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## International gangsterism and Washington's war drive against Syria

7 September 2013

At the G20 summit in St. Petersburg, US President Barack Obama postured as the moral conscience of the world and upholder of international law. He did so in an attempt (largely unsuccessful) to rally international support and justify an unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Syria.

At a post-summit press conference on Friday, Obama explicitly argued that the United States has the right to attack another country even if neither it nor its allies are facing imminent attack and military action has not been sanctioned by the United Nations. This represents a direct repudiation of the United Nations Charter, which defines such unilateral and unprovoked actions as criminal acts of military aggression. It amounts to an assertion that, in defiance of the entire post-World War II framework of international law, the United States can attack any country if it sees fit to do so.

Explaining his decision to seek authorization for the use of military force against Syria from the US Congress, Obama said, "I could not honestly claim that the threat posed by Assad's use of chemical weapons on innocent civilians and women and children posed an imminent, direct threat to the United States... I could not say that it was immediately directly going to have an impact on our allies."

At another point he said, “It is my view... that given Security Council paralysis on this issue, if we are serious about upholding a ban on chemical weapons use, then an international response is required and that will not come through Security Council action.”

The UN Security Council, for its part, has placed its stamp of approval on a great many dirty wars, including most recently the US-NATO assault on Libya in March-October 2011, but as of yet its members remain divided on the question of Syria.

The moralistic playacting that accompanies Washington’s naked assertion of militarism is, as always in such cases, based on brazen lies. No evidence has been presented to substantiate the charges of chemical weapons use against the Syrian regime. It would have nothing to gain by carrying out such an attack, under conditions where it had been winning the war on the ground against Washington’s proxy forces. UN inspectors had just arrived in Damascus, at Syria’s invitation, to investigate previous claims of chemical weapons attacks.

The Al Qaeda-linked terrorists, who comprise the backbone of Washington’s proxy “rebel” force in Syria, on the other hand, have much to gain, since they were on the brink of defeat and needed a provocation to provide the pretext for direct US intervention on their side. Their massacres, beheadings, terror bombings and other atrocities against Syrian soldiers and civilians alike are well documented, including on Internet postings. They have boasted of having chemical weapons and being prepared to use them.

The other major lie promoted to justify the launching of a war against Syria is the claim that it will be, as Obama repeated Friday, “limited and proportionate.” In this connection, it is worthwhile citing an article posted September 3 on the *Foreign Policy* web site by Bruce Ackerman, a well-known authority on US constitutional law and professor at Yale University.

Discussing the draft of an authorization for use of military force submitted to Congress last weekend by the Obama administration, he wrote: “But in fact, his [Obama’s] formal proposal is a massive bait-and-switch operation. It authorizes the president to use ‘the Armed Forces of the United States,’ including boots on the ground, and to employ military force ‘within, to or from Syria.’ What is more, the president can act to deter the ‘use or proliferation’ of ‘chemical or other weapons of mass destruction’ and intervene to ‘protect the United States and its allies and partners against the threat posed by such weapons.’ This is nothing less than an open-ended endorsement of military intervention in the Middle East and beyond.”

The resolution authorizing military force passed Wednesday by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and backed by the administration further explodes the pretense that what is being prepared is a small-scale intervention. It makes clear that the aim of the attack is to strengthen the Islamist-dominated opposition and effect regime-change. It opens the way for war against Iran, Russia and any other country deemed to be assisting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

What is being prepared is a regional war to redraw the map of the Middle East and ensure US hegemony over the region and its vast oil riches. It is a perspective that leads inevitably—and perhaps sooner rather than later—to direct confrontation with Russia and China and another world war.

Popular skepticism toward and opposition to a US attack on Syria are broad and deep, both in the US and internationally. The experience of two previous wars based on lies in the space of a decade—in Iraq and Libya—has had its impact on popular consciousness. Washington cannot, moreover, conceal its own record of violating the “international norms” that Obama claims to be defending—from the nuclear holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the saturation use of napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam, to US support for Saddam Hussein’s use of chemical weapons against Iran in the 1980s, to the use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus in Iraq.

The Bush administration repudiated the Geneva Conventions in relation to prisoners captured in the so-called “war on terror,” opening the way for torture, indefinite detention, rendition, and drone assassinations—all of which have been continued and expanded under Obama.

The massive popular opposition to war only makes the lying of politicians and the media all the more pervasive and desperate.

The US drive to war presents a spectacle of international gangsterism and lying not seen since the heyday of the military dictatorships and fascist regimes of the 1930s—of Mussolini, Hitler and Tojo. The modus operandi of the United States government in world affairs today is in all essentials no different from that employed in the rape of Abyssinia, Poland and Manchuria.

The words Nuremburg prosecutor and Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson used to describe the Nazi war criminals apply in full force to the political gangsters who constitute the American government today. These figures, Jackson said, “are surprised that there is any such thing as law. [They] did not rely on any law at all. Their program ignored and defied all law... International Law, natural law, German law, any law at all was to these men simply a propaganda device to be invoked when it helped and to be ignored when it would condemn what they wanted to do.”

The flouting of international law by the American government goes hand-in-hand with the collapse of democracy within the US. It is no accident that the war against Syria is being prepared as revelations continue to surface of government spying directed against the American population, in clear violation of the Constitution, on a gigantic and unprecedented scale. These parallel developments show the inseparable connection between imperialist militarism abroad and the preparations for dictatorship at home.

While the American media is braying for blood on all channels and around the clock, the American population is overwhelmingly opposed to a military strike against Syria. There is a

growing sense that the country most needful of “regime change” is not Syria, but the United States.

But for this popular opposition within the US to find expression, it must break free from the entire rotten structure of official politics in America, all of whose factions are implicated in the drive to war, austerity, and the destruction of democratic rights. Opposition to war must not be channeled behind the Democratic Party or appeals to Congress, but must instead take the form of the political mobilization of the working class in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods on a socialist and revolutionary program.