

“Operation Libya” - Recognizing the Opposition Government Constitutes a Pretext for Military Intervention

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The eighth anniversary of the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq is quickly approaching.

Many ask, has anything been learned?

Senior foreign policy officials in the United States and the European Union have indeed “learned some lessons,” but not the ones that the majority of Americans and Europeans would hold in high esteem.

Speaking within the context of international law, the leaders of the U.S. and the E.U. have learned to effectively “cover their tracks.” These leaders have learned from the various international attempts and initiatives to bring George W. Bush Jr., Tony Blair, Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and their co-conspirators to justice for starting an internationally illegal war against Iraq.

The leaders of the U.S. and the E.U. are putting together the legal grounds to justify the implementation of their war plans against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

The Gulf Hypocrisy Council

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an organization comprised of the petro-sheikdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. They have betrayed Palestine, they worked against Iraq, they turned their backs on Lebanon, and now they are conspiring against Libya together with Washington and Brussels.

In a blatant act of hypocrisy, the leaders of these sheikdoms have announced that Qaddafi’s regime is “illegitimate.” *Forbes* had this to say about the GCC announcement: “Gulf nations including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have withdrawn any sort of support for Muammar al-Gadhafi calling his regime ‘illegitimate’ and condoning its use of organized violence against a civilian population.” [1] Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, the U.A.E., and Kuwait have withdrawn their recognition of Qaddafi’s regime as the legal government of Libya.

In addition, the GCC announced the following: “On the situation in Libya, the Council denounced the crimes committed against civilians by using live bullets and heavy weapons

and recruiting mercenaries, killing big number of innocent victims and constituting flagrant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.” [2]

What is very striking about these statements and the petro-sheikdoms declaration that Qaddafi’s regime is not the legal government of Libya is that it is utter hypocrisy. These condemnations are being made by the same leaders that have used violence and murder against their own populations. These are also the same Arab leaders who use mercenaries and openly and continuously violate human rights and international humanitarian laws themselves.

Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain all recently used violence against peaceful civilian protesters, in many cases people who were demanding basic human rights like equality or legal recognition. In Bahrain tanks fired at Bahraini protesters in Pearl Square, which is something most the mainstream media has been trying to hide. Moreover, the GCC ironically has also demanded that “no-fly zones” be established over Libya to protect the civilian population: “The Gulf Cooperation Council demands that the UN Security Council take all necessary measures to protect civilians, including enforcing a no-fly zone.” [3]

These autocratic leaders are amongst the greatest hypocrites. They are in no position themselves to speak about any form of legitimacy. Nor are any of these autocrats elected. Under the same principles that they pretend to espouse, they should ask the U.N. to intervene in their states too. Bear in mind they also spearheaded the movement to suspend Libya from the Arab League in Cairo. These leaders have also pushed the Arab League to support any confrontation against Libya in the form of no-fly zones. [4]

Orwellian Qatar

In another iconic case, Doha has passed a so-called “media freedom law.” Like Israel’s media freedom laws, the law actually restricts media freedoms using Orwellian logic and double-speak. *The Peninsula*, a Qatari English-language newspaper, has stated: “A new media law [in Qatar] is in the offing whose preliminary draft suggests that journalists shall be free to write on issues except those concerning national security and friendly countries.” [5]

What the Qatar law signifies is a restriction on media freedom. The Qatari law denotes that journalists are free to report on anything “except” issues pertaining to Qatar’s political allies and friends or Qatari national security issues. “Friendly countries” would include Bahrain and Oman, which would explain why the Al Jazeera Network barely covered the protests in Bahrain and Oman and brushed aside the murder of peaceful protesters at the hands of the Bahraini military and foreign mercenaries under the order of the Al-Khalifas.

The Peninsula additionally reports:

Some Qatari journalists see the move as a ploy to bring back ‘in a new avatar’ the disbanded information ministry that imposed media censorship until 1995.

“It is too well-known what role the information and culture ministry played in the past (a reference to media censorship),” said Abudulla Al Athbah, a prominent Qatari scribe and columnist. [6]

This Qatari law also embodies the politics and interests that regulate the Al Jazeera Network.

If in Qatar “friendly states” are not suppose to be criticized, that means Libya is an “unfriendly state.” This in itself says that the media can be used as a weapon. It is worth noting that Hillary Clinton has also come out to endorse Al Jazeera. [7]

Legal Recognition of the Libyan Opposition

U.S. and E.U. officials are working to create more than a pretext for conflict with Tripoli, they are also creating a legal blanket to prevent their future prosecution. While the leaders of the GCC declared that the government of Colonel Qaddafi was not legitimate, France announced its legal recognition of the Benghazi-based opposition in Libya. *Forbes* reported: “The move comes as many Western nations have stepped up their rhetoric, with France officially recognizing the rebel governing-council and advanced talks of a no-fly zone in the UN Security Council and NATO.” [8]

The French move is also a display of more two-faced behaviour, because France offered aid to the dictatorship in Tunisia in crushing the Tunisian protesters. [9] The European Union as a whole has also given de facto recognition to the leadership in Benghazi, calling it a “political interlocutor.” [10] The *Deutsche Presse-Agentur (German Press Agency)* has reported that the E.U. has stated that “it was no longer prepared to negotiate with Libyan leader Moamar Gaddafi and would instead hold talks with his opponents, who are based in the eastern city of Benghazi.” [11] The Arab League has also followed suit, withdrawing its legal recognition of Qaddafi’s regime. [12]

None of this is a coincidence. These moves are part of an internationally coordinated effort. Behind the scenes it is Washington which is leading these efforts. The U.S. government has deliberately been trying to stay in the shadows to deflect attention from itself.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has declared that she is going to meet with the Libyan opposition. [13] In an ominous statement, while she was visiting Chile, Clinton told reporters: “We are in direct contact with members of the opposition, here in the United States, in Libya, in other countries, and we are working with them to determine what assistance they are actually able to use [from the U.S. government].” [14]

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Recognition of the Transitional Council is meant to Justify Foreign Intervention

Like democracy, international law is a mere question of convenience and interests for the U.S. and the major E.U. powers. While morally Qaddafi’s regime’s legitimacy can be questioned, it is a different story under the terms of international law. [15] The regime of Colonel Qaddafi under international law is the legal representative and government of Libya. Spearheaded by Paris, what the U.S. and the E.U., as well as their GCC allies, are now doing

is taking steps to remove the internationally guaranteed rights of the regime in Tripoli by giving legal recognition to the opposition.

The objective of giving official recognition to the Benghazi-based opposition in Libya could be used in several ways by the U.S. and its E.U. allies. The move is part of a strategy to balkanize Libya. It also gives what the U.S. and the E.U. could undoubtedly try to use as a legal cover or shield for military intervention.

One has to listen to the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, to understand the meaning of this. Sarkozy has stated several times that the factors that would warrant military intervention are a U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing force, a broad based coalition that includes Arabs, and the consent of the “legal government of Libya.” [16] This is it the catcher or qualifier.

Who is the legal government of Libya according to France? To Paris the Libyan opposition in Benghazi, the so-called Transitional Council, is the legal government of Libya. It is no secret that the Libyan opposition leaders want “no-fly zones” to be established. [17] Thus the U.S., the E.U., and NATO will attempt to make a legal argument for their intervention by saying that the internationally legal representatives of Libya asked for intervention, as well as using a humanitarian pretext.

Libyan Opposition Leaders Want Intervention

It has to be made clear that the reality of the situation is that “no-fly zones” would equate to nothing less than a war of military intervention, which also means that boots are needed on Libyan soil. Libyan opposition leaders have also asked for military help. Here is an excerpt on the position of the Libyan opposition in Benghazi:

“We need more than diplomacy. We need a no-fly zone but we need more than that,” pleaded Iman Bugaighis, a spokeswoman for the Provisional Transitional National Council, the self-styled alternative government, in Libya’s second [biggest] city of Benghazi. [18]

Opposition leaders have been deliberately giving mixed signals. Some of them claim that they are against military intervention, but that is fallacious. It has to be noted that while the Libyan opposition leaders in Benghazi ask for intervention, the majority of Libyans on both sides are against U.S. and NATO intervention.

To defeat the Libyan military, which is still under the command of Qaddafi’s regime, the opposition forces need military intervention and foreign arms. *The Globe and Mail* had this to report in this regard:

Even Mustafa Abdul Jalil, leader of the rebel transitional council, concedes the rebels cannot win militarily: “Everybody should know that there is no balance between our capabilities and Moammar Gadhafi’s,” the former justice minister who defected early in the rebellion said. [19]

The U.S., the E.U., and NATO may attempt to merely keep a balance of power between both sides, like the U.S. and its allies did with Iran and Iraq during the Iraq-Iran War. They could do this with a view of building their case for military intervention. They may even watch as

the opposition forces are routed and then enforce a sanctions regime and heavy punishment on Libya. Or they may wait until the Libyan opposition forces are almost wiped out and then intervene through a large-scale aerial campaign.

Onwards to the Oases of Libya: Another Imperial Adventure in the Making

Behind the smokescreen of so-called diplomacy, the U.S. is getting its E.U. allies to lead the charge internationally, because of its image as an international aggressor. What is really at hand is a regime change operation. In the words of one unnamed European diplomat quoted by the *Associated Press* (AP): “[We] are talking about military intervention to get rid of one government [in Libya] and putting another one in place [and] [t]his is what it is all about.” [20]

Democracy is not the real issue. One unelected government will be replaced by another unelected government, which is also comprised of regime figures who have defected. It is also worth noting that one of the European Union’s key talking points for post-conflict Libya is closer cooperation between Tripoli and Brussels. Simply said, the objective of both the U.S. and the E.U. is to transform Libya into a modern-day colony.

A replay of both Iraq and Yugoslavia is taking place. This time, however, the U.S. government and its E.U. allies are not only creating a humanitarian pretext for confrontation, but they are also creating a sharper legal blanket so that they will not be accused of breaking international laws like George W. Bush Jr. and Tony Blair were. Washington and Brussels have fuelled the fire in Libya and want the country to fracture through civil war and are using a sophisticated media disinformation campaign. These in themselves are crimes that will be exposed sooner or latter too.

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NOTES

[1] Agustino Fontevicchia, “Saudi Arabia, UAE Call Gadhafi’s Regime ‘Illegitimate,’” *Forbes*, March 11, 2011.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Wissam Keyrouz, “Gulf states back Libya no-fly zone,” *Agence-France Presse* (AFP), March 8, 2011.

[4] *Press Trust of India*, “Gaddafi’s forces set for Benghazi, AL backs ‘no-fly’ zone, March 13, 2011.

[5] *The Peninsula*, “Draft law promises freedom to media,” March 10, 2011.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Michael Corcoran and Stephen Maher, “Al-Jazeera, as endorsed by Hillary Clinton,” *The Guardian* (U.K.), March 10, 2011.

[8] Fontevicchia, “Saudi Arabia, UAE,” *Op. cit.*

[9] Kim Willsher, “French minister defends offer of security forces to Tunisia,” *The Guardian* (U.K.), January 18, 2011.

[10] Joshua Chaffin and Roula Khalaf, “Arab League prepares to back no-fly zone,” *Financial Times*, March 11, 2011.

[11] *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (DPA)/*German Press Agency*, “EU ditches Gaddafi for opposition,” March 11, 2011.

[12] Tim Pearce ed., "Libya 'crimes' strip it of legitimacy - Arab League," *Reuters*, March 12, 2011.

[13] *Reuters*, "Clinton to meet Libya opposition, warns of next steps," March 10, 2011.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] This is not to say that laws are legitimate, because in many cases laws are created to protect and entrench power bases, their privileges, and their legitimacy. What has to be considered here is the application of law and a lack of consistent principles.

[16] Nicolas Sarkozy, Conseil européen extraordinaire sur la situation en Libye et en Méditerranée (Extraordinary European Council on the situation in Libya and the Mediterranean) (Press Conference, Brussels, Belgium: March 11, 2011):

<<http://www.elysee.fr/president/les-actualites/conferences-de-presse/2011/conseil-europeen-extraordinaire-sur-la-situation.10882.html>>.

[17] Paul Koring, "Obama rules out Libyan air strikes," *The Globe and Mail*, March 11, 2011.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Raf Caset *et al.*, "Ahead of summit, European Union downplays likelihood of no-fly zone over Libya," *Associated Press* (AP), March 9, 2011.

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