

SYRIAN REVOLUTION

ANARCHIST INITIATIVE FROM KORIDALOS PRISON - GREECE



The recent developments in Syria- or, more accurately, the geographical area that used to be the Syrian state until 2011- constitute the most complex link in a chain of revolutions that started to take place in the Arab world towards the end of 2010.

The uprising against an autocratic regime, the uncompleted revolution of the local committees, the genocidal involvement of the USA and Russia, the chaotic war against everyone, the emergence of ISIS, the special case of the Kurdish communities of Rojava, the hundreds of thousands of deaths and the millions of refugees, the total war conflicts as well as the seemingly incongruent alliances and a lot more aspects are all pieces of a puzzle that reflects a battlefield of geopolitical competitions among the global dominant powers of our times.



As events as such write the modern world history, all revolutionary movements need to process the information available, discuss and come to conclusions and eventually choose sides and fight without failing to take the context of this historical reality into account.

The text on hand does not set out to provide an exhaustive historical narrative. Yet, it does set out to open a discussion that will look into all the critical issues raised. Also, our aim is to turn our ideas into action, thus we choose to go against the widespread inertia that surrounds the subject matter.

A historical period as such requires much more than a mere theoretical analysis. As the hotbed of war keeps spreading and is now reaching Europe, it is urgent that we create an anti-war movement which will fight for and demand an end to the international military interventions, put forward ideas on horizontal self-organization, empower the oppressed and ultimately stand up against the rise of totalitarianism.

We know well that we can achieve nothing and nothing will be spared for us unless we fight at all levels and to all directions in order to intensify and expand our horizontal, grass-roots self-organization.

For the war against state and capitalism.

Korudallos prison, November 2016

1. INTRODUCTION

The uprising in Syria, following that in Bahrain (which was drowned in blood by Saudi Arabia), was the last link in a chain of uprisings in the area of Maghreb between '11-'13. The western mainstream media called this series of uprisings "The Arab Spring", implying that the demand of the revolting populations was the replacement of their political systems with a regime of representative republic, namely a western-type democracy.

However, there are further decisive contributory factors underlying these uprisings. Firstly, it's the international neoliberal agenda promoted by state governments which serve the corporate interests of chiefly the western, Russian, Chinese and Arabic economic elites. Actually, the privatizations launched by the states triggered an escalating popular dissatisfaction as large parts of the population were turning poorer and poorer. Secondly, it's the violence that even the most peaceful demonstrations were treated with. Well before the spark (set by Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation) spread from Tunisia to Syria, demonstrations had come with death tolls on protestors. Moreover, the structural similarities of these regimes, the similar social stratification of their populations as well as the shared characteristics of the human geography in the wider region constitute altogether yet another factor that played a major role in

the spread of the uprisings from Tunisia to Libya, Egypt, Syria and Yemen. Finally, it's worth noting that the fast speed in which these regimes were overthrown solidified the protestors' conviction that dictators were, in reality, not at all untouchable.

Although all these factors co-existed in Syria, the situation evolved differently. For the moment, the geopolitical situation in Syria is a global puzzle without solution. All the imperialist rulers -global or regional- are caught in a vicious circle of conflicts, opportunistic alliances and unclear strategic goals as part of their presence in the area. The situation seems to have reached a dead end, but meanwhile the blood keeps flowing.

What has been going on for roughly four years now in Syria - meaning since the early spontaneous uprising began to weaken and gave its place to hostilities among various competing parties- indicates that the interference and direct intervention of the global powers and their agents have expanded the battlefield and, with it, the market and economy of war.

The rifts in the society are too deep and nobody can lead the situation out of this chaos. The so-called "negotiations" and "peace agreements" are nothing but plans on paper as long as they can't generate binding solutions. It's now impossible for Syria to go back to its pre-war/uprising state. While the negotiators (government, unsolicited opposition representatives, the USA, Turkey, Russia)

insist on drawing transitional plans that let Assad remain in power, a great number of opponents is by no means willing to conform.

A closer look at the course of events will allow us to understand how the situation evolved to this stalemate as we know it. The initial protests in March 2011, which demanded reforms rather than a change of regime, flared up in all big cities and Assad's security forces responded with excessive violence, killing dozens of protestors, torturing and orchestrating the "disappearance" of hundreds. As a result, lots of people took a more radical stance and demanded the fall of the regime.

Governmental authorities abandoned several cities and self-organization emerged as the prime coordinator of everyday-life organization: health-care, water supply infrastructure etc. were created in villages and neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the same thing did not happen in the field of self-defense and this was a detriment to the preservation of the initial character of the uprising. Part of the army, including generals and commanders with their forces, joined the anti-regime side and shortly later formed the FSA (Free Syrian Army). At that moment, the involvement of the international powers became apparent. The western powers (the USA, the EU, NATO etc.) armed the anti-regime nuclei while the Russian state armed Assad's allies. At the same period, the Kurdish areas of north Syria were the poorest in the whole country and predominately controlled by PYD (a party affiliated with PKK). At the

same time, PYD followed a model of communal management in the economy and social life in the areas under its control.

Under social pressure, Assad gave amnesty to many political prisoners and this event complicated the situation even further. Lots of the released political prisoners were Kurdish and Muslim fundamentalists(3). The latter broke away from Iraq-based Al-Qaeda and eventually formed ISIS, which proclaimed a territorial establishment for Salafism. The totalitarian monarchies in the Gulf (especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar) supported the fundamentalists with lots of money and equipment in order to increase their manipulative influence in the region. This support strengthened ISIS as well as Al-Nusra, which is yet another Al-Qaeda offshoot in Syria, that took a dominant role inside the opposition, compared to the (undermined and poorly equipped by the western block) FSA.

The expansion of ISIS to the west throughout 2014 found no obstacles. Neither the western powers nor Russia considered the presence of ISIS a threat to their interests. Only after the heroic and determinate fight of the Kurds and the international fighters against ISIS in Kobani did the American and Russian states understand that the empowerment of the Kurds could possibly serve their interests in that area. This development did not satisfy the Turkish state, which has long had its own reasons to oppose to the Kurdish self-determination mainly because of the attitude of their US allies. Using

the war against terrorism as a pretext, the Turkish state first attacked the Kurdish-populated areas of southeast Turkey and later the Kurdish cantons in Syria. By mid-2015, Assad's regime had lost control of many territories and was chiefly established in the capital and few adjacent areas in the west. Russia's decisive air-force intervention prevented a further contraction of the regime and enabled it to reoccupy some regions.

Today, -long after the initial uprising and a revolution that turned into a bloodbath - we stand in the middle of a chaotic war. It's obvious that any geo-strategic guesstimate is risky. On the one hand, sociopolitical stability seems to be of importance to the international economic trades. On the other hand, instability and destruction of infrastructure appears to facilitate the economic interests of certain blocks of power. Such rearrangements intensified the conflicts orchestrated by the transnational alliances and their agents. The "war economy" is integral to global capitalism that these power blocks promote. Initially, the USA armed the FSA amply enough to merely defend but not curb the governmental troops(4). Similarly, the Russian state overtly intervened on behalf of Assad's allies. This intervention, though, was not timely enough to help him prevail. Instead, it reached him when he had nearly collapsed. Weapons, telecommunications, food and fuel markets are large markets that can maximize their profit margins during wartime. Trade- legitimate or not- (mainly of petrol) between the opposing sides may seem contradictory at first sight but this is how war works in the era of advanced capitalism. Another major hindrance to the

stability is the fact that a large part of the belligerents do not respect the agreements of the dominant powers and continue a war in conditions of full extremity. Evidently, the war could have ended in the absence of all these intricacies.



2.THE REVOLUTION

The pre-revolution circumstances in the wider area/region

For a better understanding of the evolution of the Syrian revolution beyond the period of its initial outbreak (aka the 'Arab Spring'), we shall examine the era of the early 20th century. The once great Ottoman empire was in a state of disintegration and the ancestors of the modern imperialist powers, mainly English and French colonists, had divided Middle East into zones of interest, exhibiting an absolute disregard for the people, since their prime interest was directed to the economic specificities of the area. Then came the establishment of protectorate states, the features of which related to the interests of either England or France. So, in the mid-20th century and after the end of the Second World War, at a time when the borders of the state of Israel were being arbitrarily marked in the heart of the Middle East, some states in the area such as Lebanon, Syria and Iraq fought for and gained their independence. States as such - characterized by arbitrary borders, limited social cohesion and huge (mainly racial) differences - are outcomes of the ruthless action of the European imperialists of the past decades.

Syria is a country of huge inequalities. While 75% of the population consists of Sunni Muslims that have been arbitrarily divided from the

Sunnis of northern Iraq, the coastline of Syria -the most fertile and rich land -is inhabited by a strong minority of Alawites and Shiites. In the last 45 years, these minorities monopolized the power via Assad and his son's regime, which perpetuated, among others, the everlasting conflict between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. This doesn't necessarily mean that all Alawites belong to the highest classes of the social stratification. Concerning Assad's family, they came to power through Hafez Al-Assad's military take-over in 1970. He and the current dictator, Bashar al-Assad, governed with an iron grip and built a brutal dictatorship. Even the minor relative freedoms of civil democracy were curtailed. The whole political life was totally and strictly controlled by the one and only legal political party, Baath, and its allies. Trade unions, social groups and all organized groups were controlled by the regime. Thousands of political prisoners, activists or dissidents were brutally thrown into the regime's prisons. This bloodstained regime applied a policy that perpetuated the long-lasting divisive conflicts and controversies.

Even though Hafez ruled with an iron grip, he applied a 'prograssroots' economic policy and thus ensured a pretty decent standard of living for a significant part of the population. Some years before the outbreak of the uprising, his son Bashar Al-Assad, however, began to implement a series of neoliberal reforms, following the economic doctrine of the IMF. This shift broke any bonds between the regime and the social body. These reforms

marked a clear division. On the one end stood a capitalistic elite, including lots of members of the Assad family, who gained ownership of the telecommunications sector as well as nearly all the wealth of the country in no time (5). On the other end stood mass unemployment, impoverishment of the population and, generally, the deepening of class differences.

These very contradictions came to the forefront of the overall spirit of the 'Arab Spring' and had become the initial incentive for the uprising well before it was presented solely as a revolution against Assad's oppressive dictatorship. It's important to emphasize the fact that the spirit of the 'Arab Spring' played a major role in the beginning, especially during the initial stages of the uprising. Mohamed Buazizi, a street fruit seller set himself on fire, triggering heroic riots in a number of countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. Even though the cases might appear as unrelated - from an "international competition" point of view - there is a crucial factor that unites them all. For decades, they have all been governed by dictators whose neoliberal policies brought about poverty and social exclusion for the wider population.

A final but equally important factor in the area is the military operations in a series of countries in the Middle East conducted mainly by the western imperialist powers. The invasion of the soviet troops in Afghanistan in 1979, the brazen help from the USA to the

fundamentalists, the 'humanitarian' invasions of the American state and NATO in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 1991 and 2003; they have all slaughtered and forcefully relocated the populations of these areas, trapping them in a vicious cycle of violence while serving the interests of states and economic elites. The genocide of populations in this area orchestrated by the West in combination with the nazi policy implemented by Israel have led a large part of the Arabic society to favor the Islamic fundamentalism. As a result, organized Islamic groups such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS are the only true disputants of the occupiers' army and the slavish regimes in the eyes of these populations. In this way, the peoples' uprisings that demanded freedom and rights were turned into a war for the promotion of intolerant ideas.

First phase: the outbreak of the revolution

So, under the circumstances described above, the spirit of the 'Arab Spring' arrived in the long-suffering area of Syria in mid March 2011, triggering a heroic outbreak of uprisings that turned into a revolution; a revolution which, unfortunately, today has taken the form of a prolonged civil war and has become a place of experiments for the global imperialist powers. The arrest and humiliation of a man accused of a traffic offense as well as the arrest of youngsters for anti-regime graffiti sparked the first mass demonstrations (6).

The initial demonstrations were totally spontaneous without discrete political demands. Among the organizers were clerics and leftist artists whose goal, besides their innate will to oppose to the regime, was not exactly to overthrow it but to reform it. This, of course, changed quickly after the peaceful demonstrations were suppressed by means of violence, bullets and blood. The suppression of the demonstrations (for example the massacres of the 18th and 19th April in Homs, where 21 demonstrators were murdered, or the siege in Daraa, where dozens of people were killed between the 25th of April and the 5th of May) together with the people's will acted as a catalyst for the irreversibility of the situation. The demonstrators were becoming more and more, they demanded freedom and the fall of the dictatorship. Of course, this development made Assad's attitude

harsher. The even bigger protests had to be faced with the army's bullets and the storming of the regime's mercenaries in uniforms as well as the murders carried out by illegal groups allied to Assad known as Shabiha. The murdered, injured and arrested people were increasing exponentially but, at the same time, the protestors' tenacity was becoming stronger. Despite the massacres, they continued meeting at the streets, they continued fighting, they continued giving their blood to win the fight against the regime.

Under these circumstances, the first self-organized initiatives made their appearance. Due to the large participation in the uprising, the regime's forces departed from whole neighborhoods and even from large parts of the cities. Therefore, self-organization wasn't a mere political procedure but, instead, a response from those below to the total absence of the state and its structures in these areas. This spontaneous self-organization was so promising for the revolutionary movements that touched all the areas of social life. An important factor for this development was the extremely difficult situation people from these areas were found in and that's what deepened social solidarity. Collective management of food and housing, homes turning into self-organized hospitals and schools, self-organized media, rescue teams, electricity and water supply are some of the examples; concrete examples, indicating that people can self-organize beyond states, political parties and trade unions. This initial people's movement was stimulated and politically shielded by the

vision of the anarchist Omar Aziz. This fact may come as a surprise to all those who shortsightedly choose to interpret the events only at a state-against-state level, ignoring the class-based analysis and, thus, becoming apologists for totalitarian regimes. So, some months after the outbreak of the uprising, the anarchist Omar Aziz (who eventually died inside the regime's prison in 2013) put forward the idea of Local Committees, which spread over a large territory of Syria in the following months (7), before being destroyed by the regime's forces or the reactionary opposition entities. His inspiration was an important political contribution that is not simply a tale from the past. Rather, it remains alive until today in the dissident regions of Syria, such as Aleppo, where people continue to organize social life under the sounds of bombs and deprivation and they demonstrate not only against the regime but also the corrupted leaders of the armed opposition.(8)

The core principle of this endeavor was to manage all sectors of life in a self-organized way, without people having to subject themselves to any kind of power structures. Unfortunately, though, at a crucial point for the conflict -that is, when the violence was escalating especially from the regime's part- the self-defense of these grassroots committees hadn't progressed sufficiently.

The decades of Assad's junta in Syria resulted in the absence of organized political structures that would have been able - right from the outset and before suppression stifled spontaneity - not only to articulate overall demands, but also strengthen and protect the emergent revolutionary movement from both the regime's gangs-in-uniforms and the prime enemy of the revolution, meaning the radical Islamist groups. As mentioned earlier, what triggered the revolution were the neoliberal reforms of the regime. It is important to keep in mind that when the uprising broke out in Syria, peoples' movements had overthrown dictators who had ruled for many years already, like Ben Ali in Tunisia or Mubarak in Egypt. Syrian people may have expected the fall of Assad's regime to be easier and faster. Unfortunately, they had underestimated the bloodthirsty crook they had as president and also downplayed the interests of the global and regional 'players', such as the USA, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Moreover, it is important to mention that in the two largest cities of Syria, namely the capital Damascus and the industrialized Aleppo, the uprising took longer to make its appearance. This gave the regime a chance to avoid further battlefields and keep its economic and political power unscathed to a remarkable extent. As we see it, especially regarding the case of Damascus (the capital of Syria), the fact that it wasn't occupied by the anti-regime powers meant a victory to the regime and a loss to the rebels in both symbolic and material terms. Chiefly in the beginning, when the situation was still

volatile and the global allies hadn't yet interfered, if mass demonstrations had taken place, Assad could have been overthrown.

Second phase: Militarization

Even though the local coordination committees were at the peak of their political strength, they were unable to cope with the armed struggle due to the scarcity of ammunition and military experience. The one and only horizontal structure couldn't trust itself in the clash against the regime when the latter revealed its bloody face by riddling whole demonstrations.

Exactly this lack of armed communities emerging from the heart of the revolution created the first rift. Right or wrong, the power of those involved in a revolution or in a war is analogous to the weapons they have. From the moment the regime intensified the clashes, the armed groups were bound to play a pivotal role in the development of the fight. Actually, at this point there is a crucial difference between our opinion and that of those who overall criticize the revolution's militarization. For us, depending on the enemy you oppose to, there comes a point when you have to fight. At this crucial point, the lack of a revolutionary organization -which could, on the one hand, win a battle and, on the other, spread the practice of self-organization in the body of the revolutionaries - becomes apparent. The competing monarchies of the Gulf and the

fascist state of Turkey took advantage of this very lack of structures by strengthening and arming every group that could possibly serve their interests better. This move increased the conflicts in an area that had simmered on for years. For the western people who take a tiny taste of chemicals during demonstrations and simply run, it is easy to blame the people of the Middle East, and Syria in particular, for 'blindly following' radical Islamist groups. We choose to see beyond whichever political purity and evaluate the affairs in a broader scope.

When people suffer from hunger, when the regime murders, when bullets are a little too close for comfort during the demonstrations, most people won't focus on political ideas or imperatives but, instead, one's ability to provide safety and the capacity to confront the armed opponent on equal terms. In Syria's case, when the revolutionary movement was at an initial stage, this need was covered firstly by the secular groups of the FSA and later by the fundamentalists of Al Nusra, ISIS and others. We have to understand that apart from the predictable reaction of the global imperialists to intervene and deflect every revolutionary attempt around the world, the outcome also leans on whichever weakness the local revolutionary movement has and, by extension, the global solidarity the revolutionaries from foreign countries will show.

An important factor that restrained the revolution and paved the way for Islam to interfere was the people's consequent defeatism as they saw Assad remain in power and intensify the violence. As we mentioned above, due to the Tunisian and Egyptian experience, Syrian people may have thought that, despite the strong repression, Assad's fall would be a matter of days. So, when this did not eventually happen (for reasons we will explain later on), negative feelings and long-lived hatreds came to the surface. People either began to back out from the revolutionary attempts and massively leave the country or searched for saviors to drag them out of the bad situation. Once more, the lack of an organized political counterproposal acted as a catalyst for the way the situation evolved.

The FSA

For starters, we can say that, unlike other aspects, the part of military equipment and self-defense of the revolutionary communities doesn't work in a self-organized way. Members of the army defected and created a military movement, which later turned into the 'Free Syrian Army' (FSA) and came to fill this vacuum. Despite the impression its name might make, this organization consists of -more or less- over 1500 small groups of people, whose political views and origins are so different that they often fight

against one another. The FSA was created after the massacres in Daraa and Homs, where the soldiers took orders to shoot to the demonstrators. Whoever did not obey the order was executed (9). Under these circumstances, lots of soldiers and former generals of Assad's army joined the FSA. Some did so because they didn't want to take part in the murders while others saw the regime's fall coming and wanted to benefit from the new situation.

Since people who wanted to resist couldn't self-organize their defense the way they did with other aspects of life, they joined this blend of groups, which were managed (in any way possible) by some former generals of Assad. In any case, entities created during a revolution have no particular political premises or ideological basis whatsoever. This has both positive and negative implications, which we will discuss below. Due to the chaotic internal situation, all kinds of people, from democrats to radical Islamists and illegal thugs, joined the FSA. These people are responsible for atrocities committed later (10) as there was no central control capable of restraining them.

These groups are politically 'represented' by an unsolicited, exiled, political structure called the *Syrian National Coalition of Syrian Revolution*. Some of them turned to the USA and Turkey for support and, eventually, accepted military equipment and in some cases

even training from the USA, in order to meet the demands of the war. As for the USA, help wasn't given to all groups. Those deemed qualified to receive support were those who were controllable enough to ensure the enhancement of the USA's negotiating role in the area - or perhaps those who were also aiming at establishing a state of war in form of strategic tension; but, surely, the incentive behind this support was neither to help these groups defeat Assad nor to back rulers inside the opposition. In Turkey's case, the aid had a large impact on the unity of the revolution as it allowed the Turkish state to increase its influence on the choices made by the leadership of the opposition. The attitude of the National Coalition towards the Kurdish affair is a characteristic example of the kind. Its leadership is controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood and has played a very nasty role in trying to come to an agreement with Assad several times. Their stories of corruption didn't inspire trust to its base, which questioned it and prevented these nasty agreements from being put in practice.

Independent Brigades

It is important to mention that independent brigades have existed in Syria's opposition since the first moment. They haven't participated in the central management of the FSA even though they may have been branded with this label. Lacking the support of any big power,

given that they were not controllable, most of them didn't gain enough power to determine the development of the revolutionary struggle. These independent brigades would express a varied spectrum of political ideologies, ranging from radical Islamic conservatism to leftist views and ideas (for example the Leon Sedov brigade (11) or the People's Liberation Faction brigade (12)).



Al Nusra

At the same time Al Nusra makes its appearance as an offshoot of Al-Qaeda, which dominates -being adequately armed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar to overpower the FSA in military terms - and attracts lots of fighters, radicalizing the revolution towards the direction of Islam. Assad himself took care of their empowerment for this purpose by letting out of prison hundreds of radical Islamists, who nowadays man the leadership of the Islamic State (we don't know if he just gave in to pressure in an attempt to clamp down the revolution or if he did it deliberately, aiming to a long-lasting strategy of dissolution of meanings and concomitant isolation of the revolution). In this way, the conditions for the creation of ISIS were set.

The Islamic state

While Al-Nusra and other 'moderate' armed groups with fundamentalist orientations allied with the FSA in an bourgeois-democratic political frame, ISIS put in practice the Islamic law (Saria) right away and went on to gravely undermine the women's position in society and legitimize forms of violence like whippings, decapitations and crucifixions in the streets. Since Al Nusra pursued to appear moderate, they condemned these practices, criticizing them as premature. As a matter of fact, Al Nusra claims that people

must be trained in Saria before it is put in practice. Nevertheless, in the deeply religious society of Syria, these groups found breeding ground due to Assad's oppression and assaults.

In the beginning, ISIS occupied a large part of the Syrian territory, attacked the anti-regime forces it doesn't control, attacked the Kurdish areas, pursued ethnic cleansing, backed women and slaves' trafficking and profited thanks to petrol trade. In Aleppo and other places which were under the opposition's control, ISIS' headquarters were destroyed by the FSA's attacks. It doesn't come as a surprise that people who suffered mass killings found saviors in the faces of jihadists, overlooking the latter's intention to establish a more authoritarian form of oppression. However, a large part of the population in cities occupied by ISIS continued to demonstrate both against Assad and ISIS and the brutal policies of both. As a result, the Islamic Caliphate treated demonstrators with extremely harsh oppression.



The Communities of Rojava

Meanwhile, in the north of Syria we find the Kurdish PYD, who regard the revolutionary conditions as beneficial to their endeavors. Taking advantage of the power vacuum, they use their military forces, namely the YPG and YPJ (the latter is the well-known women's force), to take over certain territories. This guerilla army was based in the mountains of Kurdistan and so did a number of semi-illegal Kurdish organizations. They veiled their action with a reformist disguise, laying the foundations for the creation of Rojava under the shadow of Assad's regime. On the grounds they occupied, self-organization found space to grow as people attempted to substitute the state's social structures that had collapsed. The same happened in the rest of Syria, where people from below organized themselves all realms

of social life, from production to self-defense, since ISISs attacks created the need for self-defense. That's how the cantons of Rojava were created. Since the beginning, YPG/J have confronted ISIS and freed areas from its tyranny.

In these areas emerges a new social reality in which the state's institutions give their place to new federal democratic structures based on people's cooperation and self-organization. At the same time, women acquire an outstanding role in social life and participate actively in battles while revolutionaries from all over the world arrive to support the Kurdish battle against ISIS.

Of course, we can't refer to these developments as a communist or anarchist revolution since the economic inequality wasn't dealt with even though steps were taken to this direction as a grassroots, self-managed exchange economy established itself at the bottom of the social pyramid. This economy coexisted with the conventional trade system led by few capitalistic businesses while the social structures were yet to shed their hierarchical character under PYD's centralized control. In this context, there was a constitution as part of a 'progressive' justice system with provisions for people's courts, police forces (Asayesh) and prisons.

Further negative points were the compulsory recruitments, which were compelled as a necessity of the war, as well as the restraint of political structures that weren't under PYD's control. In some cases

members of these political formations were arrested due to suspicion. These events led to some demonstrations against PYD which were treated with oppression and, in some cases, like in Amouda, ended with blood (13).

It's important to evaluate and consider whatever is going on there in comparison with the situation before the revolution, when the Kurdish didn't have citizenship, when they were considered second-class citizens or they didn't have the right to speak their language, own over a certain number of trees or animals. Also, in order to understand the social achievements of Rojava's communities concerning multiculturalism and women's social status, we should view the conditions by means of comparison to the rest of Syria, where the religious element dominates. In order to understand the revolution's potential in the economic sphere, we have to consider that North Syria was organized in semi-feudal structures in the era before the revolution. The relentless oppression in the Kurdish areas resulted in the communities being based on solidarity relations and communalistic structures as proclaimed by their leadership as well as the revolutionaries from all over the world who supported all these beautiful ideas and actions.

Third phase: Civil war

The regime

Meanwhile, the Iranian oppressive regime and the Shiite Hezbollah joined Assad's side and so did Russia, which provided support in order to have its interests served. This support contributed greatly to Baath's assumption of power and the indefinite extension of the concomitant onslaughts. In this way, the regime maintained control of the capital and managed not only to prevent the collapse of a state under threat but also protect the Russian military bases in Latakia and Tartus situated on the coastline of the Aegean Sea. These bases were a key factor to Russia's decision to intervene.

Regime-opposition clash

Even though in the previous phase the anti-regime forces occupied small provincial cities, later on the FSA invaded larger cities, among which was Aleppo.

The regime's response was the intensification of onslaughts and the practice of indiscriminate bombing of unarmed populations in the areas occupied by the rebels. Barrels full of explosives were blindly dropped from helicopters inside the inhabited areas of eastern Aleppo, which was occupied by anti-regime forces. Events as such were typical of what daily life was like. Armed groups of thugs paid by the regime, like shabiha, carried out horrid massacres against Sunni populations (14), inflaming the sectarian hate in Syria's divided society.

Under these circumstances, what might have initially seemed to be the regime's ridiculous propaganda turned into reality. When a civil war takes place in a country governed by a sect made up by 10% of the most privileged, namely the Alawites, the sectarian dispute takes on class dimensions, resembling strikingly the national dispute between Israelites and Palestinians. So, given that the regime itself promoted the element of sectarianism as a continuous and deliberate practice of social segregation, Sunnism ceased to be a mere religious identity. Instead, it started to symbolize the oppressed. Amidst the despair of war and death, religious feelings get stronger and become an ultimate shelter for those who are weak but must oppose to the killing machine of the state. There is no doubt that someone who loses their children in a blind bombing conducted by the regime can easily turn into an extremist.

At the same time, the anti-regime forces often clashed with ISIS, which was getting stronger as it took advantage of the bloodshed caused by the regime. The control of regions was constantly changing hands and the regime, too, occasionally fought against ISIS to maintain its control.

In the meanwhile, al Nusra got stronger and increased its influence over the anti-regimes' side while the FSA slowly weakened due to serious lack of military equipment and ammunition. To address this grave disadvantage, many of its brigades endorsed the salafistic rhetoric in order to gain the courtesy of the Gulf's monarchies.

Al Nusra imprisoned some of the anti-regimes because they were considered dangerous due to their divergent political views and many of these revolutionaries died when the regime bombed the organization's prisons and headquarters. Al Nusra's policy has been totally sectarian, promoting the islamization of the revolution and the exclusive participation of Sunnis. Indicative of its policy was the attack against a left rebel group from people's liberation faction which was heading for Aleppo in order to fight on the rebels' side. Two rebels and three members of al Nusra were killed(15). Also, indiscrimination towards unarmed civilians is characteristic of al Nusra's military action.

All the same, the internal situation of the FSA remained out of control. Its leadership met with Assad's delegation in Damascus in

2013 in order to reach a peace agreement and this handling led lots of brigades to seek independence while lots of members joined the better-equipped al Nusra.

The anti-regimes' overall military equipment remained poor compared to the forces they had to confront. They had no air force like their enemies did and, thus, their leadership resorted to NATO's forces to ask for a no-fly zone. (Of course, the USA didn't care about the anti-regimes' demands, especially after understanding that they were not a controllable force). Lacking considerable equipment, they fought with improvised ammunition such as the Hell Canons (mortars made of gas bottles), which turned out very dangerous for the civilians' lives as they lacked sufficient targeting capacity.

In the areas where the regime's forces were casted from, the state's social structures gave their place to the self-organization of the Local Coordination Committees, which spread to cover all spheres of social life. A typical example as such is the groups that rushed to the bombed areas to gather and nurse the injured, dragging them out of debris wherever necessary. These groups saved lives, acting under conditions of total destruction, risking and losing their own lives and, therefore, they are a living archive of the revolution that deserves global attention. Despite this, the *white helmets*, who are the evolution and unification of these groups under the umbrella of a

non-governmental organization, have been slandered due to the funding they accepted from the western governments -although some choose to forget the massive amounts of money given from the UN to Assad's regime supposedly for medical equipment during war time (16)- as well as due to their obvious relationship with rebel groups, since they stayed and acted in the same areas.

Unfortunately, though, the social sphere was shaped under harsh conditions determined mostly by the deeply rooted religious beliefs of the wider Arab populations of Syria -beliefs which gained momentum as people faced death-, the promotion of sectarianism by the regime as well as the influential power of the monarchies of the Gulf over the resistance through their material support in form of equipment. All these brought the Islamic rhetoric in the forefront of domination and, as expected, the position of women returned to a pre-revolution state or even worse. More often than not, the fundamentalist groups who took over the resistance imposed their ideas. That's why we see occasions like Aleppo, where the population supported the resistance and then went on to demonstrate against the authoritarianism and barbarism of these groups even under a state of siege and continuous bombings.

Apart from the dirty political games played by a large part of the left, the religious rhetoric also played a role in the anti-regimes' political

isolation from the whole world. This fact has a reverse impact, since the revolution is, in reality, left in the hands of these forces, given the lack of solidarity. Most likely, the situation would be totally different if anarchists and leftists had rushed from the whole world -as did happen in Rojava- to strengthen the healthy forces of resistance against the Islamist-conservative ones that sought to monopolize the fight against the regime (like a self-fulfilled prophecy). And we can imagine that the genocide could have been prevented if the murderous apathy and isolation from the movements around the world had stopped, if strong antiwar acts had began in order to put pressure on the forces that are now keeping up the airstrikes undisturbed.

Rojava: evolution of a social experiment and the war against ISIS

Rojava's cantons were getting bigger and eventually turned into a potent political and military force. The operations there received publicity because of the heroic resistance in Kobani and got support from the whole world.

In the beginning, Rojava was in a difficult position in the war against ISIS and the canton of Kobani was in danger. However, as a result of the strategic alliance with the USA air force, which intervened when they thought that YPG/J could become their best ally in the area for the time being, ISIS' forces were repelled and YPG/J managed to advance their position. The female forces, which ISIS' fighters were afraid of due to religious superstitions, played an outstanding role in this advancement.

As YPG/J's were gaining ground against ISIS, populations such as the Gejidi, who had suffered genocide, were set free. Moreover, the Kurdish forces led by PYD enforced their political and military scheme of "war emergency" in the areas under their occupation, where the residing populations were predominantly of Arabic origins. Parts of these populations were very suspicious towards the Kurdish occupation and vice versa. Since PYD saw great likelihood of people among the Arab population turning loyal to the caliphate and availing themselves as potential suicide bombers ready to attacks from the inside at any time, they treated them as dangerous and, thus, forced part of the populations to leave.

On account of all these and given Rojava's success and the trust that PYD inspired to its base, it appears as a far more manipulable leadership than the opposition in the eyes of the USA. Practically, all these create the conditions for the USA to direct their military support primarily to PYD and base their military air force on Rojava's ground (17). Of course, this alliance is very dangerous and its implications will be seen in the future. A PYD's representative has already made statements praising the American state, its democratic structure and its policy (18); statements which are very dangerous for the evolution of the Kurdish revolution since, as it appears, the need to avoid a bloody repression leads PYD to assimilation. Unquestionably, decisions of this kind are not made by the self-organized structures but by the hierarchical structures of the party's administration. Also, there's no doubt about how an emerging authority is going to treat whoever sticks to the example of self-organization whenever (and if ever) the war ends and the time for a forced assimilation comes.

The conclusion drawn by the way the imperialist forces intervened in the area is that they are not committed allies of a certain side. Instead, they act expediently, having their own interests in mind, and little do they hesitate to change allies to mainly avoid direct clashes because they recognize each other's power. Meanwhile, the

“collateral damage” caused by airstrikes in Syria alone has reached hundreds of thousands of victims. Unsurprisingly, “mistakes” of the kind don’t happen to afflict the state’s military that coexists there in order to murder unbothered, because they exchange information about the positions of their troops (19) precisely to prevent this from happening. At the same time, diplomats in luxurious living rooms are negotiating, exchanging smiles of courtesy as if they were playing poker.

YPG/J’s relationship with the regime and the anti-regimes

In the previous phase part of the anti-regimes showed solidarity to Kobani and contributed to the war against ISIS in the rural areas. Their alliance, unfortunately, wouldn’t last for long.

It didn’t last because PYD chose, on the one hand, not to acknowledge the Syrian opposition (but balefully equate it to ISIS, instead) and, on the other, to strike an informal peace agreement with the regime so as to avoid further clashes. In turn, the opposition groups chose not to acknowledge the Kurdish autonomy either (20). The choice of the former is rooted in the history of oppression the Kurds suffered from the Arabs while that of the latter is linked with the interests of the Turkish state, which had pledged its support to the opposition. The choice of no cooperation has had a dual impact. First, it translated into a grave number of lives claimed and, second, it marked a political and ethical squandering and a wasted opportunity to lead both the regime and ISIS to demise. However,

the FSA has had no unified stance towards YPG/J and some of its brigades coordinated their operations with YPG/J in the war against ISIS (21). In the end, however, fierce clashes took place between YPG/J and the anti-regime forces over the occupation of certain areas.

A typical example of such an area is the one between the cantons of Afrin and Kobani. The occupation of this area was necessary for the Kurds to reach the cantons, especially that of Afrin, remote as it is compared to the others. Turkey wanted to prevent this from happening for fear of the Kurds' demands for autonomy. As this area was mostly populated by Arab populations and served as a supply-route for the anti-regime forces, the Turkish state sought to back FSA's brigades. Reversely, Russia's reaction was to strike an alliance with YPG/J and use its air force to bomb the villages under the anti-regime control so that the YPG/J could "liberate" them. Later on, the situation reversed again and it was Turkey that bombed the very same villages so that FSA could "liberate" them this time.

Aleppo is another example of a fight as such. In Aleppo, the anti-regime forces occasionally clashed with YPG/J at the borders of its region. PYD's choice to stay neutral in the war against Assad and occasionally ally with the regime's forces enraged the anti-regimes and urged some of its brigades to invade the Kurdish areas wherever YPG/J's had abandoned its control. Eventually, all these led to a tragedy. While some of the anti-regimes initially rushed to announce YPG/J's accession to the anti-regime forces, in the end, bloody battles burst out. Until recently, YPG/J, having control of the Kurdish area in Aleppo, has contributed to the blockade of the area under the anti-regimes' control.

Very recently (on 27/11) the anti-regimes suffered massive losses of grounds after an attack launched by Assad's forces, Russia's air force, Hezbollah and YPG. Specifically, the regime's forces took advantage of the adjacency of the anti-regimes' area to the area of YPG and launched a united attack. As a result, YPG seized grounds from the anti-regimes. These areas share no borders any longer since the regime has taken hold of even bigger areas between the two.

That's what happens when revolutions are left in the hands of administrations that ally with state military forces in the name of good cause. In reality, they safeguard their interests in statist terms.

As regards the tragic situation of the relationship between these two fronts of struggle, we believe that it is caused by a policy that doesn't trust the people who revolt but is, rather, merely preoccupied with seizure of control and establishment of authority wherever the circumstances allow. In this way, the lack of solidarity and the utilitarian use of the Syrian revolution by the leadership of PYD together with the opposition leadership's choice not to acknowledge the Kurdish autonomy led to deeper division and, ultimately, fierce hatred between Kurdish and Arab revolutionaries. This only benefits the state forces, which everyone will have to confront eventually.

It's important to mention that many Arabs fight on YPG's side and, respectively, many Kurdish on the anti-regimes' side. There has been concrete and expressed solidarity at a basic level. There were Kurdish voices demanding that YPG/J join the revolution against a

regime that had brutally oppressed them. There were Kurdish parties other than PYD which took part in the committees of the National Coalition to raise the issue of the Kurdish autonomy and were disdained by the leadership of the Muslim brotherhood, who represented their Turkish allies' interests -alliances with the devil come with a toll, as it seems. Solidarity existed and was expressed within the bases, but it was the horizontal structures to solidify it that were missing.

The situation in November 2016

At the time of writing, Syria has been in civil war for 5 years and a ceaseless massacre of the Syrian population. The deaths are over half a million with most of them claimed in the battles between the regime and the opposition and the airstrikes of the regime and their allies, who are responsible for the biggest part of the onslaughts.

This is not to negate the responsibilities of NATO's forces, which have historically taken the lead on airstrikes in the region. The terrible massacres they committed in Iraq as well as the embargo imposed, causing one million deaths from starvation and diseases, paved the way for the religious fundamentalism, which nowadays contributes to the division and perpetuation of the genocide in Syria. We mustn't forget that the leadership of the Caliphate consists of

former generals of Saddam Hussein's regime, which the USA had initially backed but later went on to remove from power.

Even nowadays, the American air force is responsible for hundreds or maybe thousands of dead civilians in Syria since the airstrikes in populated areas were anything but targeted. It's worth mentioning that people in ISIS-occupied cities that are now being bombed had the courage to demonstrate against the Islamic Caliphate; they rebelled and bled in 2011 as a result, but today they still remain under its oppression (24).

Open fronts between the regime and anti-regime forces.

The situation in western Syria has been tragic. There are scattered open fronts in all provinces while cities like Aleppo or the suburbs of anti-regime-occupied Damascus are in a state of siege, with one million people in whole Syria suffering starvation while being remorselessly bombed by Assad and Russia's forces.

At the moment of writing, east Aleppo is being remorselessly bombed by Russia and Assad's forces while the last self-organized hospital has been destroyed. Hundreds of people are dying helpless

every day under debris or from the use of chemical weapons (25) forbidden by international treaties. After months of siege, there is no more food or medicine and a population of 300,000 is left at the east part of Syria to starve.

Under these conditions, the rebels fight a war to the bitter end against formidable forces and, despite the grave disadvantage of lacking an air force, they show unique strength. This war has cost the lives of lots of soldiers, rebels and civilians who happen to live in the war zones as both sides use destructive weapons.

Fronts in North Syria

In North Syria, SDF's forces (Syrian Democratic Forces – consisting of and co-managed mainly by YPG/J, Turkmen groups, Arabs and FSA's brigades) in cooperation with the American military forces have invaded the areas around Rakka which was occupied by IS (that is, a new name for ISIS).

At the same time the IS-occupied city of Al Bab, which is located further north of Aleppo and between the cantons of Afrin and Kobani, is threatened by the allied forces of the FSA and Turkey. All this time, clashes have broken out between the FSA-Turkey military coalition and SDF over Al Bab because of its strategic importance to both

sides. Basically, they are competing to be the first to take control of Al Bab, which is now controlled by a weak IS besieged in the towns of Mosul, Raqqa and al Bab. At the time of writing, in the areas where Al Bab borders with Afrin and Kobani cantons, some of the FSA's brigades supported by the Turkish air force are attacking the villages controlled by YPG/J in order to prevent the creation of a passage between the cantons. This clash resulted in the discontinuation of SDF's operations in Raqqa so that they could blackmail the international alliance under the US leadership in order to block Turkey's interests (24).



The regime's fronts with IS

Despite the propaganda from some leftist supporters of the Assad-Russia alliance, there were no open fronts in November 2016. Occasionally, there were some minor clashes but the only serious one was that in Palmyra, which had great symbolic and economic value (smuggling of antiquities). After its integration in the areas the regime controls, every attack against IS stopped. The regime's priority is the total defeat of the anti-regimes.

3.ANALYSIS OF THE GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS

The dominant powers divided the area of Middle East into influence zones on their own account, disregarding any racial, religious or cultural factors or how the populations are settled in the area whatsoever. They grabbed rulers and drew newlines to mark borders, not according to the ethnic characteristics, not even according to the geographical specificities, but only with their profitability in mind, and shaped the conditions of the following massacres.

During periods of economic stability, the economic and political elites of these countries govern the people dictatorially and exploit the natural environment in the interest of the colonialist countries and the transnational corporations. While profits soar and money comes easy, the plundering and the harsh exploitation continue with undiminished tension.

As ruthless competition is the very nature of capitalism, exploitation is taken for granted, allowing both natural resources and people alike to get savaged and plundered. When economic crises break out, the markets shrink and, as a result, the regions are redistributed in order for the new economic conditions to be set.

During these redistributions the competition among the market powers gets intense and conflicts ensue. So, when the figures and financial accounts don't seem to work out well, due to either an economic crisis or the separatism of those states or even their integration into another convenient alliances, they opt for military operations in order to enforce their interests.

We don't mean to provide a geopolitical analysis that sees the various movements in isolation as they emerge and shape the course of history, rearranging or canceling the plans of the states. The economic crisis was one of the causes of the so-called Arab Spring. People living in those areas were suffocating and their suffocation worked as an explosive in the Arabic world. When the spark appeared in Tunisia, the fire spread everywhere.

What matters is exactly this power that emerges from the bottom of the social pyramid and forces states to re-adjust their mechanisms. This element is made up of several forces that appear united when there is a substantial incentive for people to take to the streets, putting the hatreds aside and achieving great things. However, when political conscience, collective memory and material preparation are absent, it is very easy for the revolting crowds to be manipulated.

That is why we are not going to fall in the trap of idealizing these forces. We know that they bear the characteristics of the world they live in. They are people who rally around religious, racial, economic and political communities that engage with each other often in dirty ways. What happened in Tunisia and Yemen is the perhaps the easiest way to stop a revolution. Basically, the institutions remained unchanged and the demands of the insurrectionists were not addressed whatsoever. For the sake of social decompression and dispersion of social unrest, some regime figures were replaced.

In this course of events, we have seen the division of the forces mentioned above and their transition from a war against a regime in demise to a war among themselves. When the regime's violent attacks do not translate into an internalization of loss from the part of the people and, thus, are not the ones to mark the division line in the war, there begin the hidden agreements with powerful businessmen who give their instructions to ensure that any anti-regime fight is dismantled, destroyed and devoid of any meaning in the end. The case of IS is a typical one because it served as a tool for the USA, Russia and their agents to bomb and conquer with a view to reducing the internal social reactions.

And when division isn't enough to destroy the revolution, then raw oppression increases. That's what happened in Bahrain or in Libya,

where NATO used the pretext of human life protection from the murderous forces of Gaddafi to invade. The result was that during the 7 months of NATO-orchestrated airstrikes the number of deaths was ten times bigger than the number of deaths during the first month of the revolution (27).

We mustn't forget that the dominant powers are not gods, after all. There is a chaotic situation they are trying hard to handle; one that can't be easily or fully controlled since lots of power-thirsty nuclei turn against one another - each with distinct interests. Indeed, the landscape changes when the crowds dare take a dynamic role in what history entails and decide to cancel their plans. Eventually, the role of the great powers during chaotic situations is to preserve their influence and strike alliances solely for the sake of their interests.

Geopolitical interests at the beginning of the revolution

The USA had several reasons to be pleased with the withdrawal or at least the debilitation of the Assad family. Later on, we are going to thoroughly examine the main aim behind the decision to let the Syrian state's institutions remain untouched with only few minor adjustments. For sure, if Syria's government was hostile towards Russia, then the latter would have definitely been deprived of its most direct access to the Aegean Sea, meaning its naval bases in Tartus and Latakia.

Also, the more land the West keeps under its control in the Middle East, the more commercial roads it controls. The pipelines in the areas of these countries are very important for Europe's energy supply and Syria's geographical location, in particular, is crucial to the geopolitical and economic plans drawn by western capitalists. Europe's and mainly Germany's energy independence from Russia is one of the United States' goals. If that happened, then it would result in a profound decrease in Russia's influence over the European countries as well as its overall economic weakening. There were more than a few times in the past when the European states were hesitant or even unwilling to back the economic sanctions the USA imposed on Russia precisely because of their energy dependence. So, Russia had every reason to pursue a military intervention in

Syria, seeking to protect its interests, both geopolitical and economic.

Apart from the western powers, there are also the regional ones. On the one hand, Iran has repeatedly and explicitly stated that it supports Assad unconditionally in order to preserve a valuable ally in the area. Syria's ground is vital to Iran as it strives to maintain a natural passage to Lebanon and Hezbollah. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, despite its good relationships with Assad's regime before the revolution (it was one of the biggest investors in the Syrian economy), acknowledges that Assad's removal or debilitation equals to the weakening of its regional opponent, namely the Shiite Iran. Also, Saudi Arabia focused on funding and equipping the radical Islamist groups with the aim of shifting the demands of the revolution from freedom, democracy and justice to other directions, since a fight as such would shake the fragile order from within. After it nurtured them, it ended up competing them, aiming to crown itself the dominant power of the Sunni population. The strategy of polarization it followed, by executing the anti-regime Shiite clergyman Nimr Al-Nimr as well as members of al-Qaeda, was obviously meant to concentrate the Sunni forces under its manipulative protection.

Turkey's involvement had more to do with Erdogan's views concerning the natural extension of its borders. By gaining control of north Syria and north Iraq, he wished to become the main trade intermediary between Middle East and Europe. This strategy failed due to the Kurdish domination in North Syria as well as the blockade of the Turkish forces after the operations against ISIS in north Iraq. So, in August 2016, Turkey invaded Syria, fighting tooth and nail to prevent the unification of the Kurdish cantons and obliterate the Kurdish struggle for autonomy, since it was obvious what a potential success as such could mean for southeast Turkey. Russia and Assad seemed to tolerate this invasion as long as the Turkish forces and the Syrian brigades under their control kept aloof of Aleppo, which had long been besieged. Even though the USA initially applauded Turkey's involvement in the fight against ISIS, it wasn't long before they showed their discontent with the first Turkish attacks against the Kurdish militia, who were the main allies of the USA against ISIS. So, after the battle over the re-occupation of al-Bab, the USA withdrew their support from the international coalition under their leadership, announcing that their interest would focus on the support to the Kurdish for the re-occupation of Raqqa. We have no doubts that the USA kept at the back of their minds that the presence of the Turkish army is a constant bogeyman for the Kurdish, if the latter decide to diverge from the US influence.

What is also of importance is that Turkey and Russia approached anew one another after a period of unstable diplomatic relations caused by the shoot-down of a Russian warplane. The cancellation of

promising trade agreements (28) (for example, the gas pipeline *Turkish Stream* - a plan reborn from its ashes) as well as the sanctions they imposed on each other would have a damaging impact on both economies and, thus, the hatred wasn't deemed profitable and didn't last for long. Having broken off from America and away from the European Union, Turkey added fuel to the fire by announcing that it intended to buy an anti-airforce system from Russia. The severe oppression that Turkey's government has reinforced inside the country, its diminished influence on neighboring countries, the intention to reintroduce the death penalty, the provocative statements concerning the treaty of Lausanne and the issue of Cyprus, the constant violation of the Greek airspace; all interweave a dangerous tapestry beyond prediction.

Finally, Assad - this murderer whose only goal is to remain in power - claimed that the revolution against him was a terrorists' attempt to overthrow him. Israel couldn't have been more pleased by the constant tension in the area, since it's been a military state, occupying grounds of its neighbors for the last 68 years, and has taken part in six wars and still perpetuates a ceaseless war against Palestinians. When you are surrounded by enemies, a state of constant war benefits you, since your enemies' forces are preoccupied fighting other fronts and, as a result, the forces you have to face are weakened.

The ghost of anti-imperialism

The harshness of our times breeds disappointment and that, in turn, breeds confusion. When we choose to clear it up by means of accumulating more power in order to interfere more, then many times we will be led to amorality and opportunism without experiencing a values crisis whatsoever. Eventually, we end up with artificial polarization for the sake of simplicity as we strive to understand and interpret such a complex and chaotic world. Inevitably, we are trapped in deadlocks, fanaticisms and monster-makings, blinkers and unconsciousness.

Parts of the lefts, who are yet to depart from Stalinism and statist views, felt obliged to choose a block of power to pledge their support to and this created a political paradox. They supported the massacres of Assad's regime and his allies (Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and China), considering them a form of resistance to the advancement of western imperialism. Here we must note that there are different levels of paranoia. Some voices might still advocate Putin's "struggles", recognizing him as a savior from the American monster, while some others restrict themselves to uncritically supporting resistance groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, portraying the powerful players that surround them as necessary evils. Also, we must add that even part of the anti-authoritarians,

obviously unable to disseminate the anarchist imperatives of self-organization, anti-statism, and anti-authority, internalized their failure and set out to influence large social bodies during a period of crisis and “objective circumstances” by resorting to fixed and historically “tried” recipes, negating values and ideological boundaries and endorsing the above extremely contradictory analysis.

But why is the logic of «the enemy of my enemy is my friend» or «I have to choose the lesser of two evils» wrong, after all? Simply because in either case one fails to realize that unless they assimilate, the enemy of their enemy will be hostile towards them as well and, also, that the lesser evil has one and only conscious goal; that is, to grow bigger and one day, who knows, overpower the dominant evil.

For someone to believe that the “defeat” of the USA and its allies by Russia in the Middle East will bring a better future to the oppressed populations of these areas means that they identify whichever people’s struggle with the interests of forces similar to the ones of western imperialism. The only difference, at least for now, is that these forces are not the dominant. All these forces have a role to play in capitalism and favor their own transnational corporations. They use war, propaganda and oppression as means of enforcement.

A glimpse at their internal characteristics is enough for someone to see the oligarchic cliques who govern, the harsh oppression and exploitation of the lower classes, the absence of welfare state, the slow or fast death they impose.

The former Soviet Union drowned so many uprisings in blood and nowadays Russia has become one of the most important trade-partners of the European imperialism (Gazprom supplies a large part of the European market with gas). It has used its military machine in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Georgia and now Syria. It has coordinated military actions with the European countries against ISIS while it invited the USA to partake in the «new war against terrorism» in May 2016, only to get the disarming answer from the US minister of defense that they attack only ISIS and not Al-Nusra or the anti-regimes(29). As we will analyze below, it has negotiated and already agreed with the USA on Syria. And this is hardly the beginning.

The «anti-imperialist» state of Iran, with its supreme religious leader who arrived in 1979 from his exile in Paris (where he had stayed on a tourist visa), after being prosecuted in Iraq, won't step back. Khomeini destroyed the struggle of the working class for self-organization and laid the foundations for the reconstruction of a capitalistic economy. This Islamic democracy is so democratic that all powers are concentrated in the religious leader's hands. Even more so, the guardian council, whose members are appointed - not

elected - control most of the other elected officials, who must first get the council's approval before taking part in the election. Regarding the social policy, things are extremely simple. If you are a dissident, if you resist, protest or revolt, then you will be repressed. If you insist further, then you will have your head cut off. In this context, the communists were imprisoned and executed and, eventually, politically exterminated when the regime came into power.

We deem it significant to refresh our memory regarding the co-operations of once sworn enemies.

The Shiite government of Iraq- that is, a puppet of the USA- survived and continues to survive thanks to the Shiite militias, who are equipped and funded by Iran. Also, the same Shiite militias fought and continue to fight against ISIS in Iraq (Fallujah, Mosul etc.) under the protection of the international coalition led by the USA (30). The imperialists conduct the airstrikes while the «anti-imperialists» advance on the ground. And all this is happening because they now need to get rid of the religious mafia that had once served their economic policies and military operations. ISIS, after obscuring the peoples' uprisings against poverty and oppression, went on to strike a trade-deal with the transnational corporations, selling off the area's resources and now, after having become autonomous, it is an alibi for murderers of every nationality.

When it comes to trade, the USA-Iran deal, apart from the geopolitical exchanges and the new fine-tuning of the power balance, means also the transfer of amounts of uranium from Iran back to Russia, the creation of a nuclear reactor and the lifting of some economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the west. This way, the modern punishers of the crusaders conclude trade agreements at every opportunity with every mighty unfaithful who is willing to give lots of euros or dollars. Iran's society is technologically advanced and consists of 80 million people. In times of shrinking markets, it is easy to understand what games are played.

Even though it tends to be forgotten, we couldn't fail to mention one more crucial associate of the "anti-imperialist axis" - China. China has provided economic and military support to Assad's regime (with advisors and fighters from Afghanistan and the nearby states). China is also the largest importer of raw materials from the eastern European countries and the largest exporter of products to these countries. After all, it's a common secret that it has ambitions of global economic dominance and its strategy to this end is not a militant one, since the economic dictatorship is relatively bloodless and inexpensive, totalitarian and thus highly effective. In reality, China's state capitalism is every bit like the institution of slavery that existed in the USA - one that continues to exist through its

prisons and criminal justice system. Bashar al-Assad, on the other hand, derives his basic arguments for his «anti-imperialist» bragging from his support to the Palestinian and Lebanese people in their struggle against Israel as well as his traditional hatred against the USA. Hafez al-Assad was a member of the alliance under the USA leadership in the first war against Iraq and this fact caused the reactions of Syrian intellectuals, since Saddam was highly popular in Syria. After meetings with the US secretary of state, James Baker, in Damascus, he agreed to offer 100.000 soldiers (31), even though theoretically Syria was under the influence of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Bush government congratulated him on the limitation of terrorist groups that could harm the American interests.

This example helps us to better understand the peculiar relationships of the ruling classes in the states of Middle East, northern Africa and the Gulf with the imperialist powers of the East and the West. Analysts have come up with the term “frenemies”. When there is some or absolute identification of interests, there is coordination and improvement of relationships. Otherwise, relationships go sour and there is economic competition, war of attrition or even actual war. So, when Gorbachev refused to supply Syria with sophisticated weaponry and simultaneously allowed the mass movement of the Jewish of the Soviet Union to Israel, the father Assad didn't hesitate to turn to his current enemies. As usual,

fragile alliances are defined by interests and not by tradition or ideology.

Likewise, following his father's footsteps, Bashar al-Assad cooperated with the USA on safety issues in the "war against terrorism". Basically, his contribution was to detain and torture inside the Syrian prisons those handed in by the CIA in order to extract information on the latter's behalf. The most known case is that of the Syrian Maher Arar, who lived in Canada. After his arrest at the airport of New York, he was interrogated for 13 days for suspected relations with al-Qaeda. He was sent to Syria, where he was held for 10 months to be tortured in order to give answers to the same questions he had been asked in the USA. As soon as he was proved innocent, he received a compensation of 10,5 million Canadian dollars as well as an official apology from Canada's prime minister, but the USA made no official statements on his case whatsoever. Of course, he wasn't the only one. What is more, we couldn't have omitted Hillary Clinton's statement on "Assad, the reformer" at the beginning of the uprising, when she highlighted that this view expresses not only herself, but also other members of the Congress (33). Moreover, in 2008 president Sarkozy had invited Assad to make a speech at Elysium because he hadn't yet become the «bloodthirsty dictator» he is today. Finally, before the beginning of the revolution in Syria, part of the country's resources ended up in the European markets. We can't be as naïve as to believe that Syria

would sell its petrol to Russia, Russia to Iran, and Iran to Syria on the grounds that trade in capitalistic terms occurs only among friends.

Let's now examine Syria's relations with Lebanon and Palestine. The involvement of the Syrian state in Lebanon's civil war led to Syria's occupation, which began in 1976 and ended in 2005, after the people's uprising, following the murder of the former prime minister of Lebanon. Syria's prime aim was the restriction of the Muslim Palestinians and their allies (pan-Arabs and leftists) so as to protect the Christian phalangists, who practically held the official power in Lebanon. So, the Syrian intervention crushed them and thus played a crucial role in the disappearance of the communist and left Lebanese organizations like LRNF, which later refused to cooperate with Syria in the resistance against Israel (34). At this point, let's not forget that Syria cooperated closely with the USA in 1989 under an agreement with the Arab states (35), aiming to the termination of the Lebanese civil war. In particular, Syria agreed to send 40.000 soldiers to Lebanon in the valley of Beqaa only to gradually withdraw them after the Lebanese military had regained control. A second example that reveals the real nature of Syria's relationship with the Palestinians is that of the fight against the king of Jordan (Hussein) known as the Black September, when Syria abandoned them within 5 days only, forcing them to capitulate and, as a result, face the possibility of being slaughtered (36). The attitude of Assad's regime towards the Palestinians also became apparent by the way it treated

those who lived on its grounds. At the beginning of the revolution, it accused them of instigation of and participation in the uprising on the extremists' side who meant to overthrow him. Consequently, he killed and imprisoned Palestinians (37) while he blocked and besieged the Palestinian camp Yarmouk (38). Lastly, Palestinians in Syria who supported the Intifada or the Syrian revolution were wanted by the security forces. Assad himself officially stated that Syria has no relations with Hamas any longer, given that its leader expressed his support to the «heroic people and their rightful demands for freedom, democracy and reformation» in 2012, recognizing the events in Syria as a revolution and not as a result of a conspiracy (39).

It's obvious that the strategy of Assad's regime was to use the Palestinians as leverage against Israel in the negotiations over Golan's Heights, which have been in Israel's possession since 1967. Through these negotiations, the Syrian state was aiming to achieve a peace agreement; it hasn't used military forces against Israel since 1973, not even to retaliate the attacks on its grounds. It was never interested in the Palestinians' liberation from the Israeli occupation. Reversely, it abandoned them or slaughtered them. In any case, we all know deep inside, that all the individuals we described above are also scums. This is why we intend to get closer to the core of the «anti-imperialist» axis below.

Hezbollah (meaning, the God's party) was officially founded in 1985 by clerics in Lebanon with help from Iran so as to serve as the organization that would oppose to Israel. Its fighters were trained by the "Revolutionary Guards", who arrived in Lebanon through Syria. It is a Shiite religious organization and, as its deputy has stated, it's a matter of principle to them to follow Iran (40). Hezbollah managed to gain considerable respect in the Arab world owing to the battles it fought against Israel in 1985 and 2006. It's a state within a state in Lebanon (its army is bigger than the official one, let alone that it occupies certain number of seats in the parliament) and, apart from its military action, it has also performed important social acts. In comparison with other jihadist groups, it can be considered one of the most progressive ones as it shows greater tolerance to other religions; its declarations propose that Lebanon's government should be Islamic, but this decision lies on the people themselves.

In one of his speeches, the leader of Hezbollah, Nasrallah, expressed his support to the early uprisings of the Arab Spring but didn't include the one in Syria, which had started to unfold some days earlier. He criticized the religious sects and described the peoples' demands as rightful while he rejected the scenarios of a "West-driven Arab Spring" as conspiracy theories. Somewhere at this point, the contradictions begin. In 2011, Hezbollah supported the overthrow of Saleh - the Yemeni dictator-, who described the uprising against him and the ones in other Arab states as USA- and

Israel-orchestrated actions. In the end, he relinquished his position in order to be granted amnesty by consenting that the vice president would succeed him. Let's note at this point that he had also participated in the USA-led alliance for the second «war against terrorism». In 2015, a civil war broke out between Yemen's government and the Shiite rebels Houthis, who pursued Saleh's re-thronement. Interestingly, Iran and Hezbollah supported them even though back in 2011 Hezbollah had declared itself in favor of the deposition of the dictator Saleh. (41).

Concerning Egypt, in 2013 Hezbollah welcomed the removal of Morsi (who was a supporter of Hamas) due to his relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and his support to the Syrian revolution. Hezbollah took a positive view of Sisi's authoritarian regime since it had supported Assad's regime. Sisi imposed an embargo and a blockade on Gaza, he destroyed the tunnels and closed the border-passage of Rafah(42) (opening it only few times for a short time), while he officially described Hamas as a terrorist organization(43). He adopted a compromising rhetoric, appearing equidistant from Israelis and Palestinians, but, in reality, he supported the powerful one and limited its support to the persecuted to hypocritical charities. Hezbollah did not respond to the above.

So, even though Hezbollah supported the uprisings of the Arab spring (Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain) as authentic and fair, it made a complete U-turn in its rhetoric when the Syrian revolution broke out, as we mentioned above (44). It claimed that the events in Syria were instigated by the USA and Israel in order to topple Assad, who is «the cornerstone of resistance against Israel». As a result, since 2012 it has had military involvement in the Syrian war, coordinating its action with the Syrian and Russian airstrikes and taking part in blockades and sieges like that of the town of Mantaya.

The core of the propaganda the leadership used in order to legitimize its involvement in the Syrian revolution as a repressive force against the insurrectionists was the fight against Sunni extremists and mercenaries of the West. In particular, every fighter who died in the battles, including those against Israel, was considered to be performing jihadist duties. This was an attempt to add credits to its record of resistance and, simultaneously, justify a strategy, which, of course, had little to do with resistance, given that it stemmed from the orders of Iran's leaders. Hence, it turned from an organization of resistance into a Shiite paramilitary force. Even its former leader expressed his deep opposition to «Hezbollah's support to the criminal regime of Assad, which kills his own people and has never shot a bullet to defend the Palestinians»(46).

Let's not forget that as soon as Hamas openly supported the Syrian revolution, Assad terminated any relations with them (47). Hamas moved its headquarters from Damascus to Doha of Qatar, a country that belongs to the enemy's axis of interests (48). Also, in 2012 its relations with Iran and Hezbollah deteriorated (with reports mentioning that Hezbollah asked for the removal of Hamas' members from Lebanon, but both Hezbollah and Hamas denied it), but in 2014, namely when the war in Gaza broke out, they were restored. Since March 2015, however, their relations have been in decline as Hamas announced its support to the alliance under Saudi Arabia's leadership, which fights against Houthi rebels in Yemen. Moreover, Hamas didn't help Hezbollah in the war against Israel in 2006, while correspondingly Hezbollah didn't help Hamas in the war against Israel in 2008-2009. Also, Hamas is consistently receiving help from Turkey and Qatar given that all three countries are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and belong to the power block that fights against the notorious «resistance axis». There are formal reports (even though Hamas disputes this fact) indicating that Palestinians from Syria, Gaza and the ranks of Hamas fight on the side of Islamist Sunni groups and share their expertise in the construction of tunnels (49). Basically, Palestinians, who are a cornerstone reference of the «resistance axis» against western imperialism, fight aside the «Islamist-fascists that the west has bred in order to topple Assad».

A final example is that of Nasrallah's statements after Mosouli's seizure by ISIS in 2014, saying that «Hezbollah is ready to sacrifice

five time more martyrs in Iraq than Syria in order to protect mosques, since the Iraqi mosques are more important than those of Syria»(50). Hezbollah is connected to the Shiite militias of Iran, which fought against the alliance under the USA leadership in Iraq, and its members carried out administrative and coordinative operations in the battle against ISIS (51). In February 2015, its leader admitted its presence in Iraq and its participation in battles.

As we understand it, the states competing in the international arena follow the logic of “my enemy’s enemy is my friend and, then again, my enemy”. This is why they make decisions that may come across as “irrational” but, in reality, this is not at all the case. The resistance organization of Hezbollah works this way, as well; even though its past fights inspired mainly the Arab world in the war against the felonious regime of Israel, the USA and their allies in the area, since 2012 it has followed the above logic entirely. Nevertheless, for the sake of an even-handed approach we must once more highlight the sectarian conflicts in the Muslim world as well as the fine line we mark between grassroots fighters and the leadership of the organization. We mustn’t forget that from approximately the 7th century AD to 1979 the Shiite Muslims, beside a religious sect, were also the most fiercely oppressed population with all the Muslim regimes persecuting them. This changed after the establishment of Iran’s Islamic democracy in 1979 under Khomeini’s leadership (who is regarded by lots of Shiites as the 13th

imam or, in other words, the chosen one who will save them). Therefore, Iran presents itself as a de facto protector of all the, oppressed or not, Shiite populations of the Middle East.

At this point, we must mention that the religious conflict has intensified, especially in the last 15 years and mainly by the Talibani Al Qaeda in Iraq (under Al-Zawahiri's leadership), ISIS and other jihadist groups with constant bomb attacks at the Shiites' holy mosques which leave behind carnages and death. As a consequence, we find it likely that some of the fighters from the ranks of Hezbollah don't act merely as Assad's mercenaries but are, instead, broadly mobilized in response to the fight against the Islamic groups that murder Shiites in Iraq. This, though, doesn't acquit the leadership, whose most recent geopolitical choices (i.e. support to Assad, Saleh, Sisi ,etc.) denote a strategic shift from being an ally of the Palestinian resistance to becoming an executive branch of Iran in the area.

We believe that the information above suffices to ram home that the «resistance axis» (i.e. Iran, Assad, Hezbollah) doesn't aim at freeing the Palestinians and other populations of the area. The alliances of "frenemies", the contradictions and inconsistencies in their rhetoric and strategy clearly show that their plans are drawn upon ephemeral interest rather than a set of ideals or ideology. They are

also clear indications of intertwined interests and intricate interdependences among the various authorities as well as a proof of the emptiness of their supporters' arguments. The history has shown that when states and groups with authoritarian structures engage in influential war games, they will do whatever it takes to defend their interests, which are by no means the same as those of the people below. More often than not, in this kind of hierarchical and partisan organizations, the values and the incentives of the bases and the leaders differ significantly. But if the central administration manages to impose itself, we are then led to the complicated and hostile situations we described.

When the power of political theory gives its place to the dependence on transnational corporations, when people assign the management of their lives -through election or other form of consent- to seemingly "anti-systemic" quacks, like Syriza or Trump, the last thing we need is yet another leadership striving to impose its own political agenda. People who define themselves as fighters or revolutionaries have ended up supporting bloodthirsty, murderous regimes. Their irrationalism goes as far as to allow them to recognize - and, therefore, support- the events in Egypt in 2011, in Tunisia or Yemen as revolutions on the grounds that they turned against USA-friendly regimes, while at the same time they condemn the revolution in Syria, even though it has similar causes and demands; and this happens only because it turns against a dictator who

belongs to the axis of interests they support. Their action is driven by statist logic and geopolitical analyses that take no heed of the dynamics of social outbursts whatsoever. They become more autocratic in order to impose themselves by means of violence or imaginary offsets, promoting fractures and new repressions.

Our position is that the war against the state and capitalism needs faith in community and self-organization; faith in ourselves in order to break the dependence on a world structured to suit leaders; in order to be able to organize our autonomous, horizontal and self-sufficient structures here and now; to guard them politically and militarily and prepare ourselves to spread them when times demand it.

The agreement on Syria

Ultimately, what does the USA's «defeat» in Syria mean? Basically, it doesn't mean anything at all. As we have already mentioned, the American state would have lots of reasons to be satisfied with the Assad family's overthrow or even weakening. But this doesn't mean in any way that it aimed at the abolition of the state's institutions. Indeed, the experience of Iraq, where the overthrow of Saddam brought about the collapse of all state structures, is not to be

repeated. It's been proven that solutions like the ones in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen are much more effective. Instead of the state's seizure, which needs military occupation, the USA's new strategy is to preserve the regime's basic structures and, of course, its capitalistic and authoritarian nature, promoting only superficial alterations, like the appointment of people that would serve (or at least wouldn't oppose to) their interests. Like this, stability and order are ensured in the area and so does the continuity of the profitability and safety of Israel and the regimes of the Gulf. Certainly, due to reasons we are going to analyze further on, they didn't accomplish this in Syria and from a very early stage they had to capitulate. Practically, they reached an agreement with the Russian state with provisions for the termination of the war, a political transition and Assad's short- or mid-term stay in power.

One reason why the USA capitulated regarding Assad's stay in power as head of the transitional government is the military and economic help the regime received from the Russian and Iranian states. After a certain point, it became apparent that the situation on Syria's ground -meaning who controls what- couldn't radically change. No side had the power to seize full control of the ground and confront all the other powers involved openly. Even though there are cases like the city of Aleppo, where the combating powers might take turns in besiegement and military advancements, the regime- and opposition-occupied grounds still remain relatively stable. Also, even

if we assume that one side might indeed have the military power to defeat the other, it must then live up to the demands of maintaining control of the occupied areas and, as it seems, no side has the army to accomplish such a risky mission. Therefore, a military solution for the Syrian issue is actually impossible and the weight is attached to politics.

Another parameter is the other fronts which the American state is concentrated on and considers them to be of great economic importance. The TTIP/TTP agreements, the new expansion of the American capitalism in Latin American, the competition with China over the passages of the Pacific (products worth millions of dollars are transferred daily through there) are some of those. Also, the large number of refugees moving from the war zones towards the European countries turned the stabilization of the area into an imperative. The so-called refugee crisis in combination with the attacks of ISIS in European countries compelled the USA and the EU to leave Assad's removal aside in order to fight ISIS and thereof lots of leaders came up with the idea of an alliance with Assad to accomplish this aim.

Lastly, the developments following the Syrian revolution set an ominous example of what other potential revolting populations of the world may be led to in the future (even for the populations of the

deprived southern Europe). As the revolution was followed by nearly six years of totalitarian war, it is obvious that the initial demands of the Syrian population have mainly given their place to an everlasting hatred towards the slaughterer Assad. In a nutshell, all the external forces involved in the Syrian war accomplished their common aim. Nobody is talking about a revolution any more as the zones of interest have been divided. The only thing left is the enforcement of a peace agreement and a transition from the profitability of the war to the profitability of stability.

The fact that there are reasons indicating that the USA agreed with Russia on Assad's future doesn't necessarily prove that this was indeed the case. There is, though, a series of events that corroborates this conclusion.

The armament the American state provided the FSA groups with was scarce and by no means heavy (never did the rebels receive anti-aircraft warfare, for example) (4). The reason for this, most probably, was that the FSA leaders had no absolute control of the brigades underneath and as a result the USA didn't deem them trustworthy (52). In Obama's new plan, which was endorsed by the American Congress, five million dollars was pledged towards the armament and the training of selected forces of the opposition with the following aims: protection of the Syrian population and the US allies

from ISIS' terrorists, safeguarding of the grounds controlled by the Syrian opposition from terrorist threats, creation of conditions for a negotiation that would permit the end of the clashes. This plan, however, was a complete failure.

Concerning the negotiations of Geneva, the preliminary draft of the agreement about Syria in the summer of 2012 clearly mentioned that Assad would be allowed to carry out duties in the transitional government scheme provided, of course, the opposition would consent. This agreement was signed by all five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the USA, Russia, China, the UK and France). The opposition's delegation (which can definitely not represent all the Syrians) wanted the end of the war since it had agreed on its position in a post-war Syria. But they saw no point in signing an agreement that would allow Assad's short- or long-term stay in power given that they would be incapable of enforcing it upon the people whose interests they were supposed to serve.

The opposition was occasionally but heavily pressured to sign by the US Secretary of state, John Kerry. He frequently threatened that the USA would withdraw their support unless they enforced the agreement upon the people of the area they theoretically controlled. Kerry had also refused to satisfy their demands for a discontinuation of the Russian and Syrian airstrikes before the initiation of the

negotiations, saying that such a term was not a prerequisite and that Assad's resignation wasn't necessary before any agreement (54). In December 2015, after a meeting with Putin, Kerry stated that the USA and their allies weren't aiming at a change of regime in Syria. He also stated that the discussions with Russia didn't concern what could or couldn't be done with Assad in the immediate future. Rather, they addressed how peace would be reached in Syria so that the Syrians would be able to decide on their future and that no people should be forced to choose between a dictator and terrorists. Thus, the Syrian opposition's demand for Assad's immediate removal was obviously not a proposal to start the negotiations with. Finally, in a conference in February 2016, when two members of the humanitarian aid called him to take action towards the termination of the war, Kerry's off-the-record reply was that they should blame the Syrian opposition and not him and that they should expect three months of destructive airstrikes (55). Likewise, in December 2015 the French minister of foreign affairs stated that he didn't aim at Assad's removal any time before the political transition and that the Syrian forces (Assad's regime and the FSA) should unite against ISIS, which was an option that even Kerry had envisaged. Merkel had stated that the fight against ISIS meant discussions with many agents, including Assad, while Cameron had also stated that the possibility of Assad playing a role in Syria couldn't be ruled out.

At some point, the EU and USA's interest switched from Assad to the military defeat of ISIS as a prime enemy and international destabilization factor. France and Russia conducted air-force operations jointly in the new «war against terrorism» and the USA focused on the empowerment of the Kurdish, namely its basic ally in the fight against ISIS on the ground.

As it appears - at least for now -, although the event is officially attributed to airspace violations, Turkey shot down the Russian warplane because the attack launched by the Russian air-force targeted the northwest borders of Turkey and Syria, which is an area controlled by anti-regime forces (mainly Turkmens), thus by Turkey and, by extension, NATO. Unsurprisingly, the West addressed other Russia-conducted murderous airstrikes with a mere condemnation statement because the targeted areas were controlled by rebels- not their allies. There has been no substantial reaction to the dirty work done by Russia and Turkey in Syria because the states of the west have been meaning to pressurize the opposition into an agreement with Assad -one that would let Assad remain in power- and know well that the attacks against those still resisting can serve their purpose. At the same time, the reactions within Russia and Iran are almost non-existent.

Another incident indicative of the situation is the statement of the US defense secretary in April 2016, claiming that Al Nusra dominates

in Aleppo. At once, Russia and the regime took advantage of this statement in order to bomb Aleppo, even though they had agreed on the termination of hostilities. Al Nusra and ISIS were excluded from this agreement. After being put under pressure, the US defense secretary publically refuted his unsubstantiated statement (56).

All the above can lead us to one conclusion. **The lie, which has become a common narrative in the west, that the war in Syria is continued because the USA is trying to overthrow Assad while Russia is trying to keep him in power, appears to be so believable because it is veiled with a truth, which is the existence of antagonism among different power blocks. However, at this point we are not talking about a little white lie but, rather, an attempt to obscure the deliberate undermining of a revolution against a dictator with demands for freedom, justice, and equality.** The task of stripping the Syrian struggle off its meaning is realized under the auspices of both democratic/ secular and fundamentalist/ jihadist leaders who jointly massacre the insurrectionists; these massacres in Syria - from the air or on the ground- are perpetrated by the USA, Russia, Europe and Iran. While having killed over half a million people and forced millions to flee, they kept negotiating their shares inside luxurious hotel rooms and are still trying to finish off any remaining resistance against Assad in order to impose their agreement. Therefore, we call everyone to contemplate whether the people who are being murdered on a daily basis in Syria deserve our support or not and decide if it's worth taking action to bring this genocide to an end.

4. WAR ECONOMY

Even though we have analyzed different aspects of geopolitical competitions as well as of the interdependence of the capitalist forces, a more direct way to understand these very particular and intricate relationships is perhaps to analyze a trait that all authoritarians undeniably share. The desire for money and all that goes with it.

It has been written that war is the continuation of politics with other means. So, historically there have been competitions among capitalist power blocks that reached the stage of direct and totalitarian military clashes (i.e. World War I and II), because the shares weren't enough for everyone involved. The result of these wars is the emergence of the winners as hegemonic power - with some winning powers being more hegemonic than others- and the destruction of those defeated -whose recovery and re-disposition is always a profitable business.

But in our times, the economic management (i.e. economies of debt, financial institutions and products, commercialization of every possible aspect of our everyday lives, ruthless and ever-increasing exploitation and impoverishment and, of course, authoritarian regimes to enforce all the above) has at least for now postponed a war as such. The aim of the initial involvement of the great powers in the revolution in Syria was not only to crush the struggle (either militarily or by means of obscuring its meanings) but also to generate rounds of negotiations towards an agreement that could reshape the balance of the very same powers; political, economic and military powers. Instead of a direct military face-off among the dominant powers, a war-stage was created for everyone to show their teeth. To all those involved (international, regional and local players), these negotiations/wars work as a field for profitmaking. They design a “war economy”, one everyone can benefit from, given that “losing” equals to gaining somewhat less.

Syria’s ground is now divided into areas that are under the control of different forces. There are parts controlled by the regime, others by FSA, others by Islamist opposition groups, others by Kurdish and others by ISIS. In each area resides a population that produces capital that ends up in the hands of each “leadership”. Here, we must note that the values and aims of each leadership determine the ways of export and redirection of the capital it accumulates. Consequently, there can be seen fundamental differences regarding

the procedure of each capital export and use. Here, however, we are only going to cover the ways this capital is accumulated.

So, apart from the taxes imposed on the people who live in the area this or the other power rules, in Syria's war zones the formal economy is supplemented by the black market. Trade and smuggling, mainly of basic goods (food and medical equipment), weapons and petrol but also of human flesh, flourishes. As always, the cost is basically determined by the simple law of supply and demand. Thus, the necessary food for the people's survival is overpriced due to the shortage in supply combined with the great demand while the necessary weapons for the people's extinction are becoming cheaper and cheaper. Paradox as it may seem, it's at the same time so true.

However, none of these areas is self-sufficient. To cover its needs (and the special needs war generates) it needs imports. So, the taxes from the trades inside the borders of Syria are one more source of profit for the forces in control. For this peculiar kind of internal trade to be possible, some requirements are necessary like agreements between the opposite sides. Indicatively, we mention some of these requirements: standard exchange rate of Syrian pound-dollar throughout the Syrian territory, existence of exchange spots that enjoy some safety and protection in the different areas

regardless of who controls them, a central bank in Damascus that prints money, safe trade routes that each side will recognize as neutral- this is the case even between sworn enemies like the Assad regime and Al Nusra). (57)

Then, we see another paradox being unfolded. Maybe both sides of the conflict disagree about how they could coexist and that's why they kill each other, but they do agree when necessary to ensure the money flows after it is accumulated and so on and so forth. Paradox as it may seem, it's at the same time so true.

At a global-regional level, the trade works pretty much the same way. The existence of wars means the trade of weapons and telecommunication systems between states. For example, the warfare exports of Germany (mainly to states of Middle East and North Africa) for the first half of 2015 amounted to 6.35 billion euros, which is nearly the total value of the sales for the entire 2014 (58). **Also, the price of a weapon system that has been proven fatal enough in real war conditions skyrockets since its efficiency is considered tested. The more they kill, the more accurate they are. Unlike cars, bombs need to prove their fatality in the "test-drives" before they sell well.**

Moreover, both in times of stability and war, the largest amounts of natural resources of these areas (petrol, natural gas etc.) are sold to the same international corporations, irrespective of the interests the latter might serve (i.e. American, Russian, European or Chinese). There's only a slight difference, though. In times of war the prices are up to 10 times lower because the official trade gives place to smuggling. For example, the string-pullers and leaders of ISIS sold petrol drilled in the areas under their control (and transferred it by land through Turkey or through Iraq's pipelines in agreement with the Sunni bourgeois classes; meaning circles connected with the official opposition even) at much lower prices than those found in times of stability.

Overall, the war in Syria is a comprehensive destruction of capital. The over-accumulation reduces the demand and, of course, the international corporations present at the destroyed states will take over the reconstruction of the countries. As regards human resources, the evolution of capitalism has an inevitable result, which is an increasing impoverishment of ever-growing populations. So, when the middle class is proletariat-ized, the proletariats are superfluous. Therefore, they have to be either slaughtered or turned into cheap labor force, work under conditions of modern slavery or become inmates of concentration camps and prisons.

Another - even more dystopian- scenario could note the impact of the modern westerners' shortsightedness. Trapped in a microcosm of their own as they are, western societies show a terrifying familiarization with ruthless massacres of whole populations as well as scornful obliviousness to the planet's depletion of resources or the destruction of whole ecosystems. Eventually, they seem to feel astonishingly at ease with the cult of a dominant technocratic dogma, which propagates the necessity of a drastic decrease in the global population. Fundamentally, the systemic need for ever-increasing rates of profitability sustains the vicious circle of overconsumption and overproduction. Nobody, at least for now, can predict the future, but unless we succeed in the destruction of the existing socio-political and economic structures, most probably the color of our societies will be that of blood and ashes.



5. CONCLUSIONS

Our compass is the social revolution

Complex events like the revolution in Syria are determined by a plethora of factors. The reasons, causes and, primarily, the competing interests a revolution reveals are factors that must all be taken into account in an analysis. However, the focal point of, say, a historical analysis might differ significantly from that of a political or an economic one. **In this respect, a geopolitical analysis that is fully in service of statist views and interpretations can only focus and reveal different aspects of history from those of a socio-political analysis that sets out to serve the revolutionary point of view, which takes a class-based or anarchist approach.** This clarification is crucial because it's rather easy to endorse mere geopolitical conclusions and, therefore, diverge from our main aim as anarchists, which is the social aspect of the conflict. It's, indeed, not difficult at all to unintentionally lose target in complicated situations like that in Syria; especially when taking sides for or against state entities or having a blurred picture of who has possibly allied with whom. Take the sympathy for Assad's regime and the Russian state as an example; it's expressed by a platform that is perhaps vehemently anti-American. Reversely, we also see sympathy for the American state owing to its temporary alliance with YPG. Likewise, according to the logic that "the enemy

of my enemy is a friend”, sympathy for the Russian, American and European states may grow lightheartedly and solely because they fight the Islam-fascists of ISIS or even support the Kurdish as a nationality, seeing them as an internal destabilization factor and threat to the fascist state of Turkey. Following this senseless logic, why shouldn't someone be sympathetic to the Turkish state possibly because it represents capitalistic interests hostile towards the Greek state, which is our own internal enemy? Therefore, the criteria for supporting a struggle - in this case a revolutionary procedure- are different from any mighty sympathies and alliances occurring in a war. As clearly seen above, alliances with the devil are definitely taking place. Nevertheless, we can't be the ones to let the devil take the hindmost in all this obscurity.

Our support to a struggle -moderate or fervent- depends on whether it identifies with our class interests and anarchist perspective on social organization. The ones from below must always be supported in a progressive revolutionary perspective. After all, this is the very notion of international solidarity. From this political perspective, support to any state entity - big or small, eastern or western, more or less imperialistic - is not an option. **The anarchists' compass is grassroots solidarity and the values/ interests proclaimed can't be other than horizontal social structuring, communalism and harmonic co-existence with the natural environment.** Our interests can't be the same as the capital's ones;

they simply can't back - explicitly or implicitly - the prosperity of elites, of bosses and state entities, regardless of the fact that alliances may occur between opposite sides during the clashes for reasons of physical survival. But when physical survival is inconsistent with the political survival, then the target is lost and the struggle for freedom can easily be transformed into an agent of authority. As a rule, there is nothing set in stone in a dynamic situation such as a people's uprising; every single moment shapes and defines the extent to which the struggle upholds its liberating revolutionary nature. Our criticism to and solidarity with this struggle must be geared along the same lines. When we are informed about the slaughter of a whole population in Syria, our only option is to fight the state terrorism off. When we are informed that conservative anti-regime forces and regime murderers are challenged by revolutionary voices, we should back these voices. When we are informed about communitarian endeavors of horizontal social structuring, collectivization and antifascist struggle, our only option is to fight by their side. If the immediate goals of our struggle ever appear to be in sync with state-capitalistic interests, then this must be taken into account from a tactic point view, without attempting to obscure the conditions, mislead or plunge ourselves into confusion. Things are crystal-clear since our struggle couldn't ever be in sync with authoritarian (bourgeois or socialist-communist), capitalist (state or private) interests, especially in the long run and in its essence.

The evolution of the Syrian uprising brings us yet again before some fundamental realities. The residents of the cities and villages of Syria gave a new meaning to their everyday life through self-organization and solidarity. Where the state structures had collapsed, local coordination committees emerged to ensure the coverage of basic needs such as nutrition, medical care, counter-information networks, water and electricity supply and whatever else needed. What was missing and proved to be critical for the future of the revolution was the self-organization of the defense. The lack of experience in illegal action turned the rebels into easy prey for Assad's army and mercenaries. The appearance of armed groups - either fundamentalist or of the brigades that split off the government army - provided refuge to the rebels. This is basically the law of survival. When all sides attack you, you will trust the first one to offer you even the faintest hope for salvation. Political gauging comes next.

Time and again history has taught us - and those people who were present at the Syrian revolution confirm this- that, we like it or not, the ones who bear arms are the ones to shape the political agenda. And this holds truth not only in terms of crude exertion of authority and establishment of power; it is also what legitimizes the stances of individuals or groups who put their lives on the line. On this account, they gain an ethical advantage over those who don't risk as much due to their position or their weakness or even by chance. Besides, with the Greek reality in mind, the renown of our revolutionary

movement stems from this very fact. There have been persecuted, prosecuted and executed fighters in its classes, and the toll comes for the whole movement, which can't be paralleled to a non-militant political group, no matter how revolutionary the latter's rhetoric may be. However, regardless of any ethical or material advantage, the truth is "[...] power comes from raised fists and not from kind faces. It's gun barrels the power comes from and not mouths. Comrades this was known and remains real [...]"

So, if we truly want to hope for our revolutionary initiative to stand, we must have the armed power to defend it. The development of our self-organized infrastructure goes hand in hand with the empowerment of our armed groups. Self-organization is not only an anarchist revolutionary imperative, but also a human reaction when all certainties collapse. What this means to us, as anarchists, is that we must defend the rebels who build new social cells in a revolutionary procedure, but even more so inspire people about how to defend their achievements by means of expropriation of the repression forces. As history has shown any number of times, no regime will give in to pleas; rather, only a force is capable of challenging another force on equal terms.

At this point we can turn to the enlightening example of the initial achievements in the Kurdish areas. Unlike the rest of Syria, there the development of self-organization included a parallel organization of an armed force able to defend the territory. In this case, the 3-decade experience of the Kurdish rebels both in forming an illegal political body and in conducting guerrilla war against the Turkish state played a paramount role. The efficiency of the YPG/J's forces caused the USA and later Russia to change their stance. The heroic and successful fight-off of ISIS in Kobani in 2014 made the Kurdish libertarian achievements known to the whole world. Even if the structures that defended the social achievements in western Kurdistan weren't perhaps self-organized or horizontal, still, they proved vital and determinant to the survival of these achievements.

Another major contribution to this result came from the international solidarity movement. After the uprising broke out in the Kurdish cantons, there were the first reports on the self-organization of social and economic life, which urged lots of anarchists, libertarians and communist revolutionaries from western countries to join the fight for the defense of the revolution. In contrast, the rest of Syria witnessed the rapid prevalence of centralist ideas - religious or secular- and this prevented the revolutionaries of the world from seeing the uprising of the Syrians as part of the wider international libertarian struggle, despite the horizontal characteristics it bore initially (actually, these characteristics still exist to a certain extent today, especially under the terrifying conditions of war-torn neighborhoods like Aleppo, where Assad and Russia have jointly

committed unparalleled atrocities). It's in the nature of centralist structures (states, organizations, political parties etc.), regardless of the label or title they bear (democratic, communist, national, Islamist, civil etc.), to try to subjugate and stifle any horizontal and anti-hierarchic structures. **That is the reason why it is crucial to be informed of not only the declarations but also the practices applied.**

A blanket rejection of the revolting masses in Syria as fundamentalists or west-manipulated puppets means that our ideological blinkers impose a tunnel vision on the way we see a situation that is, in reality, not afar from our goals anyway. Rejecting the grassroots local committees formed in Syria merely because they don't call themselves anarchist (and why should they anyway?) means that we consign the living revolutionary history to oblivion. These rebels, whose fate is connected with the fate of all the rebels of history, could be us. Perhaps not all uprisings bear the same libertarian characteristics that we, as anarchists, consider liberating. For example, in all the uprisings of the "Arab Spring", that of Syria included, the most prominent protests followed the routine of Friday's prayers in mosques; and so have done the people in Palestine all these years. That's where people gathered and that's where they expressed their opposition to the regime. That's where they began to believe in their power and claim their dignity. That's the point when they become radicalized and declare eager no more

to unresponsively witness yet another bloodshed committed by the security forces.

If we imagine ourselves in any uprising or revolutionary process of the past, we will come to realize that under such circumstances there comes always a wide spectrum of viewpoints, stances and convictions at play. Let's take a moment to visualize a similar situation set in the Greek reality. Despite the absence of acute religious or racial differences, polarization might as well suffice to bring about a collapse of the existent structures, which, in turn, can result in the intervention of various international and regional forces, leading to opportunistic alliances driven by choice or necessity before chaos prevails.

December 2008 could possibly be our experiential point of reference since it was a moderate social uprising in terms of both the subgroups it mobilized to take to the streets and the level of violence used by both sides. However, the communication among the rebels was particularly difficult and the disruption of the social life in the metropolis distinctive. What next comes in mind is that in a widespread uprising, when the sizes, proportions and complexities of the situations are increasing dramatically, **those who gain the people's trust are fundamentally those who can guarantee a relative safety.** In other words, it's those who will possess both the

determination and means to find and use weapons to defend their structures and attack the security forces of the regime, namely the enemy number one of the rebellions.

Something else we need to keep in mind as anarchists and revolutionaries is that the intervention of dominant power blocks is bound to happen not only in regional state-on-state wars but also in the emergence of any spontaneous unrest that goes against the authorities and their institutions. Every similar uprising that seeks a revolutionary future will come up against the power blocks that share interests with the challenged regime. Perhaps other power blocks will support the rebels in an attempt to manipulate and control them. Various statist and authoritarian formations will pursue to intervene in order to promote their set of interests and, ultimately, claim to play a leading role in the aftermath of the unrest. Possibly, in a process as such we might have to ally with powers that we share no common ground with or, even worse, we would normally criticize or oppose to. In all wars, be it revolutionary or of other kind, the alliances are struck not on the basis of opinions but, rather, by gauging the actual needs to conduct the war itself. A typical example is that of the Spanish anarchists who allied with a government they'd been persecuted by; or ELAS - the *Greek People's Liberation Army*- who received money, information and officers from the English state in order to become more effective in the guerilla war against the occupying forces. In

the case of Syria, respectively, we see PYD allying with the USA and Russia. In history, alliances with the devil abound but, in the end, they always come with a toll.

The recent reality of Syria in combination with the proliferation of uprisings in North Africa and Middle East altogether compose a living archive of experiences and conclusions. It's important to go beyond the mainstream and statist analyses and trace the roots of the social dynamic that gave birth to the Syrian uprising. The Greek and global revolutionary movement will stand before new verities, much of which will stem from what is happening in Syria right now. Official statistics mention that 4.000.000 people have already been uprooted from their areas only in Syria, meaning nearly one fifth of the country's population before the war. This massive number of refugees has changed the relationships between the EU and Turkey for the worse and has intensified the division tendencies within EU. The audacious expression of fascist rhetoric by large parts of the society within the EU is now a fact. The capitalist crisis, the immigration issue, the sporadic yet resonant attacks of the fundamentalists in western cities, the increasing division tendencies, the spread of the battlefield all around Europe from Morocco to Ukrain altogether compose an explosive mixture. **The European societies, one after another, are slowly but steadily getting drowned into a war of low intensity, which will inevitably be intensified. Those in power are well aware of it and are**

getting prepared by turning their forces against both the external and internal enemies. The increase in joint military drills, the cooperation in energy issues and information exchanges, the closure of the borders, the enforcement of administrative detention (only upon refugees- at least for now), the militarization of the police and the tighten-up of the EU counter-terrorism laws are, if anything, indications of reduced self-confidence among the dominant powers. **They are preparing for war and we ourselves are among their targets. Our preparation as revolutionaries for an undeclared yet glaringly emergent war must draw on both historical examples and modern experience.**

Internationalist solidarity

The ongoing battle in Syria raises a number of questions and teaches plenty of lessons. Some questions lead to relatively safe conclusions. One important conclusion is that in a social revolution effective safeguarding of the struggle and communitarian self-organization of the social base must go hand in hand. Another conclusion is that the better equipped the movement is, the more possibilities of political and physical survival it has. To put it simply, power comes indeed from blazing guns, but let's not forget that the enemies of the rebels ... have guns to burn. That's what they rely on, after all; their material superiority. Therefore, we, as revolutionaries,

know well that our power is commensurate with the size of the social base we mobilize (which is, in turn, inextricably connected with the power of weapons). As we say, “solidarity is the weapon of the peoples”. Even more so in our times, our grassroots base must be wide enough to include both local as well as global social powers. We all acknowledge how critical it is to spread our struggle beyond the narrow local boundaries. An important parameter of the struggle is also to exercise pressure on foreign governments, which would never remain neutral given that they always share certain interests with the local elite (political, economic, military etc.).

On the other hand, the contribution to the struggle at close quarters is another big chapter. The international brigades fighting on the side of the revolutionaries were, and still are, a living part of history. It is of no importance to go through examples of concrete solidarity in the whole history of revolutions. It would be interesting, though, to have a look at the other side, namely the enemies’. There, the ‘counter-revolutionary history’ is full of examples of “foreign” forces rushing to their rescue. In Syria, in particular, we’ve witnessed both conservative fundamentalist international fighters of ISIS and pro-government mercenaries of the regime. Besides, it’s a foregone conclusion that the capital knows no borders; in reality, it uses the borders together with nationalist ideas, religious fanaticism etc. whenever and in whichever way it sees fit. In case Assad and his allies- that is, the dominant local elite of Syria- prove “victorious”,

they will be presented as the official symbols of national pride and unity, even though they had their asses saved thanks to external interventions. We've seen this happen in Greece as well, where the domestic saviors of the nation managed to serve their interests with the help of the English and American military forces. International solidarity in form of class interest comes high not only in our agenda but in that of authority, too. In this context, the distinct interests and values in social antagonism and, correspondingly, the most beneficial alliances become more apparent. For the network of parasitical interactants, which consists of elites, bosses, authoritarians and states, can't impose itself on the common enemy despite its material superiority. Our basic goal, therefore, must be the support of the revolutionary struggle on an international basis by any means possible: Political, economic, military contribution, from afar or with our presence in the actual battlefield.

The ones from below together with the ones from bellow.

In a nutshell, the only safe conclusion we consistently come to draw from every uprising, revolution, war or any violent rearrangement of human-geographic and economic factors, in general, is that the better prepared we are for the clash, the more possibilities we have of prevailing physically and, thus, socially. **Every day, each of our**

moves is part of a revolutionary preparation even if there is no concrete plan made in advance.

Each assembly or other horizontal structure builds relations of interpersonal trust; it helps people recognize one another as co-travelers in common paths, destroying the alienation of a society of masses. The self-organized structures, squats, grassroots syndicalism, self-organized clinics, eco-communities etc. are the first cells of the social structure we are heading for and these experiences help us familiarize ourselves with the procedures of a self-organization which we would wish to develop under chaotic conditions such as of war.

The creation of illegal structures, the acquisition of weapons, information etc. can be, first and foremost, a material and psychological preparation for the defense of our communities and, by extension, a source of inspiration for others to expropriate and use the enemy's weapons themselves in an endeavor of widespread self-organization of our everyday life.

Solidarity with refugees, meaning the ones directly affected by the bloodshed, provides a concrete solution to their immediate basic needs and leads to valuable experiences and relationships. Putting

pressure on our states by organizing events, demonstrations, direct actions etc. against the interventions made by the USA-Russia superpowers, who slaughter and force immense populations to move solely because they had the misfortune to live inside their geographical zone of interest, means that we take a side in this and every war. **We are on the side of the rebels and the self-organized structures; we are against the centralist, statist, secular, fundamentalist or any other authoritarian formation.**



6.THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SYRIAN WAR

The last two months created new realities and added new variables to the vast slaughterhouse of the Syrian civil war. Six years after the revolution of 2011, the war is still on in full extremity. Below there is a brief update on the new facts and developments that have taken place until today (January 2017).

In the first half of December the criminal airstrikes conducted jointly by the regime and the Russian state in the rebel-held neighborhoods of Aleppo continued unabatedly and so did the siege. One after another the rebels' neighborhoods fell into the regime's hands. An important role in this was reserved for the fascist state of Turkey. By invading Syria with the operation "Euphrates Shield" at the end of August, Turkey forced (the most manipulable) parts of the FSA and some Islamic organizations (like Ahrar Al Sham) to unite with the Turkish army in the operations against ISIS and SDF. Turkey managed to gain considerable control of the leaderships of such organizations despite the strong reactions from grassroots fighters (many of whom deserted their ranks to defect to other organizations such as the former Al Nusra). Eventually, these leaderships moved lots of fighters to the "Euphrates Shield" operation, draining the defense of Aleppo. When these fighters left for Al-Bab, what some months ago seemed rather difficult came true. On December 22 the whole of

Aleppo fell into the regime's hands. With nearly the entire east side destroyed by the airstrikes, with thousands of dead and injured, with even more refugees, there unfolded a real genocide perpetrated by the Assad regime and his allies.

The city's occupation by the regime was followed by the subsequent agreements on the evacuation of the last neighborhoods occupied by rebels (with the well-known green busses) and a series of further atrocities. Hezbollah and other shiite militias carried out massacres, plunders and attacks on civilians while, on the other hand, some fighters of the former Al Nusra Front burned down the busses used in the parallel evacuation of women, children and injured from two shiite villages, Kefraya and Al Fu'ah, which were besieged by the rebels in the district of Idlib. The refugees from Aleppo settled in military camps in Idlib. After their arrival, demonstrations against the genocide of Aleppo and in solidarity with the revolutionary Syrian population took place in all the areas controlled by the anti-regime forces as well as in many areas of the world (from Europe to Gaza Strip).

After the occupation of Aleppo, which had long been a key target of the regime for economic, military and symbolic reasons, Turkey and Russia mediated and a "truce" was signed on the 29th of December. Right from the very first hours it became apparent that the so-called

“truce” meant only to serve the interests of the Turkish and Russian states, and, of course, Assad’s regime. ISIS, SDF and Fateh al Sham (former Al Nusra Front) were excluded from this “truce”. This gave the regime the chance to bomb and attack whichever place it pleased in Syria as long as it hosted (or was claimed to be hosting) even the smallest core of fighters.

Taking advantage of this “truce”, Assad attempted to occupy the remaining areas controlled by the anti-regime forces around Damascus. From the 23rd of December and on, the Assad regime and Hezbollah launched a formidable attack against a cluster of villages called Wadi Barada, - located 15 kilometers northwest of Damascus- which posed the threat of becoming a new Aleppo. The water sources there that supply the capital had been under the control of the rebels since 2012. On December 22 the residents of Damascus were left without access to drinking water. The anti-regimes blamed the regime for bombing the sources while Assad blamed the former for contaminating the water with petrol. Despite the withdrawal of the Al Nusra Front from the area in July -according to others, there is still a core of 30 fighters-, the regime claimed that most of the fighters belonged to Al Nusra and continued the airstrikes in the area, while Hezbollah advanced slowly but steadily through fierce battles on the ground.

As Wadi Barada was gradually turning into the main front of the war, the declaration of "truce" was spreading the battlefield all over Syria (the district of Idlib, the besieged city of Madaya, west Ghouta -suburb of Damascus controlled by the rebels-, Homs, Hama, the district of Aleppo and Yarmouk). Meanwhile, the front between ISIS and the regime escalated, mainly as a result of the former's initiative. With an unexpected operation ISIS reoccupied Palmira and the areas of Deir ez-Zor.

There have been no significant changes in the past two months as regards the "Euphrates Shield" operation conducted by the Turkish state and certain anti-regime rebels. The Al-Bab battle continues as is without any response to the aggressions coming from ISIS although the latter has caused marked damage to the Turkish army as well as the rebels. However, the recent approach between the two countries has led to joint airstrikes by the Turkish and Russian forces against ISIS targets based in Al-Bab.

On the other hand, the operation of SDF (YPG/J and certain brigades of the FSA), under the auspices of the USA-led coalition, which provides guidance as well as a valuable air force, continues its successful advancement towards the villages north of Raqqa, namely the capital of ISIS.

The picture also includes US drones relentlessly targeting Islamist rebels; mainly those who belong to the former Al-Nusra Front. This US-strategy dates back to September 2014 but after the declaration of “truce” it has been intensified sharply.

The next stage was the conversations in Astana of Kazakstan on 23/01 regarding a “political” solution to the Syrian affair with the involvement of Assad, Iran, Russia, Turkey and certain representatives of the anti-regime forces, mainly from brigades (secular or Islamic) whose leaderships are partially controlled by Turkey. Many rebel groups were leery of these conversations due to the constant violations of the “truce” from the part of the regime. Throughout January, demonstrations and protests of the revolted population of Syria continued in the districts under the anti-regime control with demands for the rebels’ unity, the fall of the Assad regime and the termination of the siege in the rebel-held areas in Syria’s territory.

We observe, therefore, a turn of events in the course of the Syrian civil war; one that was hardly unpredictable.

To sum up, we have a Russia-Turkey convergence driven by common interests. This, in turn, led the anti-regime forces controlled by

Turkey to abandon their goal of overthrowing the regime and turned them into pawns in its political agenda.

A historically steadfast competition between a NATO country and Russia is left aside when it comes to Syria's grounds, so that any remnants of the flames of resistance get obliterated.

Besides, the imperialists managed to strike a deal in the end, put new marks on the maps, and do business as usual. But, as always, some are far too many. Those who don't acknowledge receipt of an agreement on their defeat will bleed. This way and in pursuit of stability in the region, The USA have long been promoting the regime and now even back Assad himself; after the agreement, they've been targeting those anti-regime nuclei that were left over.

What is tragic in this story is that the armed insurrectionists still trust the political parties -religious or secular- as intermediaries of their struggles, which results in their consequent submission to foreign interests. That's why we see large parts of the FSA and Ahrar Al Sham to serve as the ground forces of the fascist state of Turkey, which uses ISIS as a pretext to prepare attack against the revolted cantons of Rojava. Similarly, the SDF forces have become the infantries in service of the USA-led coalition against ISIS, targeting

also Fateh al Sham (former al Nusra). Unfortunately, despite its religious extremism and authoritarian characteristics, Fateh al Sham has attracted all those who were left over; those who won't enter into an agreement of surrender to the felonious Assad regime because they won't relinquish their demand for the overthrow of a tyrant, especially after the bloodshed they suffered. These interrelations have increased the fragmentations and inaugurated a new civil war between the rebels of Fateh al Sham and the rest.

The most recent developments confirm that the involved imperialist powers are indifferent to the overthrow of the regime. Their opportunistic incentives behind their involvement are revealed as they support those armed parties that managed to prevail by undermining the self-organized structures of the revolutionary communities they once had pledged to defend. Eventually, they threw the revolutionary struggle into disarray and led their ranks of insurrectionists to fragmentation.

In conclusion, the western and eastern imperialists march in unity and concord, ridding their way of any threats to the peace of the cemeteries they want to impose, so that unbothered they can pave the transition from an economy of war to the stability of free capital flows. Their message is straightforward: Dare not revolt to overthrow your tyrants. And it is not just the Syrians they are addressing;

rather, it's all the oppressed of the unstable region of the Middle East and North Africa, and even the (deaf) citizens of the first world. They strive to make clear that whoever revolts is bound to bleed.

Unfortunately, the desertion of the revolution and its conversion to a civil war became a reasonably foreseeable end from the moment the armed fight passed from the control of the coordination committees to the hands of those parties that promoted interests foreign to the Syrian revolution and its goals of freedom.

Of course, for us as revolutionaries, the revolution is always the bet no matter what the conditions. Therefore, as we support self-organization coming from small groups in our domestic struggle, regardless of their fluctuating dynamics, so we do with regard to the Syrian grounds; we consistently support the self-organized coordination committees and all those fighting for the fledging values of the revolution against Assad; those who refuse to take orders from neighboring or distant states and, thus, do not partake in felonious agreements. Plenty of protests are already taking place in the rebels' areas with demands for the fall of the regime and rejection of an agreement of submission.

What is crucial is to not leave them alone this time. Especially now, that they are enfeebled and far fewer in numbers after they were abandoned to be massacred and subdued by the most obscurantist forces. The aim is to bring the flame of the uprising to our neighborhoods and put our imperatives into practice, without failing to support those who self-organize their social life and armed defense in other areas of the planet. They might have never had the chance to know of our theoretical approaches, perhaps they don't fully endorse them, or they might still be driven by religious deceptions. Still, they act upon instinctive principles of liberty, they fight against the tyrants and introduce procedures that are relevant to all the insurrectionists of the world.

Let's extend our support not only to their victories but also their defeats. Let's not allow the warplanes that bomb them to be supplied on European grounds. Let's try to connect and communicate with them instead of abandoning them to be slaughtered. Let's intensify the social pressure that will break the wall of silence and combat the apathy on the events unfolding in Syria.

For no revolution is one too many in our revolutionary plan and no regime, totalitarian or bourgeois-democratic, can serve the interests of the oppressed.

Thus, we must learn our lessons from the successes and mistakes of the Syrian revolutionaries in order to prepare our smaller or bigger uprisings and organize actions of solidarity to the revolted wherever they may be.

**January 2017,
Korydallos prison**



***DEVOTED TO ALL THOSE WHO
SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES FOR SYRIAN REVOLUTION***

