

When Liberals Go to War

As ISIS Slaughters Kurds in Kobani, the U.S. Bombs Syrian Grain Silos

by AJAMU BARAKA CounterPunch 10 October 2014

The U.S. is conducting a curious humanitarian war against ISIS in Syria. While Kobani, the largely Kurdish district that straddles the border with Turkey is being attacked by ISIS forces and facing the very real possibility of mass civilian killings if it falls, [U.S. military spokespersons](#) claimed that they are watching the situation in Kobani and have conducted occasional bombing missions but that they are concentrating their anti-ISIS efforts in other parts of Syria. Those other efforts appear to consist of [bombing empty buildings](#), schools, small oil pumping facilities, an occasional vehicle and [grain silos](#) where food is stored to feed the Syrian people. Turkey also seems to be watching as the Kurds of Kobani fight to the death against ISIS.

The humanitarian concerns of officials in the U.S. with the plight of Kurds in Kobani could not be more different than what occurred in Iraq when ISIS forces made a push into Kurdish territory. When the Kurdish city of Erbil was under attack by ISIS, U.S. forces unleashed the full power of its air force in tactical coordination with Kurdish forces to push ISIS back.

So what is the difference in the two situations?

The difference and the reason why the Kurds of Kobani are to be sacrificed stems from the fact that they are the wrong kind of Kurds. Masoud Barzani and the bourgeois Kurds of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) are the “good Kurds” and the predominant force among the Kurds of Iraq. Their control of almost 45% of Iraqi oil reserves and the booming business that they have been involved in with U.S. oil companies and Israel since their “liberation” with the U.S. invasion makes them a valued asset for the U.S. The same goes for Turkey where despite the historic oppression of Kurds in Turkey, the government does a robust business with the Kurds of Iraq.

The situation is completely different in the Kurdish self-governing zones in Syria. In Kobani, it is the Kurdish People’s Protection Units, or Y.P.G., that is linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (P.K.K), a Turkey-based Kurdish independence organization that both the U.S. and Turkey have labeled a “terrorist” organization, that provides the main forces resisting the ISIS attack. Also, the ISIS attack in Kurdish territory neatly converges with the strategic interests of Turkey. Both the U.S. and Turkey saw the control of territory by militant Kurds as a threat. Turkey in particular wanted to undermine the self-governing process among Kurds, Christians and Sunni Arabs in those self-governing zones and turn the territory into a battlefield in order to steal Syrian territory and isolate and attack the “bad” Kurds of the PKK.

Turkey pushed and apparently secured an agreement from the U.S. that it will not oppose it taking parts of Syrian territory. To consolidate that land grab Turkey also wants to establish a “buffer zone” along the Syrian-Turkey border. This is why U.S. government spokespersons have been floating the idea of a [no-fly zone in Northeastern Syria](#) in the U.S. state/corporate media. The zone is being framed as necessary to protect civilians from attacks by the Syrian forces – the humanitarian hustle again.

Yet for the “bad” Kurds of Syria like the “bad” Palestinians of Hamas and Gaza, there will be no humanitarian intervention.

To placate the Turkish government in exchange for its increased cooperation in what is being set-up as a final push on Damascus, the people of Kobani will be delivered to ISIS.

The transparency of Turkey’s plan and the collaboration of the U.S. in the planned massacre of YPG combatants at Kobani could be easily exposed in the U.S. if the news readers in the corporate press were actually able to “see” the world more critically and allowed to question the state sanctioned narratives without running the risk of ending their “careers.” For example, the obvious question regarding a no-fly zone in Northeastern Syria is why is it necessary when the only civilians being attacked in Northeastern Syria are Kurds and they are being attacked by ISIS forces that don’t have an air force, at least not yet.

But those questions are not being asked very often because they don’t comport with the official narrative that the U.S. is compelled to act once again to save the world against an intractable enemy that can only be defeated by U.S. military might. All of this is part of the imperialist hustle that even large segments of the “left” in the U.S. has fallen for.

However, the non-bombing of ISIS at Kobani and the theatrics of bombing fixed, empty buildings confirm what should be obvious based on the history of U.S. interventions – that the real objective of U.S. intervention in Iraq and Syria is the reintroduction of direct U.S. military power in the region in order to secure continue control over the oil and natural gas resources of the region, undermine Iran, block the Russian Federation, and break-up cooperative economic and trade agreements between counties in Central Asia and China. In other words, the objective is to secure U.S. and Western colonial/capitalist hegemony. The U.S. and its allies just needed a pretext to get back in without alienating large sectors of their domestic populations. ISIS give them what the sarin gas attacks could not – mass acceptance in the West for another war, however limited it is being sold in its first phase.

The militarists in the U.S. political establishment never wanted to abandon their plans for a permanent military presence in Iraq, even in the face of the fact that it was costing the nation an enormous price in blood, treasure and domestic legitimacy to remain. They concluded that the road back to Baghdad and on to Tehran went through Syria. A position that despite reports to the contrary, Obama signed on to early in his administration. All Obama wanted was some plausible deniability during the first phase of the plan to destabilize Syria.

The current situation in Kobani is part of the cynical farce that is the fight against ISIS. Turkey has no interest in preventing Kobani from falling to ISIS when it suits its strategic interests to deny the Kurds any semblance of self-determination. And the U.S. is not interested in altering the balance of forces on the ground in Syria by seriously degrading ISIS militarily and undermining its primary short-term strategic objective of regime change in Syria.

With the creation of ISIS, the neocons and liberal interventionists now have their war and a sizeable portion of the U.S. public is in support, at least at this point . But that support will change as soon as it becomes clear that the political elite has plunged the U.S. back into another quagmire. The real shame and expression of the white supremacist colonial/capitalist global contradiction is that until that awareness takes hold among the people at the center of the empire and the people there move to alter U.S. war policies, thousands more will die in Kobani and throughout Syria, Iraq and the world.

Ajamu Baraka is a human rights activist, organizer and geo-political analyst. He is a contributor to “[Killing Trayvons: an Anthology of American Violence](#)” (Counterpunch Books, 2014). He can be reached at info.abaraka@gmail.com and www.AjamuBaraka.com

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/10/10/as-isis-moves-to-slaughter-kurds-in-kobani-the-u-s-bombs-syrian-grain-silos/>