

The American Dilemma in Libya: To Bomb, Invade, Partition, Or All of the Above

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Global Research, March 19, 2011

BlackAgendaReport.com 19 March 2011

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

“The West dearly wishes to appropriate to itself a section of the ‘Arab revolt,’ so as to bomb an evil ‘dictator’ on their behalf.”

The UN Security Council voted on Thursday to authorize a [“no-fly zone” over Libya](#) – a surprise to the author, who had predicted in the this column on Tuesday that China and/or Russia would veto the move. The measure gives the OK to “all necessary measures” to protect civilians from attacks by Moammar Gadhafi’s forces – wording the U.S. and its allies will undoubtedly treat as a mandate to apply as much force as they wish. In light of the disastrous UN action, the title of this article is even more appropriate than when it was first published.

“R2P” – Responsibility to Protect – is the Obama regime’s favored formula for pouring mud in the otherwise clear waters of international law. The philosophy – actually, a political position seeking legal recognition – amounts to a kind of super-power judicial waiver couched in the language of nobles oblige, the obligation of the strong to help the weak. In the real world, the strong only help themselves – in this case, to Libya’s oil reserves, the largest in Africa.

Obama UN Ambassador Susan Rice, a far meaner junkyard dog than George Bush’s Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, is the administration’s loudest and most bellicose proponent of so-called “humanitarian” intervention. Even before the Democrats won the White House, Susan Rice proposed a sea and air blockade and “no-fly zone” against Sudan. Having finally succeeded in partitioning Sudan, after decades of fomenting civil war, the West is clearly considering the “option” of partitioning Libya, where most of the oil is conveniently located in the eastern part of the country, near Benghazi.

The workings of the imperial brain are plainly visible in the output of the corporate press, which act as ventriloquist dummies to power. Suddenly, the media have all undergone a crash course in the intractable nature of Libyan tribal politics – a subject until now totally unknown to the western press. After a quick education from the State Department and designated think tankers, corporate media dutifully prepare the public for the possible drawing of an American “line in the sand” somewhere before the gates of Benghazi, a town that would then be dubbed a “hero city” – the opposite of Fallujah, the demon-city leveled by the U.S. in 2004 at the cost of tens of thousands of Iraqi lives, to the cheers of U.S. corporate media.

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Western reporters, who are such quick studies when it comes to tribalisms and other perceived pathologies of exotic, non-western peoples, have not yet figured out who the rebels are, politically. This is quite strange, since corporate correspondents have for weeks spent all their waking hours among the rebels, profiling individuals and rushing to the battlefronts. Yet, they cannot – or will not – provide a coherent overview of rebel politics, beyond an incandescent hatred of Khadafi, the man. Khadafi's narrative of the conflict, that the rebels are largely Al Qaida-type elements, is dismissed as nonsensical. But no one disputes that Benghazi was the center of an Islamic revolt in the Nineties, and that resentments from that period fester. The presence of Islamic militants among the rebels is now widely acknowledged, although corporate correspondents can't seem to find many in the flesh to profile.

The western media, and the governments they serve, are caught in crossfire of contradictions. The U.S. wants desperately to position itself on the "right" side of some aspect of the unfolding Arab Reawakening. The West dearly wishes to appropriate to itself a section of the "Arab revolt," so as to bomb an evil "dictator" on their behalf. The western media's job is to do the public relations work, presenting these "pro-western" combatants in the most attractive light. However, it appears the media are having trouble packaging the Libyan rebels as sufficiently virtuous "freedom fighters" – one suspects because, on closer inspection, many turn out to be fundamentalists or tribalists.

"Why is the rebellion apparently incapable of taking advantage of mass desertions from the armed forces?"

Ironically, the merest presence of Islamic fundamentalist fighters would have, in previous times, been reason for a U.S. attack and invasion – against those harboring such elements.

And, what happened to the estimated 6,000 former regime troops that deserted at the start of the rebellion? Some former Khadafi officers occupy high profile positions in the rebel ranks, but the equivalent of several brigades worth of deserters is not in evidence. This, again, raises the question of who the rebel leaders really are; why are they apparently incapable of taking advantage of mass desertions from the armed forces? One cannot help but suspect the presence of unwholesome elements around whom former soldiers and others cannot bring themselves to effectively coalesce.

The most unwholesome elements of all, of course, are the U.S. and European imperialists, whose intervention represents the overarching threat to the Libyan and Arab nation. Much is made of the Arab League's request for a no-fly zone over Libya. But the League's rather ambiguous proposal – it cautions against an "attack" on Libya, as if a no-fly zone can be imposed without attacking anybody – has no more force of law than a NATO no-fly decision, or an African Union decision to attack Europe!

The United States has paid no attention to countless Arab League resolutions regarding Israel's six decades of lawless behavior in the region, or to the Jewish State's constant violations of UN resolutions. No one in the Arab world believes the West has suddenly developed a new respect for either Arabs or the rule of law. What's new is western fear that, at long last, the empire is finally slipping away.

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