tradition that bears its name must admit that the concept of the third camp is not well known beyond some small

corners of the revolutionary left. Even there, it is often considered a relic of the world that

bore it."



Finland, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) split, effectively down the middle, in a debate about whether they could still maintain their position of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union. Leon Trotsky's supporters on the "majority" side of that debate compiled a collection of his essays, *In Defense of Marxism*, that covers it. The debate was also surveyed, with explicit editorial sympathy for the "minority," in two volumes entitled *Fate of the Russian* Revolution, published by Workers' Liberty. The "minority" perspective came to be

summarized by the slogan, "Neither Washington nor Moscow, but the Third Camp of

international socialism." The SWP split apart, and in 1940 the "minority" founded the

Workers Party, which would become the Independent Socialist League in 1949. The roots of the concept of the third camp go deeper. It was not merely an attempt to create a theoretical framework to understand developments in Russia, although it emerged through that, but a reassertion of something integral, even foundational, in socialist politics: the idea that the working class cannot rule except by and for itself. In his reply to Trotsky in the debate that split the SWP, Max Shachtman, the leader of the "minority," put it like this: I repeat, I do not believe in the bureaucratic proletarian (socialist) revolution [that is, the ability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to advance the cause of socialism]. ... I reject the concept not out of "sentimental" reasons or a Tolstoyan "faith in the people" but because I believe it to be scientifically correct to repeat with Marx that the

emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself. The

bourgeois revolution ... could be made and was made by other classes and social

strata; the bourgeoisie could be liberated from feudal rule and establish its social

dictatorship under the aegis of other social groups. But the proletarian revolution

cannot be made by others than the proletariat acting. ... No one else can free it—not even for a day.¹ Shachtman's conclusion represented a form of return to first principles. In 1853 Marx and Engels, both of whom emphasized that democratic forms are necessary to working-class rule, had referred to the revolutionary potential of burgeoning working-class movements as a "sixth power in Europe," which could "assert its supremacy over the whole of the five so-called 'great' powers." Trotsky himself had coined the term when, in 1918, he described the revolutionary working class as an independent "third camp" in the 1917 February Revolution, opposed to both the first camp of "all the property-owning and ruling classes," and the second camp of "the compromising groups."³

At the end of his life, Trotsky was wrong to argue, against Shachtman and others, that the gains of the 1917 revolution were still expressed, in however degenerated a form, in the Stalinist state. But his vital roles in making that revolution and then in defending it from Stalinist sabotage showed that for Trotsky, the golden rule of revolutionary socialist politics was precisely that all efforts must be directed toward building up working-class consciousness and political independence. This was the thread of his politics, which those who would found the third-camp tradition saw themselves as picking up and extending. That tradition today is scattered and semi-submerged.⁴ But it contains much that could help reinvigorate and renew socialist politics, and reorient a left in disarray.

In 1960 Hal Draper, who emerged as one of the foremost theorists, writers, and organizers of the third-camp tradition, and who co-founded the journal in which this article appears, wrote the pamphlet *The Two Souls of Socialism*. Draper argues that socialist thought throughout history can be divided between "socialism from above" and "socialism from

below"—the former advocating utopian-elitist conspiracies, or statist dictatorship, to deliver socialism to the masses, and the latter advocating the masses' self-activity and selforganization. He describes working-class self-emancipation as the "First Principle" of revolutionary socialism.⁵

Socialism From Below

that *were* organized above.

As a literary device, the concept of socialism from below is useful. But to extrapolate from these three words a "way of doing politics," as Dan Swain called socialism from below in a June 2015 article for *rs21*, republished by *New Politics*, 6 obscures more than it clarifies. The diffuse, loosely networked social movements of the past decade—the Tahrir Square uprising in Egypt, the Spanish "Indignados," the global Occupy movements—caught many leftist imaginations, seeming to express a potential new grass-roots politics from below that was brushing aside the old orthodoxies and staid structures of parties and unions.⁷ But it was in large part precisely because these movements had no adequate, permanently

organized structures, able to impose above—at the level of politics, government, and

society—the demands and aspirations generated below, that the movements dissipated—

We require, in other words, a comprehensive perspective for working-class power, from

or, as in the case of the Arab Spring, were effectively confiscated by reactionary movements

below and above. To achieve that, our class needs its own political organizations: democratic revolutionary parties. An overemphasis on socialism from below as the summarizing concept of revolutionary politics can lead, and, in Draper's case, perhaps did lead, to de-emphasizing the vital necessity of permanent political organization. The idea of socialism from below can serve us as a literary device, but only if it is part of a more thoroughgoing independent working-class politics. The Left in Disarray: The Long Retreat from the First Principle⁸ These are odd times to be a partisan of class politics and moreover of the idea that

authentic socialist politics are the politics of working-class self-liberation. The economic

built up in the minds of millions, and the consequences and sequels of that crisis are still

to provide, an epochal opportunity to spread the idea that the working class, the global

social majority, which produces society's vast wealth, should also control that wealth.

working themselves through. Looked at from one angle, that crisis provided, and continues

crisis of 2008 shook the immense mystique that neoliberal, free-market capitalism had

But 2008 found much of the revolutionary left in the midst of a long-term "retreat from class." That was the phrase used by the Marxist writer and historian Ellen Meiksins Wood in her 1986 book, *The Retreat from Class: A New True Socialism*. The book was a polemic against those socialists, mainly but not exclusively from Stalinist or Stalinist-influenced backgrounds, who were galloping away from class-struggle politics in the direction of a hodgepodge of post-modernism and barely reformist liberal identity politics. Some of those criticized remained in the tent of broad leftist or even labor movements, but largely on their right wings. Yet much of post-Trotsky Trotskyism, without ever really going over to the right or explicitly abandoning principles, had also undertaken its own version of the same retreat, a systematic backing away from the idea of independent working-class politics as the foundational core of socialism, a retreat from the first principle of workingclass self-emancipation. Utterly disoriented by their Biblicist adherence to the claim that the Stalinist states somehow represented historical progress, post-Trotsky "orthodox" Trotskyists were able to substitute a whole variety of locums for the independently organized working class—other forces and movements that they argued could be unconscious bearers of the socialist project, or at least potential allies, and whose victories against imperialism would be beneficial for socialist interests no matter how murderously hostile they were in practice to actual working-class organization.

as a site of anti-capitalist organization, and organized labor no longer privileged as an agency for socialist change. Some eco-socialists, responding to climate crisis, have also argued that there is no longer any privileged agent of socialist transformation nor or any privileged role to be played by the international proletariat. 10 These arguments deserve a hearing. The socialist movement is not a religion, and no idea should be sacred in left thought. If the two golden rules for revolutionary socialism proposed at the beginning of this article no longer stand up to reality, they should be amended and reshaped or ditched entirely, and our politics should be reassessed. If it is no longer the case that labor creates wealth, giving the working class a privileged position as

an agent of revolutionary social change, we should indeed move to some kind of post-class

politics. But the evidence does not suggest this.

fascists.

Reasserting the First Principle

traditions outside this genealogy.

project of working-class self-liberation.

independent working-class politics, that is key.

1940) 43-51.

About Author

Transport Workers and a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

Leave a Reply

Comment

Name *

E-mail *

© 2021 New Politics

The retreat from class has taken a variety of forms, not always in the direction of passive

low ebb of class struggle and disoriented by changes in capitalism have argued that

support for anti-imperialist locums. Elsewhere on the left, other tendencies recoiling from a

automation, atomization, and precarity have rendered the workplace no longer privileged

Far from disappearing from the historical stage, the wage-working proletariat is expanding. It has become the biggest single class only recently. Capitalist globalization has led to the creation of vast new working classes, and with them, new labor movements, throughout the world: in South Korea, in Brazil, in India, in Mexico, in Nigeria, and elsewhere. It is a profound historic tragedy that, at moments when the international left should have been seizing the potential for labor-movement growth and renewal by building movements of internationalist class solidarity, much of it was instead focusing on cheer-leading the enemies of labor. When an independent labor movement, an embryonic third camp, began to emerge in Iraq following the U.S.-British overthrow of the Ba'ath regime, the global farleft largely ignored it, preferring instead to idealize the so-called resistance to U.S.-British

occupation, led by competing factions of Sunni-supremacist sectarians and Shi'a clerical-

There are certainly challenges inherent in attempting to reverse the retreat from class:

Independent labor organization is still weak throughout much of the world. Neoliberal ideology has sunk deep and increasingly global roots that organized socialists must struggle to confront. Debates about tactics, strategies, and forms of organization are all vital. But is there anything objective, material, in today's world which suggests that socialist politics must reassess its foundational principles that class is central and that our politics must be one of working-class self-emancipation? The evidence suggests not. In returning to class, we can learn much by rediscovering the theorizing and practice of those socialist traditions that have, at times of upheaval and crisis on the left, cleaved to the idea that the only consistent socialism is socialism as working-class self-liberation. Renewing the Third Camp,

deracinating, distorting, and destroying socialist politics. In attempting to renew socialism as a politics of working-class self-emancipation, the third campists emphasized both aspects: independent working-class self-activity and organization, and emancipation and freedom. Kicking back against the bureaucratic statism, top-down command structures, and enforced, monolithic ideological homogeneity that Stalinism had made hegemonic in left politics, both as models for the "socialist" society and the cultures of organizations aspiring to build it, the third campists sought to reconnect socialism with its libertarian core.

What does it mean, then, to aspire to the renewal of the third-camp tradition today? It

certainly does not mean adopting a religious attitude to tradition, claiming some unbroken

chain of political doctrine from Marx and Engels through Lenin and Trotsky to Shachtman

and Draper. Neither does it mean excluding all that is valuable in working-class socialist

It might seem odd to look to a semi-submerged historical tradition, shaped in and by a

tradition as it developed was not the product of some obscure quibble over the theoretical

characterization of a particular state. Rather, it was an effort to reorient the revolutionary

socialist movement, undertaken by activists who could see clearly how Stalinism was

different world, as a source for contemporary socialist renewal. But the third-camp

The renewal of the third camp, in a world of left disarray and insurgent populism

(occasionally on the left but largely on the right) fundamentally means reasserting

independent working-class politics. It means reconnecting to the first principle of

wagon to the parties or politics of other classes, but only on the basis of our class

revolutionary socialism, that working-class emancipation cannot be won by hitching our

organizing by and for itself. To renew the third camp today means a return to class as the

The literary emphasis that the concept of socialism from below places on mass, grass-roots

upheaval, with all that this implies in terms of a vibrant, fructifying democracy rather than

aspire to build, can aid that renewal. But ultimately it is the concept of the third camp, of

This first principle of revolutionary socialism goes right back to its conception as a discrete

politics. The work of Marx and Engels was dedicated to helping the working class

systems of command and control, whether in our own organizations or the society we

key axis for political organization; a return to understanding struggle between classes,

within every country, as the motor of social change; and a re-forging of socialism as a

understand itself, organize itself, become a class for itself. Class remains the fundamental social conflict, the relationship that holds the key to unlocking revolutionary social change. Renewing the third camp, helping our class become a class for itself, remains the key task of socialists today. Everything that helps this is useful to our cause; everything that slows it down is harmful. That is the essence of revolutionary socialism; that is our golden rule. Everything else is commentary, strategy, and tactics. Footnotes

in Blackstock and Hoselitz, eds., *The Russian Menace to Europe* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 121-202. 3. Leon Trotsky, "Work, Discipline, Order" (Report to the Moscow City Conference of the Russian Communist Party, March 28, 1918), from *The Military Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1918).

Jacobson, "The Two Deaths of Max Shachtman," New Politics (Vol. 10, No. 2, January 1973);

and the interviews, articles, and recollections collated in Workers' Liberty's symposium on

the third-camp left. As for its semi-submersion, until the Marxists Internet Archive digitized

and uploaded archives of the Workers Party/ISL newspaper Labor Action in the mid-2010s,

4. Those interested in how the tradition developed, and dissipated, might read Peter

Drucker's Max Shachtman and His Left (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994); Julius

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Extracts from the New-York Tribune on the Crimean War,"

1. Max Shachtman, "Crisis in the American Party," New International (Vol. 6, No. 2, March

the only widely available source of writing from the 1940s first generation of the third-camp tradition was the first volume of *Fate of the Russian Revolution*, published by Workers' Liberty in 1998. 5. Hal Draper, "The Two Souls of Socialism," *New Politics* (Vol. 5, No.1, Winter 1966), 57-84. 6. Dan Swain, "Socialism From Below," online at newpol.org/socialism-below (accessed 05/04/2017). 7. See, for example, Wheeler and Lunghi, eds., Occupy Everything! Reflections on why it's kicking off everywhere (London: Minor Compositions, 2012).

8. Sean Matgamna's *The Left in Disarray* (London: Phoenix Press/Workers' Liberty Books, 2017) explores the historical trends described in this section in more detail. 9. See, for example, the essay "Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It Is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It," written by the Institute for Precarious Consciousnes and especially promoted by the UK-based group Plan C. 10. Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature* (London: Zed Books, 2007) 241, 257. Posted in Left Politics

 Stalinism: The Complete Negation of Socialism Neo-Stalinism The Achilles Heel of the Peace Movement and the American Left > If you've read this far, you were pretty interested, right? Isn't that worth a few bucks -maybe more?

Daniel Randall lives and works in London. He is a railway worker and workplace representative for the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and

equality, and justice — what New Politics has called "socialism" for a half-century.

Please donate and subscribe to help provide our

informative, timely analysis unswerving in its

commitment to struggles for peace, freedom,

Donate to Support New Politics

Online Features

Please donate to *New Politics* to allow us to continue bringing you independent, sharp, and provocative political analysis. You can make a tax-deductible

contribution by clicking here. To subscribe, click here. Need help in making your donation or in subscribing—or just want to send us your suggestions? Contact us at

Support

newpoliticsjournal@gmail.com.

Recent Posts As American Life Returns to Normal, Mass Shootings

Resume April 6, 2021 Refusal Music

April 6, 2021 One Hundred Years of the Russian NEP – Lessons for

Cuba April 3, 2021 The Children at the Border and the Question of Immigration March 31, 2021 The Only Treatment is Freedom: Mumia Abu-Jamal

and COVID

March 30, 2021

online articles We welcome the opportunity to be a site of left discussion and debate, and

New Politics actively seeks submission of

we are especially interested in running articles that engage important issues on the left that are in

keeping with the broad democratic and socialism-from-below approach that is a proud tradition New Politics continues to embrace. See Why We Publish for our general political perspective. Please send submissions to newpoliticsjournal@gmail.com. Follow

f y a New Politics Updates

New Politics Updates is a free newsletter for readers of New Politics, in whatever venue. It provides an up-

to-date list of recent articles at the website, notifications regarding the print edition, announcements of events featuring our authors, and other items of probable interest to readers of our journal. Rest easy: We won't flood your inbox (the newsletter will appear two to four times a month) and your contact information will not be shared with anyone. First name or full name Email

policy Subscribe

☐ By continuing, you accept the privacy

 $\stackrel{\perp}{=}$

home About Contact Current Issue RSS Online Features Submissions Advertising Donate Subscribe

Responsive Theme powered by WordPress

Advanced Searc



'The Anti-Imperialism of Fools': A Cautionary Story on the Revolutionary Socialist Vanguard of England's Post-9/11 Anti-War Movement

Camila Bassi¹

Division of Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Development and Society, Sheffield Hallam University, S1 1WB, England. Email: C.Bassi@shu.ac.uk

Preface

The day after 9/11 I attended a local Socialist Alliance committee meeting in Sheffield, England, as a representative of the revolutionary socialist organisation, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) comrades present discussed the 9/11 attack as regrettable in terms of the loss of life but as nonetheless understandable. They acknowledged the attack as tactically misguided, yet refused (when pressed to do so) to condemn it. Later, in November 2001, at a public meeting of the Sheffield Socialist Alliance, I shared a platform with a then national committee member of the SWP to debate the US and UK war in Afghanistan. Besides from agreeing on opposition to the imperialist war onslaught, I was alone on the platform in raising opposition to the Islamist Taliban rule and in arguing for labour movement solidarity with forces such as the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), which resist both imperialism and Islamism and demand a progressive, democratic secular alternative. The SWP comrades present, both on the platform and from the floor, alleged a political error on my part and those who argued along with me. Their rationale was that, to fully

oppose the War on Terror, we had a duty to oppose the main enemy and greater evil - US and UK imperialism - and this alone. Anything else, they argued, would alienate the masses of disillusioned, angry British Muslim youth that socialists needed to win over. The SWP's dual camp of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' (a socialistic inversion of imperialist war discourse of 'the status quo versus regression') came to dominate England's anti-war movement. They publicly launched their initiative the Stop the War Coalition (StWC) ten days after 9/11, with the aim of mobilising a broad political grouping against the War on Terror. Since then the SWP vanguard of the StWC has, at critical moments, steered the political course that England's anti-war protests have taken.

Introduction: Neither inverted dual camps nor point zeros

During war time major imperialist powers typically impose a geopolitical choice between the status quo and regression, or the civilised and the barbaric. The consequence of this bourgeois dual camp is that its fetishism, including in its leftist inversion, diverts from the indispensable task of organising a third independent force, or camp, of politics by and for the collective interests of workers worldwide. The War on Terror is pitched by its leading imperialist advocates as a battle of us versus them, or good versus evil, while, in an inverted dual camp, 9/11 and later Islamist acts of terrorism are conceptualised by sections of the Left as inevitable products of a greater imperialist terrorism and a reflection of wider struggles between David and Goliath. This in turn lends itself to the conclusion that such products and struggles form part of an anti-imperialist resistance necessitating (albeit qualified) alliance against the prime enemy. It is this conclusion - in relation to the case of a revolutionary socialist vanguard of an anti-war movement in the West - that this paper identifies as problematic. I do so not by orientating to post-Marxist left analysis but by returning to the spirit of Marxism. In brief, this paper draws upon the tradition of third camp revolutionary socialists during war time, in order to critique the blind-alley inverted dual campism dominating leftist anti-war resistance during the War on Terror. This tradition is to develop the independent political agency of workers internationally, as a class capable of self-government in their struggles against capitalism and its reactionary products, and to assess, by and for this class's advancement, the upshot of the actual politics flowing from these struggles and products. In the simplest terms, the rudimentary foundation of the third camp is "nothing but the camp of workers and oppressed peoples everywhere who are sick to death of insecurity, exploitation, subjection and increasingly abominable wars, who aspire to freedom, peace and equality" independent of their ruling class and their ruling class's reactionary enemies (Shachtman, 2006c [1950], xi).

The absence of third camp politics is apparent in prominent leftist academic and public intellectual commentary on 9/11 and the War on Terror. In the aftermath

of 9/11 Watts (2005, 645), for instance, observes a "confusion mixed with revulsion" within the ranks of the Left: "the reluctance to admit 'they had it coming', the whispered moral equivalence of casualties (what of Rwanda or the Palestinian intifada?) and a sort of deep schizophrenia" - "[w]as this not a strike in the name of a modern anti-imperialism or was it grounds for a 'just war' [...] Was this not of a piece with the anti-globalisation movement", yet who could endorse Islamism? Chomsky (2001, 12), while denouncing 9/11, defines its uniqueness in the fact that, unlike any other point in US foreign imperialist venture or European colonial history, the victims struck back at the very heart of the imperialist power: directing "the guns [...] the other way". More to the point, 9/11 was a cumulative result of US foreign policy and proved that industrial powers no longer had the monopoly on violence (Chomsky, 2003, 2002). In an article for Le Monde just under two months after 9/11, Baudrillard remarks that the event represented "the purest type of defiance" and "could be forgiven", since:

In dealing all the cards to itself, the system forced the Other to change the rules of the game. And the new rules are ferocious, because the game is ferocious. [...] All those singularities (species, individuals, cultures), which have paid with their deaths for the establishment of a global system of commerce ruled by a single power, avenge themselves by transferring the situation to terrorism (Baudrillard, 2001, in Afary and Anderson, 2005, 170).

During the US invasion of Najaf in 2004, Klein (2004) tactically defends the Shiite Islamist Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army, despite recognising the politics of the Mahdi Army that (if ever to come to power) would attempt an Iranian-type theocracy. Her reasoning is that, for the moment the Mahdi Army represents something in common with the Iraqi population - opposition to the imperialist occupation of Iraq. In a plenary of an anti-war teach-in at Berkeley, Butler (2006) comments:

Understanding Hamas, Hezbollah, as social movements that are progressive, that are on the Left, that are part of a global Left, is extremely important, that does not stop us from being critical of certain dimensions of both movements [...] it doesn't stop those of us who are interested in non-violent politics from raising the question of [...] whether there are other options besides violence, so again, a critical, important engagement [...] should be entered into the conversation on the Left.

The signatories to an anti-war statement released during the 2006 Israeli war in Lebanon offer "solidarity and support to the victims of th[e] brutality [in Lebanon and Palestine] and to those who mount a resistance against it" (see: Chomsky,

2006), by implication then, political support to Hezbollah and Hamas. These signatories include SWP members (Alex Callinicos, Lindsey German, Chris Bambury and John Rees), and leftist academics and public intellectuals (Gilbert Achcar, Tariq Ali, Frances Burgat, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, IIan Pappe, Harold Pinter, Tanya Reinhart, Steven Rose, Hilary Rose, Arundhati Roy and Howard Zinn, for example). While Achcar (2006a) cautions against the SWP's alliance with the Muslim Association of Britain in England's anti-war movement (an organisation with political links to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood), he nonetheless frames a struggle "between the Islamic fundamentalist David and the US imperialist Goliath" (Achcar, 2006b, 72). Specifically, the "demon" of US imperialism, which has produced and fed the "monster" of Islamic fundamentalism for its own interests, now finds itself vulnerable, because "the demon [...] ultimately turned against the demiurge" and so (as on 9/11) the monster is hitting back (Achcar, 2006b, 43). Achcar (2006b) concludes that in the battle between two barbarisms the prime culpability lies with the greater, heavyweight barbarism. Crucially, he fails to exhibit a politically independent, progressive democratic alternative to both imperialism and its reactionary enemies. Indeed, this is a symptomatic failure of all of the aforementioned commentary.

Closer to the disciplinary home, prominent Marxist and post-Marxist public intellectual geographers fall short of mapping out an anti-imperialist resistance in the spirit of the third camp. As Castree (2008, 168) remarks of Smith's (2005a) The endgame of globalization: "[i]f one thing is missing it's a discussion of progressive forms of opposition within and without the American state apparatus". Harvey's (2005) The New Imperialism offers brief mention of the daunting challenges faced by an anti-war and anti-imperialist movement in the United States, and notes of a rising tide of global resistance to neo-liberalism, yet stops short of discussing a third camp grounded in the struggles of labour movements worldwide. This stopgap is perhaps the result of what Smith (2008) highlights as Harvey's break from being an advocate of revolutionary theory to that of being "a subversive agent, a fifth columnist inside of the system, with one foot firmly planted in some alternative camp" (Harvey, 2000, 238). Ó Tuathail (2008, 342) questions whether "the world of hard political choices" is avoided by Gregory (2004) in The Colonial Present, with his abstraction from the issue of what an anti-colonial geopolitics would and should actually look like. On the insurgency violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, Gallaher (2008, 349) queries of Gregory: are these "forms of resistance" and, if so, "what are we to make of their political content?" A demurring Gregory, she observes, evades the question of whether the Left should support any of these resistances. Retort's (2005) Afflicted powers, Castree (2007) also notes, neglects to assess the Left's prospects in opposing capitalism and Islamism and falls short of detailing their call for a non-vanguardist leftinternational. In sum, he astutely cautions: "this sort of pessimism of the intellect and the will is as implausible as unalloyed optimism about the immediate future" (Castree, 2007, 569).

As possible routes out of this impasse, Hyndman (2003, 10) proposes "a third space" of feminist geopolitics that goes "beyond the binaries of either/or, here/there, us/them". Developing the work of critical geopolitics while avoiding, she argues, its deconstructive tendencies that are "insufficient to generate change for building alternative futures" (Hyndman, 2003, 4), Hyndman suggests such futures can be mapped via a multi-scalar exploration and knowledge production of the multiple identities, ways of seeing and interventions during the War on Terror. But on the ultimate goal of dismantling and democratising geopolitics, the question of what agency can deliver this remains unanswered. This is unsurprising, since Hyndman's (2003, 10) feminist geopolitics is "an ethnographic, rather than a strategic, perspective", which "does not promote an oppositional stance in relation to particular political principles or acts". The third space of neither/nor then is not to be mistaken for the third camp. So, on the US and UK war in Afghanistan, Hyndman remarks of the virtual invisibility of Afghan women until the Northern Alliance 'victory' in which media images of unveiled women played to Western notions of progress. What is missed, however, is reference to and political engagement with RAWA, which (to date) holds a position that occupies but also goes beyond a third space, by representing a third camp alternative:

The US "War on terrorism" removed the Taliban regime in October 2001, but it has not removed religious fundamentalism [...] [B]y reinstalling the warlords in power in Afghanistan, the US administration is replacing one fundamentalist regime with another [...] RAWA believes that freedom and democracy can't be donated; it is the duty of the people of a country to fight and achieve these values. [...] Today RAWA's mission for women's rights is far from over and we have to work hard for the establishment of an independent, free, democratic and secular Afghanistan (RAWA, 2006).

Braun and Disch (2002) note of a near impossibility in mobilising for or against the war in Afghanistan when the mission was framed by its rightist advocates in leftist terms (as defending the rights of Afghan women against tyrannical patriarchy), and by its leftist opponents as simply an imperialist war about oil. For them, the binarism of either opposing the war or supporting it in these terms can only be transcended by refusing the articulated discourses altogether, which predetermine our understanding of political connections. The challenge, they state, lies in "[b]ringing the networks out of hiding" (Braun and Disch, 2002, 510) that offer less prescriptive, more promising resistance. Featherstone too (2006) develops a networked approach to leftist anti-war resistance; specifically, the imaginative internationalist politics of transnational networks, which provide a way out of the

binarism that he ascribes in part to the 20th century Marxist Left. He, for instance, contests the nation-centeredness of this Left throughout the Cold War, demonstrative in its doctrine of 'socialism in one country' and its subsequent siding with the USSR. In particular, his concern is that this Left bypassed the "more rhizomorphic, routed and productive practices of solidarity" (Featherstone, 2006, 8) that were occurring during this time, which offered a less hierarchical, more imaginative internationalism (such as E.P. Thompson's involvement in the European Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament during the 1980s that brought together political dissidents on both sides of the Cold War). However, in discussing the 20th century Marxist Left, he omits third camp revolutionary socialists who, during the Cold War, agitated for an internationalist front of independent working class politics as a progressive socialist alternative to capitalism and Stalinism (see next section). On the War on Terror, Featherstone (2006) importantly cautions against both the Left that sides with violent and anti-democratic forms of resistance to imperialism, and the Left that sides with so-called humanitarian imperialist intervention. Instead, he calls for a networked politics that transcends both. This work forms part of a wider post-Marxist relational or networked analysis, which (at its most critical end) is represented by enquiry into the geographies of solidarity and autonomism: "spaces where people desire to constitute non-capitalist, egalitarian and solidaristic forms of political, social, and economic organization through a combination of resistance and creation" (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006, 730; see also, for example: Routledge, 2008; Pickerill 2007; Featherstone, 2005). From a third camp Marxist perspective, the strength of this analysis lies in its anti-Stalinism, its attention to everyday molecular (but connected) rebellions, which occur within but beyond capitalism, and its internationalism. There is nonetheless a critical departure from the politics of the third camp, rooted in the Italian autonomist Marxists' redefinition of the working class during the 1970s. That is, a shift from the working class as the agency of revolutionary change due to the specific relationship of wage-labour to capital, to that of 'the socialised worker' or 'the multitude', which signify immanent-revolutionary forces evident in new figures of struggle and new subjectivities (Thomas, 2003; see: Hardt and Negri, 2004, 2000). In contradistinction, third camp Marxism politically centres its international solidarity work on class-based struggles and demands, as the foundation of a united revolutionary front for workers and oppressed peoples everywhere.

What thus is the contribution of this paper to critical geographical debate? This paper offers an indirect challenge to Amin and Thrift's (2005) demarcation of an old, and relegated, Marxist Left against a new, present and future, agonistic, affective and networked Left. We have, they argue, arrived at a promising point zero - a Left politics afresh that is free from dogmatic certainties and crude binarisms. Yet at point zero, as Smith (2005b, 893; see also: Harvey, 2006) warns us, it is not one hundred but ninety nine flowers that blossom since "Marxism [...]

is the one flower", in Amin and Thrift's schema, "that [...] should instead be choked in its bed". This paper also propounds a third camp Marxism distinct from Harvey's 'fifth column', which reflects "the paradox of optimism amidst a resigned denial of revolution" (Smith, 2008, 153), and from a wider trend, noted by Castree (2007), of radical work infected with a pessimism of both the intellect and the heart. Scattered throughout this paper are quotes from activists and organisations beyond the West resisting an imperialist War on Terror and an Islamist-based political substitute to this, while posing a democratic secular alternative. Their words and struggles indicate an actual basis to the third camp. The Marxism spirited in this paper recognises the basic duty of socialists everywhere to develop labour movement based solidarity with such forces, where and when they exist, as part of an international and sovereign revolutionary offensive.

In sum, this paper challenges both the point zero and the inverted dual camp. Its premise, using the case of the SWP vanguard of the post-9/11 anti-war movement in England, is that a rediscovery of, not a retreat from, the spirit of Marxism offers a critical departure from the inversion of a bourgeois dual camp that subsequently sides with the enemy, i.e., Islamism, of the 'greater enemy' of imperialism. As such, whilst there is a binary straitjacket of leftist anti-war resistance that post-Marxist critical accounts do well to shake off, this paper indirectly challenges the monofication and refutation of Marxism and the subsequent demarcation of a point zero. I seek instead to advance an alternative current of Marxist interpretation - the third camp as opposed to an inverted dual camp - in a modest attempt to rescue a political soul. The first section of this paper illustrates the third camp tradition as laid out in key texts of Hal Draper and Max Shachtman written during the Cold War. Thereafter, in the second section, the antiwar political resistance of the SWP is explored (as profiled in their paper Socialist Worker, their magazine The Socialist Review, and their periodical International Socialism Journal). Specifically, I examine their response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, their support for the Islamist 'resistance to imperialism' in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, and the tenets which bolster their inverted dual camp, that is, their analysis of imperialism, anti-imperialism and Islamism. In the third and final section, the broad united front and wider project of anti-imperialism pursued by the SWP's vanguard of England's anti-war movement is unravelled as, effectively, an evasion of politics in the spirit of the third camp. For this purpose, arguments made by Leon Trotsky on the nature of politics and the products of capitalism are drawn upon.

The third camp

Perhaps the major exemplar of third camp politics during the last century was summed up in the slogan of the former US-based Workers' Party (WP), later renamed the Independent Socialist League (ISL), during the Cold War: "Neither

Washington Nor Moscow, But International Socialism" (Matgamna, 1998). Key writings of two of the founding members of the former revolutionary socialist WP/ISL, Hal Draper and Max Shachtman, contain a definitive elucidation of the third camp tradition. In an article written during the Korean War (1950-1953), and originally printed in Socialist Leader, Shachtman (2006c [1950]) defends the ISL's opposition to both sides of the war against critics who argue that Stalinist totalitarianism is a greater evil to the bourgeois democracy of the US (for example, the former, unlike the latter, prohibits the existence of an independent labour movement), and since there is no actual mass movement against the two, the ISL ought to back the US. The problem with this position, Shachtman (2006c [1950]) reveals, is that it neglects to understand that Stalinism derives its social power by providing an anti-capitalist (albeit reactionary) solution to the social problems of capitalism, which elsewhere are insolvable on a capitalist basis and the official labour movement fails to deal with on a socialist basis. To undermine the social power of Stalinism then, it is essential that "the labour movement throws off all responsibility for the politics of capitalism, its wars included, and leads the way out of the present blind alley of society with an independent programme of socialist reconstruction", and while

[w]e never promised that we would be able to organise them into an independent movement, packed, wrapped, sealed and delivered by a specified date. We did say that unless they are organised into a movement independent of capitalism and Stalinism, the decay and disintegration of the world would continue, as it has. We did say that the forces of the Third Camp of socialism and liberty are here, and it is our sworn duty to help organise them into an independent movement (Shachtman, 2006c [1950], xi).

Shachtman (2006c [1950]) rebukes both leftist Social-Democrats, for having abandoned the third camp and struggle for socialism (thus offering critical support for American imperialism), and the Fourth International, for failing to understand the third camp by placing Stalinism as part of it. Whereas he points out, as a basis on which to build, the millions of workers in India and Britain who defy both sides of the Cold War. In a debate between Hal Draper and the once third campist Ignazio Silone, originally printed in Labor Action during 1956, Silone defines the position of the third camp as a 'sophism of equidistance', that is, a point of political abstinence midway between two enemies falsely deemed equal in their political dangers (Draper, forthcoming [1956]). Again, this, Silone purports, fails to recognise and act upon the fact that Stalinism is the greater evil to Western imperialism, which must be critically supported. Draper (forthcoming [1956], 17) retorts by directly quoting Silone's previous third campist position (from an interview in 1939) on the question of the war waged by conservative bourgeois democracies against fascism, in order to point out its analogy with Stalinism:

When the socialists, with the best possible anti-fascist [read: anti-Stalinist] intensions, renounce their own programme, put their own theories in mothballs and accept the negative positions of conservative democracy, they think they are doing their bit in the struggle to crush fascism [Stalinism]. Actually, they leave to fascism [Stalinism] the distinction alone daring to bring forward in public certain problems, thus driving into the fascists' [Stalinists'] arms thousands of workers who do not accept the status quo. (Brackets original)

It is the duty of socialists, Draper (forthcoming [1956]) insists, to resist the enforced dilemma of choosing between the status quo and regression, or one's ruling class and one's ruling class's enemy. But this does not consequently mean that socialists occupy a sophism of equidistance, or that socialists never chose one side over another while maintaining their political independence (see later the distinction between political and military support). Draper (forthcoming [1956]) and Shachtman (2006a [1953], 2006b [1951], 2006c [1950]) do not pretend that both sides in any given conflict are the same but neither do they take individual conflicts (like the 1950-1953 Korean War) in isolation. They maintain that the fight against Stalinism can only be politically won by socialists mobilising the labour movements within which they are active as part of an internationalist, independent political alternative. For instance, Shachtman (2006b [1951], ix) asserts that while a workers' government in the US clearly "cannot come tomorrow morning", it will never be a possibility until American workers decisively break from the capitalist class and "their imperialist course which poisons us with chauvinist ideas and alienates us from the peoples of other lands and them from us". Thus as a practical basis for international workers' solidarity, he asserts that the position of the American labour movement must be for a democratic foreign policy pillared by the unreserved right of all peoples and nations to self-determination (Shachtman, 2006a [1953]). (Ironically, by the 1960s Shachtman himself abandoned third camp politics in favour of critical support for the Western imperialist war camp.)

Writing on the question of anti-imperialism and revolution (originally printed as a discussion guide for the Independent Socialist Club of Berkeley in 1968), Draper (2002 [1969]) observes that a defeat for American imperialism abroad can have the objective effect of galvanising opposition to American capitalism domestically, but this does not imply that socialists should, on this basis alone, politically support any opposing side to an imperialist-waged war. Why? Because one possible domestic outcome is not the only possible outcome, and while a number of phenomena might aid revolutionary conditions domestically, such as hyper-exploitation or recession, socialists plainly do not contend for these conditions. Instead, the decision to support anti-imperialist resistance must be based, consistently, on an assessment of what politics any given side in a war is a continuation of. For this reason, Draper (2002 [1969]) spells out, during war

socialists should not offer political solidarity to an organisation, movement or government merely on the basis that it is an enemy of our enemy; or has widespread support; or is in (or is likely to be in) power; or formally adopts a political programme ostensibly unobjectionable; or is successful in winning over more politically progressive elements than its leadership. The decision to offer political solidarity must be on the basis of what is analysed as "the real political character and real political programme of [its] formation" (Draper, 2002 [1969], 147). Using the case of the Spanish Civil War, Draper (2002 [1969]) also draws an important distinction between political support and military support. He explains that, while revolutionary socialists militarily organised alongside a section of the bourgeois Loyalist government against the Franco-led fascists, they maintained their political independence (which included lending no faith to the bourgeoisie as a trustworthy ally or an effective, sincere force against fascism). Their existence as politically independent, third camp forces in turn offered a political alternative to both the fascists and bourgeois status quo. Whereas, he cautions, the political and military collaboration that occurred between the Stalinist Communist Party and the Loyalist government turned into joint violent suppression of these independent left forces.

The UK-based Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) was once not adverse to these tenets. The former third camp slogan, "Neither Washington Nor Moscow, But International Socialism", was adopted in the late 1960s by the forerunner to the SWP, the International Socialists (IS). It was during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) that the IS/SWP first abandoned the third camp. From originally holding a stance that was against both sides in the conflict - for the reason that for Iran and Iraq the war was being waged for regional imperialist interests - this changed in 1987 (Thomas, 2002a; see: German and Massoumi, 2007; Stack, 2003). As a longstanding SWPer retrospectively comments, "I was back at college when the Iran-Iraq war began. A plague on the houses of both reactionary regimes, I thought [...] My view, though, began to change [...] [when] [i]t was becoming clear that the west was backing Iraq" (Stack, 2003). The new standpoint was to politically support Iran in view of the fact that the US was offering support to Iraq, not because the politics of which the war was a continuation of, on the part of Iran, had suddenly become progressive. Iran today continues to be positioned by the SWP as a regional bulwark against US imperialist ambition.

The post-9/11anti-war 'politics' of the SWP

It is a mistake to think of the strategy of suicide bombing as [...] an irrationalism that derives from Islamic fundamentalism. There is a rationale for the adoption of this strategy that stems from the problem of defeating an enemy in conditions of extreme inequality of resources

[...] what motivates them to action is rage at material conditions of oppression and exploitation (Jenkins, SWP, 2006).

How can a political movement whose program is based on oppression, injustice and discrimination possibly liberate people from oppression, injustice and discrimination? Political Islam capitalizes on the discontent of people in its struggle for power. Those who see terrorism as the response of desperate, despairing people try to vindicate political Islam and say they "understand" its terrorism. [...] While they refer to the injustices of the West and the necessity of struggle against it, they do not find it necessary to struggle against political Islam [...] there are two poles of terrorism in today's world which feed off each other. We cannot defeat one pole without curbing the other (Hamid, Worker-communist Party of Iraq, 2005, 4).

The aim of the SWP-initiated StWC (2001) was and remains officially "very simple: to stop the war currently declared by the United States and its allies against 'terrorism'". In 2003 the StWC co-organised, along with the Muslim Association of Britain and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the largest ever demonstration in Britain's history, against the war in Iraq. Part-and-parcel of the SWP vanguard of this anti-war movement is a geopolitical perspective and representation of the barbarous heavy-weights of imperialism (and capitalism) producing and struggling with the provoked reactions of the counter/under-weights of anti-imperialism (and anti-capitalism). A statement by the SWP Central Committee released the day after 9/11 asks:

Is it so surprising that some group, in rage and desperation at American policies around the world, should have chosen to turn its own methods against the US itself? [...] Yesterday's attacks were in fact a stark revelation of the nature of global capitalism. Our rulers believed that they could preside over a world heaving poverty, suffering, and injustice and yet insulate their own metropolises from the consequences. The folly of this belief was exposed as the southern tip of Manhattan disappeared amid smoke and flames (SWP Central Committee, 2001b, 1-2).

A similar statement released four days after 7/7 questions: how could "four ordinary young men from Yorkshire be driven to blow themselves up in London? For Blair and Bush they were barbarians at war with 'our civilisation'" (SWP Central Committee, 2005, 1). The answer? They had witnessed the real barbarity of US, British and Israeli imperialism:

So, like the rest of us, they will have raged. But they will also have despaired. Then they succumbed, like other desperate young people on every continent at different times over the last 150 years, to the disastrous fantasy that they could rid the world of violence by hurling back a portion of it in some act aimed at innocent people (SWP Central Committee, 2005, 2).

Both statements evade condemnation of the attacks by posing them as tactically misguided venting of otherwise explicable and legitimate anti-imperialist anger, i.e., as simply products of imperialism and capitalism. Critically then, the SWP circumvent any deeper examination of the politics that the attacks were a continuation of, including the implications for progressive democratic, working class forces.

During the War on Terror the SWP's inverted dual camp of imperialist Goliath versus anti-imperialist David has gone further than refusing to condemn Islamist attacks in the West, by offering political support to Islamist 'resistance to imperialism' in the Middle East - in particular, to the Iraqi insurgents (of which the rival Sunni and Shia Islamists have formed the dominant political components (see: Rosen, 2006; Parenti, 2005)), Lebanon's Hezbollah and Palestine's Hamas (see: Sagall, 2007, 2003; Ashford, 2006; Harman, 2006; Birchall, 2004). Their rationale: such resistance should be politically supported because it is an enemy to imperialism, has a base of popular support, wields power, and has elements of a political programme that are agreeable. So, the SWP advance, since socialists at home must hold out an "uncompromising opposition to our 'own' imperialist bourgeoisies" (Molyneux, 2004) we ought to be politically lenient on the resistance (in whatever form) against our imperialist powers overseas. Accordingly:

Sometimes [...] terrorist tactics do more or less merge with the mass resistances of the people, and this certainly affects or should affect the language and tone of our critique. We on the left should not, I suggest, 'condemn' Palestinian suicide bombers or attacks by the Iraqi resistance.

Underpinning this is the calculation that, by upsetting the global imbalance of forces one's prime enemy will be destabilised and the Left at home fortified. In an article aptly titled "Why Opposing Imperialism Means Supporting Resistance", Harman (2006) refers to how the momentum of Vietnamese struggle against US imperialism in the 1960s infused the women's and black movements in the United States, in order to make the case that political support for the Iraqi insurgents can in the long-term yield a destabilization of imperialism over there, and an advancement of the anti-war and anti-capitalist movement over here. This calculation is "despite", he admits, "the attitude to women of some of the resistance groups and

those whose religious bigotry leads them to direct their fire against other Iraqis as much as against the occupying troops" (Harman, 2006, no page).

Leading SWP theoreticians (see: Rees, 2005, 2001; Harman, 2003; Callinicos, 2002) interpret Lenin's and Bukharin's classical accounts of imperialism as explaining the nature of imperialism today. This is understood as the synthesis of geopolitical rivalry between states and economic competition between capitals. Their analysis proceeds that leading the game in this classic-cumcontemporary inter-imperialist rivalry has been the grand strategy of the Bush administration to uphold US geopolitical superiority and impose an Anglo-American model of free market capitalism worldwide (Callinicos, 2002). It is the economic vulnerability of the United States (brought about by ever-increasing internationalisation of finance, investment, production and trade) that, in the interests of its multinationals, has to be redressed by military might (Harman, 2003). And the "'blowback" of 9/11 has offered greater opportunity for the world's "rogue superpower" to unilaterally go "on the rampage" (Callinicos, 2002), with the war in Iraq demonstrating the application of US military power to ward off inter-imperialist rivalry and secure control of oil (Harman, 2003). On antiimperialism, Harman (2003) conceptually conflates present-day Islamist resistance in the Middle East with past anti-colonial movements, thus positioning such resistance as part of wider national liberation struggles against present-day colonial-style imperialism. In doing so the critique of Islamism is limited to that of a critique of bourgeois-democratic liberation movements more generally, which, while spurring people "to confront local ruling classes that are tied to imperialism" (giving "rise to near-revolutionary upsurges"), at worst "misdirect those involved [...] in a reformist direction" (Harman, 2003, no page). Therefore, for example, the SWP insists that socialist support for the "genuine national liberation movement" resistance against imperialist occupation in Iraq should not be altered by either its "lack of single organisation" or "the insurgency's Islamist colouring" (Alexander and Assaf, 2005). Further still, Rees (2001) argues that the decision on "whether or not to oppose imperialism" cannot simply be based "on whether or not we find the past or present behaviour of the [opposing] regime to be progressive"; instead, it is "determined by the totality of relations in the system at any one point". Oddly the very fact that socialists oppose imperialism appears to be brought into question here, but what he is actually suggesting is that, in the global imbalance of forces, we need to side with the counter/under-weight against the heavy-weight and, in the process, we need not concern ourselves with the politics flowing from the counter/under-weight:

This does not matter much for those of us who are active in the West building international activity against imperialism and war. We are on the side of Third World movements against imperialism, however confused their ideas may be. But it is of fundamental importance for Third World revolutionaries (Harman, 2003).

Over here, the SWP theoreticians conclude, we need to concentrate on the defeat of our own imperialist governments, which means being firmly on the side of movements against imperialism over there, and it is the problem of socialists over there to contend with the more reactionary or reformist elements of movements that we over here resolutely support. In brief, the duty of socialists to help build the third camp during the War on Terror is thwarted by an evasion of actual political content, and by a substitution of international workers' solidarity for a commitment to boost the resisting underdog afar and in turn the anti-war and anti-imperialist movement back home.

Fatalist prostration and the evasion of politics

[S]upport for a movement for liberation should not depend on those who lead it at a particular point in time (Harman, SWP, 2006).

[A]n anti-imperialism based on the repression of women, religious minorities, small nationalities, trade unions, peasant organisations, and political parties [...] actually performs a function imperialism wants: repression of the masses [...] The anti-imperialism of these religious forces thus actually serves imperialism in the current global scenario. It is the anti-imperialism of fools (Sulehria, Labor Party Pakistan, 2006).

Post 9/11, the SWP has set itself the task of radicalising the anti-capitalist milieu into a particular kind of anti-war - and ultimately "anti-imperialist" - movement, mobilising "politically diverse forces [...] around a limited common objective" and ensuring Party comrades are "as militant as possible" (Callinicos, 2002; see also: Callinicos and Nineham, 2007). They conclude that the success of the StWC is due to the execution of a broad united front (see: Callinicos and Nineham, 2007; Ashman, 2003; Callinicos, 2002) reminiscent, in fact, of the Stalinist popular front in which the Party poses as "the champion of unity at all costs and the arch-enemy of 'divisive' debate" while siphoning recruits "by virtue of organisational weight and prestige" (Thomas, 2001, 29). This broad united front is defined as

unity of the basis of opposition to [...] war alone, without the addition of other planks (for example, condemnation of terrorism) that may exclude some important potential allies and that imply that the main enemy is anyone but Western imperialism (SWP Central Committee, 2001a, 2-3).

This popular front enables the possibility to unite with virtually any self-declared anti-imperialist force, sentiment or language because of a shared enemy. In other

words, the politics of my enemy's enemy is my friend. Take, for example, the SWP Central Committee's (2006, 1-2) instruction with regard Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006:

As socialists and internationalists we see our main responsibility as rallying mass opposition in our own countries to this war [...] The internationalist and radical left must throw their weight into the balance to help secure a defeat for imperialism that can weaken the global tyranny of capital.

This, in practice, was spelt out in the prominent slogan on England's anti-war demonstrations at the time, "We are all Hizbollah, Boycott Israel".

The SWP claim that, elsewhere in the world, anti-war mobilisations have been hindered by a drive by some imprudent leftists to oppose imperialism and Islamism (Callinicos and Nineham, 2007; Ashman, 2003; SWP Central Committee, 2001a). This is condemned as a political abstentionism rooted in confusion (infecting both the anti-capitalist milieu and sections of the Left) over the question of Islamism. So while public intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn are acclaimed for having stood firm in opposition to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, others on the Left are considered to have floundered. It is remarked, for instance, that Attac's Susan George was, for a period of time, confused over "the question of Islam" (not Islamism?) and foolishly doubted her own opposition to the bombing of Afghanistan (Ashman, 2003). During the Israeli war in Lebanon, Harman (2006) defines those on the Left refusing to support the Islamist Hezbollah as adopting "a 'neither nor' stance". This resembles Silone's mis-definition of the third camp as a sophism of equidistance, or a point of political abstinence halfway between two enemies falsely considered equal in their political dangers. A convenient mis-definition perhaps, for on the part of the SWP the priority of building the biggest counter-weight, anti-imperialist movement does not then need to confront what is abandoned in the process. In other words, domestic political support for Islamist 'resistance to imperialism' afar deserts the actual and potential international basis of the third camp, including labour movement solidarity with political forces, as exemplified by the following statements in relation to the US and UK war in Iraq:

We are openly against the occupation but we are not part of the armed resistance. We are distant from the Islamic political groups that control the resistance. Their political programme is linked to the conservative Iraqi tradition and they are not interested in the improvement of people's life conditions. We struggle directly – together with the other movements (of workers, progressive women and students) – to defend

our rights and to establish a civil, lay, secular society (Union of the Unemployed in Iraq, in Longhi, 2004).

Is it the case that we have to struggle against political Islamic groups? They have already declared their hostile policy and practices against civil life and modernity, and in particular against women, by forcing them to wear veils, and by openly propagating their intension to bring back Sharia law [...] Do we have to struggle against another international reactionary force that has occupied Iraq? They have installed the so-called Ruling Council against the will of the people [...] The only way is to get organized, and to struggle against all the reactionary forces and not allow them to rule us (Mahmoud, Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, 2003).

The general ramification of the SWP's post-9/11 anti-war 'politics' is that, treating politically retrogressive acts as simply products of capitalism (or an imperialist regime) effectively means substituting vigorous Marxist theory for a "[f]atalist prostration" that evades politics (Trotsky, 1961 [1934], 24), which necessitates identifying what products of capitalism to base ourselves on in their conflict with what others (Thomas, 2002b). On this matter, Trotsky's debate with the ideas propagated in L'Humanite (the former daily newspaper of the French Communist Party, Parti Communiste Français) on the question of workers' defence against the fascists is worth briefly revisiting. During 1934, L'Humanite challenged the use of workers' militias in defence against the fascists. One of the reasons given was that, in responding to the gun shots of the fascists with our own gun shots "we lose sight of the fact that Fascism is the product of the capitalist regime and that in fighting against Fascism it is the entire system which we face" (in Trotsky, 1961 [1934], 23). Trotsky (1961 [1934], 23) astutely replies:

It is difficult to accumulate in a few lines greater confusion or more errors. It is impossible to defend oneself against the Fascists because they are... "a product of the capitalist regime." That means we have to renounce the whole struggle, for all contemporary social evils are "products of the capitalist system".

So, in a comparative twist with L'Humanite on fascism, when suicide bombers wound and kill ordinary workers in New York, London or Iraq, one suspects the SWP are close to alluding that we "are to sigh philosophically: 'Alas! Murders [...] are products of the capitalist system,' and go home with easy consciences" (Trotsky, 1961 [1934], 23-24). What is more, Harman's (1994) insistence that socialists must not regard Islamists "as our prime enemies" because "[t]hey are not responsible for the system of international capitalism" and are instead its products, has, post-9/11, gone one stage further; with the SWP putting into effect his

argument that, their "feeling of revolt" can "be tapped for progressive purposes" so "[o]n some issues we will find ourselves on the same side [...] against imperialism and the state". 'Alas' once more, a revolutionary socialist commitment to equality is translated into a gamble to boost strategically weaker enemies to bring them on par with strategically stronger ones (Thomas, 2002a).

What the SWP schema misses is that while the growth of Islamism is a product of capitalism, "the increase in the misery and the revolt of the proletariat are also products of capitalism" (Trotsky, 1961 [1934], 24). And socialists have a duty to choose what products of capitalism to base ourselves on (most obviously, the working class) and to politically develop these products (as part of a third camp) in their/our struggle against other products of capitalism that are detrimental to their/our ultimate emancipation. Perhaps the SWP will retort, echoing L'Humanite, that it is the whole capitalist system we have to deal with. But "[h]ow?", echoing Trotsky, "[o]ver the heads of human beings?" (Trotsky, 1961 [1934], 24).

Conclusion

In times of war, the frontiers will be altered, military victories and defeats will alternate with each other, political regimes will shift. Workers will be able to profit to the full from this monstrous chaos only if they occupy themselves not by acting as supervisors of the historical process but by engaging in the class struggle. Only the growth of their international offensive will put an end not alone to episodic "dangers" but also to their main source: class society. (Trotsky, 2006 [1939], iv)

The account offered by this paper is that of a revolutionary socialist organisation, which heads an anti-war movement in the West during the proclaimed War on Terror with a precarious, politically-compromised perspective of the inverted dual camp: a flipping inside-outside of bourgeois promotions of worldwide conflicts as between the status quo and regression, into socialistic representations of battles between David and Goliath. In the process of prioritising one enemy to be defeated, a systematic examination of what politics flow from David and Goliath, and specifically the corollaries thereof for the development of an international sovereign offensive of the working class, is bypassed. Instead, it is deduced that by throwing one's weight behind David the imbalance of forces can be turned against the prime enemy of Goliath. Critical geographers should recognise the anti-war 'politics' of the UK-based SWP as part of a wider political malady infecting the Left, including parts of critical academia. A symptom of this malady is a gut anti-imperialism, which tempts leftists in the West, wishing the defeat of the usual imperialist suspects abroad (aka the United States, Britain and Israel), to

instinctively give political support to an opposing side. In its place a third camp anti-war resistance needs to be advanced. This anti-war resistance can be strengthened by labour movements in the West (including our own academic trade unions) fully engaging in international political solidarity work with forces that occupy the frontline (and third front) of workers' and oppressed peoples' struggles against imperialism and its reactionary enemies, and for progressive, democratic secular alternatives. Within and beyond Marxist, autonomist and post-Marxist critical geography, this paper calls for a return to the very spirit or vital guiding principles of Marxism. This requires reopenings of, and debates on, original Marxist ideas and practices that have been prematurely assumed defunct.

In sum, the bourgeois dual camp and its leftist inversion reduce socialists to geopolitical gamblers who hedge bets on a return that might generate the most anti-imperialist conditions, and reduce workers to mere supervisors of history, bankrupt of any agency to steer and change its course. Third camp Marxism stipulates independent working class politics as a fundamental prerequisite for the survival of humanity. While the international third front is not, at present, anywhere near to being a fully-fledged force, its dialectical foundations are nevertheless in existence everywhere and the political task of advancing these is, this paper suggests, one worth fighting for.

Acknowledgements

I would very much like to thank all of those who offered invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this paper: Virinder Kalra, Noel Castree and comrade Caroline Henry; and, the ACME reviewers Dave Featherstone, Paul Routledge and Ulrich Best. I also thank Harald Bauder – an ACME editor – for his assistance. Finally, a special thank you must go to Louisa Cadman who provided a source of critical engagement and encouragement throughout the journey of this paper.

References

- Achcar, Gilbert. 2006a. Marxists and religion yesterday and today. International Viewpoint: News and analysis from the Fourth International, http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article622 (last accessed 21 September 2006).
- Achcar, Gilbert. 2006b. The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder. London: Saqi.
- Afary, Janet and Kevin B. Anderson. 2005. Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press

- Afshari, Reza. 2001. Human Rights in Iran: The Abuse of Cultural Relativism. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Alexander, Anne and Simon Assaf. 2005. Iraq: The rise of the resistance.

 International Socialism Journal 105, http://www.isj.org.uk (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Amin, Ash and Nigel Thrift. 2005. What's left? Just the future. Antipode 37(2), 220-38.
- Ashford, Anne. 2006. Palestine: Beyond a religious argument. The Socialist Review March, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9685 (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Ashman, Sam. 2003. The anti-capitalist movement and the war. International Socialism Journal 98, http://isj.org.uk (last accessed 2 August 2006).
- Assaf, Simon. 2006. Hizbollah and Lebanon's resistance to imperialism. Socialist Worker Online August, http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=9378 (last accessed 15 September 2006).
- Bayat, Asef. 1998. Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran. New York: Colombia University Press.
- Birchall, Ian. 2004. Path of greatest resistance. The Socialist Review November, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9099 (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- Braun, Bruce and Lisa Disch. 2002. Guest editorial: Radical democracy's 'modern constitution'. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 20, 505-11.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. Berkley Teach-in Against War (Part VI). http://video.google.com/videoplay?doaid=-1054740516888584797 (last accessed 27 January 2008).
- Callinicos, Alex. 2004. End of empire: Spectre of defeat. The Socialist Review July, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=8971 (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- Callinicos, Alex. 2002. The grand strategy of the American Empire. International Socialism Journal 97, http://isj.org.uk (last accessed 2 August 2006).

- Callinicos, Alex and Chris Nineham. 2007. At an impasse? Anti-capitalism and the social forums today. International Socialism Journal 115, http://isj.org.uk (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Castree, Noel. 2008. Book review: Smith, N. 2005: The endgame of globalization. Progress in Human Geography 32(1), 165-69.
- Castree, Noel. 2007. Book review essay: Capitalism, the Left and the new world (dis)order. Progress in Human Geography 31(4), 563-70.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2006. Statement in Solidarity with the Peoples of Lebanon and Palestine. http://www.chomsky.info/letters/20060808.htm (last accessed 24 January 2008).
- Chomsky, Noam. 2003. Wars of terror. Znet, http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=3543 (last accessed 19 September 2005).
- Chomsky, Noam. 2002. Terror and just response. Znet, http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=2064 (last accessed 19 September 2005).
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. 9-11. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Cohen, Nick. 2007. What's Left?: How Liberals Lost Their Way. London: Fourth Estate.
- Draper, Hal. Forthcoming [1956]. The "Third Camp": Hal Draper debates Ignazio Silone (reprinted). In, Sean Matgamna (ed.), What is the Left? London: Phoenix Press.
- Draper, Hal. 2002 [1969]. The ABC of national liberation movements (reprinted, abridged version). Workers Liberty Journal 2(3), 141-48.
- Euston Manifesto. 2006. http://eustonmanifesto.org/joomia (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- Featherstone, David. 2006. Networking the Political: The Campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament, the Euston Manifesto and the Contested Geographies of Left Internationalisms. Unpublished paper available from the author.

- Featherstone, David. 2005. Towards the relational construction of militant particularisms: Or why the geographies of past struggles matter for resistance to neoliberal globalization. Antipode 32, 25-71.
- Gallaher, Carolyn. 2008. Insurgent violence and the colonial present. Political Geography 27, 348-53.
- Galloway, George. 2006. George Galloway: Hizbollah is right to fight Zionist terror. Socialist Worker Online July, http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=9334 (last accessed 15 September 2006).
- German, Lindsey and Naz Massoumi. 2007. The "War on Terror": is Iran next? Socialist Review December, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=10184 (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Gregory, Derek. 2004. The Colonial Present. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hamid, Toma. 2005. Comment on London bombing: It's terrorist ideology, not despair. Forward: A Fortnightly Political Paper of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq 56, 4.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire. New York: Penguin Press.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2000. Empire. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Harman, Chris. 2006. Hizbollah and the war Israel lost. International Socialism Journal 112, http://www.isj.org.uk (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Harman, Chris. 2003. Analysing imperialism. International Socialism Journal 99, http://isj.org.uk (last accessed 2 August 2006).
- Harman, Chris. 1994. The prophet and the proletariat. International Socialism Journal 64, http://isj.org.uk (last accessed 2 August 2006).
- Harvey, David. 2006. Editorial: The geographies of critical geography. Transactions: Institute of British Geographers 31, 409-12.
- Harvey, David. 2005. The New Imperialism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David. 2000. Spaces of Hope. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.

- Hyndman, Jennifer. 2003. Beyond either/or: A feminist analysis of September 11th. ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies 2(1), 1-13.
- Jenkins, Gareth. 2006. Marxism and terrorism. International Socialism Journal 110, http://www.isj.org.uk (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Johnson, Chalmers. 2001. Blowback. The Nation September, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011015/johnson/print (last accessed 14 October 2008).
- Kepel, Gilles. 2004. Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Klein, Naomi. 2004. Bring Najaf to New York. The Nation August, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040913/klein (last accessed 16 October 2008).
- Lamb, Christina. 2001. Khomeini fatwa 'led to killing of 30,000 in Iran'. Daily Telegraph February, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2001/02/04/wiran 04.xml (last accessed 20 October 2006).
- Longhi, Vittorio. 2004. Interview: Iraq's Union of the Unemployed. Red Pepper Archive May, http://www.redpepper.org.uk/May2004/x-May2004-UUI.html (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- Mahmoud, Houzan. 2003. On the capture of Saddam: The Ba'ath tyranny is gone, but the threat of Political Islam, and New World Order have emerged. Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, http://www.equalityiniraq.com/english/archive/htm/houzan070104.htm (last accessed 21 September 2006).
- Matgamna, Sean (ed). 1998. The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism (Volume One). London: Phoenix Press.
- Molyneux, John. 2004. Marxism on terrorism. The Socialist Review April, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=8844 (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. 2008. Book forum: Derek Gregory's The Colonial Present (Oxford, Blackwell, 2004). Political Geography 27, 339-43.
- Parenti, Christian. 2005. The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq. New York: The New Press.

- Phillips, Richard. 2008. Everyday engagements with Islamic Imperial Histories. Paper presented at the RGS/IBG Annual International Conference, London, August.
- Pickerill, Jenny. 2007. 'Autonomy online': Indymedia and practices of alterglobalisation. Environment and Planning A 39, 2668-84.
- Pickerill, Jenny and Paul Chatterton. 2006. Notes towards autonomous geographies: creation, resistance and self-management as survival tactics. Progress in Human Geography 30(6), 730-46.
- Retort. 2005. Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War. London: Verso.
- RAWA. 2006. http://www.rawa.org/rawa.html (last accessed 21 September 2006).
- Rees, John. 2005. Imperialism and Resistance. London: Routledge.
- Rees, John. 2001. Imperialism: globalisation, the state and war. International Socialism Journal 93, http://isj.org.uk (last accessed 2 August 2006).
- Rosen, Nir. 2006. In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq. New York: Free Press.
- Routledge, Paul. 2008. Acting in the network: ANT and the politics of generating associations. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 26, 199-217.
- Sagall, Sabby. 2007. Palestine: Attacks on Hamas. The Socialist Review January, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9925 (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Sagall, Sabby. 2003. Iraq: The resistance deepens. The Socialist Review December, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=8679 (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- Shachtman, Max. 2006a [1953]. For a democratic foreign policy (reprinted). Workers Liberty: Reason in Revolt 3(6), iii-iv.
- Shachtman, Max. 2006b [1951]. An open letter to "our friends in Asia" (reprinted). Workers Liberty: Reason in Revolt 3(6), viii-ix.
- Shachtman, Max. 2006c [1950]. Socialist policy in the war (reprinted). Workers Liberty: Reason in Revolt 3(6), x-xi.

- Smith, Neil. 2008. Book review essay: Castree, N. and Gregory, D. 2006: David Harvey: a critical reader. Progress in Human Geography 32(1), 147-55.
- Smith, Neil. 2005a. The Endgame of Globalization. London: Verso.
- Smith, Neil. 2005b. Neo-critical geography, or, the flat pluralist world of business class. Antipode 37(5), 887-99.
- Stack, Pat. 2003. Senseless and selfish carnage. The Socialist Review May, http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=8463 (last accessed 3 October 2006).
- StWC. 2006. Steering Committee and Officers. http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=52 (last accessed 1 December 2008).
- StWC. 2001. Aims and Constitution. http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcate gory&id=24&Itemid=41 (last accessed 19 January 2008).
- Sulehria, Farooq. 2006. Anti-imperialism of fools. Labor Party Pakistan, http://laborpakistan.org/articles/intl/antiimpfls.php (last accessed 21 September 2006).
- SWP Central Committee. 2006. Against the US-Israeli War on Lebanon. Statement released 31st July, 1-2.
- SWP Central Committee. 2005. A Cycle of War and Despair. Statement released 13th July, 1-2.
- SWP Central Committee. 2001a. Build the International Struggle Against Imperialism. Statement released 19th October, 1-3.
- SWP Central Committee. 2001b. The Attacks on New York and Washington. Statement released 12th September, 1-2.
- Thomas, Martin. 2003. Autonomist Marxism: three themes, three critiques. Workers Liberty, http://www.workersliberty.org/print/1521 (last accessed 3 October 2008).
- Thomas, Martin. 2002a. Two critiques: "Empire" and "new imperialism". Workers Liberty Journal 2(3), 27-56.

- Thomas, Martin. 2002b. The practice of accommodation: Poisoning the new anticapitalists. Workers Liberty Journal 2(2), 155-58.
- Thomas, Martin. 2001. The new turn of the SWP. Workers Liberty Journal 2(1), 19-29.
- Trotsky, Leon. 2006 [1939]. A step towards social patriotism (reprinted). Workers Liberty: Reason in Revolt 3(6), iv.
- Trotsky, Leon. 2004 [1938-1939]. Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1934-1940). New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Trotsky, Leon. 1961 [1934]. Wither France? Ceylon: Star Press.
- Watts, Michael. 2005. Left Retort. Antipode 37(4), 643-53.

Third camp

The **third camp**, also known as **third camp socialism** or **third camp Trotskyism**, is a branch of <u>socialism</u> that aims to oppose both <u>capitalism</u> and <u>Stalinism</u> by supporting the organised <u>working class</u> as a "third camp".

The term arose early during <u>World War II</u> and refers to the idea of two "imperialist camps" competing to dominate the world: one led by the United Kingdom and France and supported by the United States; and the other led by Nazi Germany and supported by Fascist Italy.

Contents

Origins of the term

Organizational support of the three camps theory

Other uses of the term

See also

References

External links

Origins of the term

From the 1930s and beyond, <u>Leon Trotsky</u> and his American acolyte <u>James P. Cannon</u> described the Soviet Union as a "<u>degenerated workers' state</u>", the revolutionary gains of which should be defended against imperialist aggression despite the emergence of a gangster-like ruling stratum, the party bureaucracy. While defending the Russian revolution from outside aggression, Trotsky, Cannon and their followers at the same time urged an anti-bureaucratic <u>political revolution</u> against <u>Stalinism</u> to be conducted by the Soviet working class themselves.

Dissidents in the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, witnessing the collaboration of Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler in the invasion and partition of Poland and Soviet invasion of the Baltic states, argued that the Soviet Union had actually emerged as a new social formation, neither capitalist nor socialist. Adherents of this view, espoused most explicitly by Max Shachtman and closely following the writings of James Burnham and Bruno Rizzi, argued that the Soviet bureaucratic collectivist regime had in fact entered one of two great imperialist "camps" aiming to wage war to divide the world. The first of these imperialist camps, which Stalin and the Soviet Union were said to have joined as a directly participating ally, was headed by Nazi Germany and included most notably fascist Italy. In this original analysis, the "second imperialist camp" was headed by England and France, actively supported by the United States. [1]

Shachtman and his co-thinkers argued for the establishment of a broad "third camp" to unite the workers and colonial peoples of the world in revolutionary struggle against the imperialism of the German-Soviet-Italian and Anglo-American-French blocs. Shachtman concluded that the Soviet Union's policy was one of imperialism and that the best result for the international working class would be the defeat of the Soviet Union in the course of its military incursions. Conversely, Trotsky argued that a defeat for the Soviet Union would strengthen capitalism and reduce the possibilities for political revolution. [2]

With the demise of fascism in World War II and the emergence of Soviet-controlled governments in Central and Eastern Europe, the "three camps" conception was modified. Now the leading imperialist camp was held to be that of the chief capitalist powers—the United States, the United Kingdom and France—with the Soviet Union consigned to a second imperialist camp.

Over time, Shachtman's aggressive calls for the defeat of official Communist nations' expansionism (the second camp) drifted rightward into support for the <u>capitalist</u> nations (the first camp). This position has led <u>orthodox Trotskyist</u> groups to declare the position reactionary. However, some supporters of the three camps analysis split with Shachtman and continued to develop their analyses of the changing world situation.

Organizational support of the three camps theory

The <u>Congress Socialist Party</u> of India also adopted a Third Camp position, with the slogan "We want neither the rule of London or Berlin; nor the rule of Paris or Rome; nor that of Tokyo or Moscow" (September 1939).^[3]

A third camp position is held today by the <u>Workers Liberty</u> groups, [4] <u>New Politics</u> and by some in the multi-tendency Marxist organization <u>Solidarity</u> in the United States as well as some in the <u>Democratic Socialists</u> of America and the <u>Socialist Party USA</u>.

Other uses of the term

More recently, a movement by the <u>Worker-Communist Party of Iran</u> and its leaders such as <u>Hamid Taqvaee</u> and <u>Maryam Namazie</u>, together with groups including <u>Left Worker-communist Party of Iraq</u>, has emerged calling for a third camp opposing <u>American militarism</u> and <u>Islamic terrorism</u>. However, this is unrelated to the Trotskyist third camp theory as neither organisation comes from a Trotskyist background.

See also

- Anti-Stalinist left
- Centrism
- Council communism
- Left communism
- Neoconservatism
- Non-Aligned Movement
- Shachtmanism
- Three Worlds Theory

References

- See for example "Against Both War Camps For the Camp of World Labor! (https://www.marxists.org/archive/shachtma/1940/05/mayday.htm)" and the May Day 1940 manifesto of the Workers Party, the political offshoot of the SWP established by Burnham, Shachtman and Martin Abern in April 1940 (Labor Action, "Special May Day Preview Number", May 1, 1940, p. 1).
- 2. A series of sharply critical articles and letters from Trotsky's debates with Shachtman was published posthumously under the title *In Defense of Marxism*. Cannon's polemics against Burnham and Shachtman are contained in the book *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*.

- 3. Sherman Stanley. "India and the Third Camp" (https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/jud d/1940/04/india.htm) (April 1940).
- 4. "Workers' Liberty and the "Third Camp" (http://www.workersliberty.org/node/3186).
- 5. Alan Johnson. "The Third Camp as History And a Living Legacy" (http://www.wpunj.edu/newpo l/issue27/johnso27.htm).
- 6. "Third camp" (http://www.thirdcamp.com/indexe.php).

External links

- Max Shachtman. "The Soviet Union and the World War" (https://www.marxists.org/archive/shachtma/1940/04/ussrwar.htm).
- Leon Trotsky. "Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events" (https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1 940/04/finnish.htm).
- Pierre Frank. "Under Pressure of the Coming War, Imperialism Beckons "Third Camp" (https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/frank/1951/12/3rdcamp.htm).
- Tony Cliff. "Marxism and the theory of bureaucratic collectivism" (https://www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1948/xx/burcoll.htm).

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Third camp&oldid=932835921"

This page was last edited on 28 December 2019, at 13:39 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.

New Politics (magazine)

New Politics is an independent <u>socialist</u> journal founded in 1961 and still published in the <u>United States</u> today. While it is inclusive of articles from a variety of left-of-center positions, the publication is historically associated with a "Neither Washington Nor Moscow!" <u>Third Camp</u>, democratic <u>Marxist</u> perspective, placing it typically to the left of the social democratic views in the journal *Dissent*.

Overview

Julius and Phyllis Jacobson were the founders and longtime co-editors of the journal, which had a political center of gravity reflective of their youthful formative experience in the Independent Socialist League of the 1940s and 1950s. During the Cold War, New Politics espoused the idea that socialism is indissoluble from democracy and freedom and argued strongly against totalitarian Communist states and authoritarian visions of socialism as corruptions of and departures from the socialist ideal. The journal is perhaps best known for having published the seminal article by Hal Draper, "The Two Souls of Socialism," in 1966. It was also the first English-language publication to publish articles by the dissident Polish socialists Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski.

The first series of *New Politics* ran from 1961 through 1976, after which it ceased publication for a decade. The journal was restarted in 1986 and has been in print ever since, publishing two issues per year.

The current co-editors are Saulo Colón, <u>Dan La Botz</u>, Nancy Holmstrom, Jason Schulman, and Julia Wrigley, and its editorial board members are Barry Finger, Thomas Harrison, Michael Hirsch, Micah Landau, Scott McLemee, <u>Stephen R. Shalom</u>, <u>Bhaskar Sunkara</u>, Lois Weiner, and Reginald Wilson. For many years Joanne Landy of the <u>Campaign for Peace and Democracy</u> was a member of the editorial board until her death in 2017.

New Politics

NewPolitics	
Editor	Saulo Colón, <u>Dan La</u> <u>Botz</u> , Nancy Holmstrom, Jason Schulman, Julia Wrigley
Former editors	Julius Jacobson, Phyllis Jacobson
Categories	Politics
Frequency	Biannual
Founder	Julius Jacobson, Phyllis Jacobson
Year founded	1961
First issue	1961
Country	United States
Based in	New York City
Language	English
Website	newpol.org (http://new pol.org)
ISSN	0028-6494 (https://wwww.worldcat.org/search?fq=x0:jrnl&q=n2:0028-6494)

Contributors have included Michael Albert, Bettina Aptheker, Stanley Aronowitz, Elaine Bernard, Janet Biehl, Ian Birchall, Murray Bookchin, Johanna Brenner, Stephen Eric Bronner, Paul Buhle, Eric Chester, Tony Cliff, Noam Chomsky, Bogdan Denitch, Hal Draper, Martin Duberman, Martin Glaberman, Robin Hahnel, Herbert Hill, Doug Ireland, Staughton Lynd, Sidney Lens, Nelson Lichtenstein, Michael Löwy, Manning Marable, Sean Matgamna, Paul Mattick, Kim Moody, Christopher Phelps, Adolph Reed, David Roediger, Saskia Sassen, Jane Slaughter, Immanuel Wallerstein, Stan Weir, Cornel West, B. J. Widick, Ashley Dawson, Ellen Willis, Kevin B. Anderson, Dan Georgakas, Patrick Bond, Sharon Smith, Christian Parenti, David Bacon, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Gilbert Achcar and Howard Zinn.

References

■ Worcester, Kent. "New Politics," in The Encyclopedia of the American Left, 2d ed., ed. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 555–556.

External links

Official website (http://www.newpol.org/)

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=New_Politics_(magazine)&oldid=1020061563"

This page was last edited on 26 April 2021, at 23:38 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.

Julius Jacobson

Julius Jacobson (1922 – March 8, 2003) was an <u>American socialist</u> writer and editor who edited *Anvil, New International*, and <u>New Politics</u>, all publications in the <u>Third Camp</u> tradition of socialism, a democratic <u>Marxist</u> tradition sometimes called "Shachtmanite" after its significant theorist, Max Shachtman.

Biography

Jacobson came from an East European <u>Jewish</u> immigrant family in <u>New York City</u>. The family was politically <u>leftist</u> and he was politically active at a very young age, first joining the <u>Communist Party</u>'s <u>Young Communist League</u>, but soon leaving that group for the <u>Young People's Socialist League</u> of the <u>Socialist Party</u>, where he became a Trotskyist and met his wife Phyllis Jacobson.

Drafted into military service during <u>World War II</u>, he saw combat in Europe and participated in the <u>liberation</u> of <u>Paris</u>. While in Europe, he participated in contact between European and American <u>Trotskyists</u>.

An early ally of <u>Max Shachtman</u> and <u>Hal Draper</u>, he followed them out of the <u>Socialist Workers Party</u> and with them was one of the founding members of the <u>Workers Party</u>, later known as the Independent Socialist League, eventually becoming editor of its journal *New International*.

Like Hal Draper, Jacobson was opposed to the merger of the ISL into the <u>Socialist Party of America</u> and to Shachtman's drift toward the right politically. Unlike Draper, he did not turn his energies toward creating a new socialist group, but rather into the creation of an independent journal, <u>New Politics</u>, in 1961, together with Phyllis Jacobson. He remained active as a writer and editor of *New Politics* up until his death in 2003.

In addition to his work published in *Anvil*, *New International* and *New Politics*, Jacobson contributed to the following books: *The American Communist Party*. *A critical history*, 1919-1957 (pub 1957 with <u>Irving Howe</u> and <u>Lewis Coser</u>), *The Negro and the American Labor Movement* (1968), *Soviet Communism and the Socialist Vision* (1972) and *Socialist Perspectives* (1983, with Phyllis Jacobson).

See also

- New Politics
- Phyllis Jacobson

External links

- New Politics (http://www.newpol.org)
- New Politics Standing Fast: Julius Jacobson (1922-2003) (https://web.archive.org/web/20050 911174728/http://www.wpunj.edu/~newpol/issue35/finger35.htm)
- Socialist Worker Obituary: Julius Jacobson (http://www.socialistworker.org/2003-1/445/445_0
 Jacobson.shtml)
- Against the Current Julius Jacobson (1922-2003) (http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/594)
- Julius Jacobson writings at the Marxist Internet Archive (https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/wr iters/jacobson/index.htm)

This page was last edited on 20 September 2020, at 20:58 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.

Phyllis Jacobson

Phyllis Jacobson (1922 – March 2, 2010) was an <u>American socialist</u>. Together with her lifetime political and personal partner <u>Julius Jacobson</u>, she co-edited the independent left journal <u>New Politics</u> from the 1960s until the end of the 20th century.

Contents

Biography

See also

References

Writings

External links

Biography

Born into a New York City Jewish working-class family, she joined the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) affiliated with the Socialist Party as a teenager in the 1930s, where she met Julius Jacobson. Together they were persuaded of revolutionary socialism in its Trotskyist expression and they played a role in successor youth organizations to the YPSL associated with the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party. Between the 1930s and 1950s, at a time when the Communist Party had sway over much of the left in the United States, the Jacobsons were associated with a radically democratic current of the socialist movement which rejected Stalinist bureaucratic collectivism and understood the Soviet Union to be a perversion of socialism because of its lack of workers' control over industry and society. They were founding members of the Independent Socialist League, for which she was briefly the Manhattan organizer and which espoused Third Camp socialism.

As the ISL and its leader Max Shachtman began to turn, in their view, toward the Right after 1956, the Jacobsons persisted in what they perceived to be their left-wing democratic socialism, like Hal Draper, and declined to follow Shachtman and his circle, who, they thought, became virtually or wholly neoconservative. Together the Jacobsons launched New Politics in 1961. She was active in the periodical from the outset but her role was formally recognized in 1968 when she became the first woman listed as a member of its editorial board; subsequently the Jacobsons would be listed as co-editors.

Phyllis Jacobson was critical to the journal's operations. "It was Phyllis who handled the day-to-day work of the journal," wrote a *New Politics* editorial board member in an obituary. "She cajoled authors and financial contributors to meet deadlines. She had the unique tact to convince often thin-skinned writers to accept editorial suggestions, and, when rarely necessary, editorial fiats. She maintained and meticulously updated the vast rolodex of contacts, donors, and subscribers. She coordinated the layout, printing and distribution. Some though that she, unlike Julie, was the real schmoozer, with a rollicking laugh so infectious that rare indeed were those who could resist joining her." [1]

<u>New Politics</u> kept alive two intellectual traditions in unpropitious times: the current of independent radical socialism and the freewheeling "little magazine" published independently of the academic world. For the last decade of her life Phyllis Jacobson was paralyzed by a debilitating stroke, but the journal still continued to be

published then, as well as after the Jacobsons' deaths.

See also

- New Politics
- Julius Jacobson

References

1. Barry Finger, "Phyllis Jacobson: An Appreciation," *New Politics* website, May 8, 2010 (http://newpol.org/node/304)

Writings

- "The Need to Say NO," New Politics, 1962 (http://newpol.org/node/317)
- "Kate Millett and Her Critics," New Politics, 1970 (http://newpolitics.mayfirst.org/node/294)
- "Black Outrage in Los Angeles," *New Politics*, 1992 (http://newpol.org/node/272)
- "Two Invented Lives," New Politics, 1997 (http://newpol.org/node/268)

External links

- Joanne Landy and Stephen R. Shalom, "Phyllis Jacobson, 1922-2010," New Politics website, 8 May 2010 (http://newpol.org/node/309)
- Lynn Chancer, "A Personal and Political Tribute to Phyllis Jacobson," New Politics (summer 2010) (http://www.newpol.org/node/349)
- Bogdan Denitch, "For Phyllis Jacobson, A Comrade," New Politics website, 8 May 2010 (http://newpol.org/node/303)
- Samuel Farber, "Goodbye, Phyllis," New Politics website, 8 May 2010 (http://newpol.org/node/ 301)
- Barry Finger, "Phyllis Jacobson: An Appreciation," New Politics website, May 8, 2010 (http://newpol.org/node/304)
- Stephen Steinberg, "A Robust Voice for Such a Diminutive Person," New Politics website, May 8, 2010 (http://newpol.org/node/300)
- David Finkel, "A Tribute to Phyllis Jacobson," New Politics website, May 8, 2010 (http://newpol. org/node/305)

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phyllis_Jacobson&oldid=909364447"

This page was last edited on 4 August 2019, at 23:02 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.