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“Geneva II” and the US regime-change drive in Syria

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Wednesday’s opening of talks on the Syrian crisis was dominated by the Obama administration’s insistence that the purpose of the “Geneva II” discussions was to remove President Bashar al-Assad and install a pro-US puppet government.

In the manner of a colonial overlord, US Secretary of State John Kerry declared, “We see only one option, negotiating a transition government born by mutual consent.”

Kerry made clear that “mutual consent” meant an outcome dictated by American imperialism. “That means that Bashar Assad will not be part of that transition government,” he continued. “There is no way, no way possible, that a man who has led a brutal response to his own people can gain legitimacy to govern.”

Such thuggish arrogance is the trademark of US policy in every region of the world. Any government that is viewed as a hindrance to the pursuit of the geopolitical interests of the American ruling class is targeted for destabilization or overthrow, through covert or overt means. As Kerry spoke, extreme right-wing and fascistic forces in the Ukraine backed by the US and its

allies in Western Europe escalated protests aimed at bringing down a government considered to be too closely tied to Russia.

In Syria, Washington has spent nearly three years seeking to use violence to carry out regime change. The US and its allies in Europe, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have financed an insurgency dominated by Islamic fundamentalist elements that have committed atrocities against ethnic and religious minorities. The conflict has produced more than 100,000 casualties and displaced millions. It threatens to develop into a region-wide civil war.

The US campaign in Syria follows the illegal US wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, which have devastated the two countries and led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. It comes on the heels of the US-led war to overthrow Gaddafi in Libya.

The Obama administration brazenly cloaks its campaign in Syria in the rhetoric of democracy and human rights. Responding to comments by Syrian officials—who protested the insistence that they hand over power to the so-called “rebel” forces—the State Department denounced the regime for engaging in “inflammatory rhetoric” and failing to “lay out a positive vision for the future of Syria that is diverse, inclusive and respectful of the rights of all.”

Last September, the Obama administration was on the verge of launching a military assault against Syria, but ultimately pulled back after failing to forge an international coalition as it had in Libya in 2011, and in the face of broad popular opposition. In a last-minute tactical shift, Washington agreed to a Russia-brokered deal involving the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles. The “Geneva II” talks make clear, however, that Washington has not backed away from its basic strategy.

The modus operandi of American imperialism in the pursuit of its interests consists of thuggery and lies. The latest escalation is based on a well-timed allegation that the Assad regime carried out “industrial scale killing,” including the torture and murder of 11,000 detainees. The American media has been full of lurid allegations that stem from a report commissioned by Qatar, which has played a leading role in bankrolling Islamist militias within Syria. All of the supposed evidence is derived from the allegations of an operative codenamed “Caesar” who has been working with Syrian opposition groups since September 2011.

The testimony of “Caesar” on the situation within Syria has as much credibility as the tales of Iraqi chemical weapon mobile laboratories provided by the exiled opposition agent “Curveball” and promoted by the White House on the eve of invasion of Iraq 11 years ago.

As the US prepared for war in the late summer of last year, Kerry and other senior administration officials charged that a chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta was the responsibility of the Syrian government. The gas attack came shortly after Kerry met with Syrian

opposition figures, who had been experiencing months of military setbacks and were desperate for more direct military assistance from the United States.

Washington's claims that the gas attack was carried out by Syrian forces have been thoroughly exposed as lies. A UN chemical weapons inspectors' report last month detailed numerous sarin gas attacks carried out by opposition militia forces, including several confirmed attacks within days of the Ghouta killings. Also last month, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh exposed the Obama administration's manipulation of intelligence on the incident.

Now two American experts—former UN weapons inspector Richard Lloyd and Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Theodore Postol—have authored a report further demolishing Washington's claims. Using a map of Damascus released by the White House on August 30 last year, which detailed the different areas then controlled by government and opposition forces, Lloyd and Postol concluded that the chemical weapons had to have come from within 2 kilometres of the target, and that every possible launching point was in rebel-held territory. Syrian government and military forces could not have been responsible.

Postol told McClatchy News Service: "My view when I started this process was that it couldn't be anything but the Syrian government behind the attack. But now I'm not sure of anything. The administration narrative was not even close to reality."

The latest allegations against Syria are no more credible than the sarin gas lies.

The cynicism of US foreign policy, and the threadbare pretense to be promoting democracy and human rights, are further exposed in the ongoing events in Ukraine. Opposition protests aimed at unseating the Russian-aligned government have been orchestrated by the US and Germany, both of which remain unperturbed by the leading role played by fascist organisations within the opposition. These groups are the direct descendants of the anticommunist proxy forces that worked with the Nazis during the occupation of Ukraine in the Second World War and helped carry out the genocide of the Jews in the country.

Today, the neo-fascists are hailed as potential statesmen by senior US officials. Just a few weeks ago, Senator John McCain publicly met with the notorious anti-Semite and leader of the Svoboda (Freedom) Party, Oleg Tyagnibok.

The crises in Ukraine and Syria testify to the Obama administration's willingness to recklessly promote extreme right-wing forces to advance the predatory economic and geostrategic interests of the American ruling class.