

NATO Invades Chicago: But Where is the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) for Citizens in this War-Zone City?

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Global Research, April 29, 2012
29 April 2012

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The city of Chicago will be invaded by a NATO conference next month, costing US taxpayers up to \$100 million for the provision of facilities and security for 50 delegations comprising some 100 dignitaries and thousands of advisors.

But instead of providing ring-of-steel security for the NATO bureaucrats in attendance, what the hard-pressed citizens of Chicago would appreciate more is a little application of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) doctrine that NATO powers are so keen on bestowing on other parts of the world wracked by violence.

Chicago’s notoriety as a violent city has gone into overdrive in recent years with an epidemic in fatal shootings. Last year, nearly 2,300 people were shot in the Windy City, resulting in 441 homicides, including men, women and children. In the first three months of this year, some 656 were shot, with 145 homicides. At that rate, the victims of gun crime will amount to over 2,600 shootings and 580 homicides by the end of this year alone.

With this level of violence, the people of Chicago do not feel safe in their own city, and the state and federal authorities are conspicuously inadequate in their duty to protect citizens.

In that way, it is not far-fetched for the people of Chicago, or some concerned foreign governments on their behalf, to invoke the principle of R2P, in emulation of how the NATO powers so readily intervene around the world purportedly to “protect human rights”. After all, the R2P advocates tell us that “sovereignty is not a right, it is a privilege” and if governments cannot protect their citizens then they forfeit their right to sovereignty, thereby giving the UN or NATO a mandate to protect vulnerable populations.

Likewise, the case can be made for NATO intervention in Chicago whereby heavily armed “peacekeepers” with strange accents lock down large areas of the city, impose no-fly zones and launch missiles from aerial drones on groups suspected of perpetrating violence against vulnerable citizens who are left unprotected by the presumptive authorities.

Let’s put Chicago’s annual casualties of gun crime into a Syrian context. On a Syrian versus Chicago population basis (20.5 million versus 2.8 million), the American figures would be equivalent to 18,815 civilian shootings and 4,160 homicides in Syria. This is of the same order as the unverified, and no doubt grossly exaggerated, UN figures commonly quoted for Syrian victims since conflict broke out in that country 13 months ago. If such dubious figures for Syria have sparked so much attention from Western governments, mainstream media

and the UN Security Council, why is the plight of Chicago citizens being ignored? As the cheeky saying goes in this city: "What are we? Chopped liver?"

It is not hyperbole to say that large areas of Chicago resemble a war zone for its hapless population. Schoolchildren have to be escorted daily by armed guards for even a short trip to visit a library across town. People from ethnic minorities are particularly at significant risk of suffering a violent death from just walking out on the streets. Surely, there is a legal case at the UN or some other international court that the US authorities are abdicating a responsibility to protect their own citizens. The UN or NATO is thereby mandated to intervene to protect Chicago citizens (assuming, of course, that the principle and practice of R2P is genuinely construed).

Another factor for R2P being applicable to Chicago is the level of systematic violence emanating from armed gangs and criminal mercenaries. Many of the shootings in the city are believed to be the work of heavily armed gangs or private militia engaged in industrial-scale drug dealing. Furthermore, many of these private armies are funded and directed from foreign territories – Mexico and Colombia.

In the coming weeks, no doubt we will hear a lot from Western governments and the mainstream media exhorting the UN or NATO to intervene in Syria because of violence against citizens whom the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad is not protecting in the face of armed gangs (even though these same armed gangs are being supported by these same Western governments and media).

Therefore, applying the same – albeit cynical – criteria, a case could be made for NATO peacekeepers being sent to liberate Chicago and overseeing some badly needed regime change here.

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