

From the Cold War to NATO's "Humanitarian Wars" - The Complicity of the United Nations

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Humanitarian wars, especially under the guise of the "Responsibility to Protect (R2P)," are a modern form of imperialism. The standard pattern that the United States and its allies use to execute them is one where genocide and ethnic cleansing are vociferously alleged by a coalition of governments, media organizations, and non-governmental front organizations. The allegations - often lurid and unfounded - then provide moral and diplomatic cover for a variety of sanctions that undermine and isolate the target country in question, and thereby pave the way for military intervention. This is the post-Cold War modus operandi of the US and NATO.

In facilitating this neo-imperialism, the United Nations has been complicit in the hijacking of its own posts and offices by Washington.

Former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan has been appointed a "special peace envoy" with a mediating role in Syria. Yet, how can Annan be evaluated as an "honest broker" considering his past instrumental role in developing the doctrine of R2P - the very pretext that has served to facilitate several US/NATO criminal wars of aggression? Furthermore, the evidence attests that the US and its allies - despite mouthing support for Annan's supposed peace plan - are not interested in a mediated, peaceful solution in Syria.

From the Cold War to Humanitarian Wars

As the Cold War began to wind down in the late-1980s and early-1990s, NATO saw the opportunity that would arise from the geopolitical vacuum following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. Not only did NATO begin transforming from a defensive organization into an offensive military body, the US-led alliance began to embrace a supposed humanitarian mandate for this purpose. It is through this purported embrace of humanitarianism that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was able to change into an offensive, interventionist military force - indeed the largest such force ever in the history of the world.

NATO's biggest military operation up until a decade after the Cold War was the First Persian Gulf War following the invasion in 1991 of Kuwait by Iraqi forces under the command of Saddam Hussein. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, at the time a US ally, was mired in a territorial oil dispute over colonial-era borders to which Washington at first appeared to show cool indifference. Immediately after Iraqi forces entered Kuwait, however, a strident US government and media campaign was mounted claiming the sanctity of Kuwait's sovereign territory and the "defence of small nations." There were also lurid media reports - later shown to be fabrications - of atrocities committed by Iraqi troops, such as the

butchering of babies taken from hospital incubators. The international public was successfully manipulated to accept a US-led war against Iraq to ironically liberate the Emirate of Kuwait only to reinstate an absolute and despotic monarch.

Equipped with UN resolutions, the US-led NATO powers – along with a “coalition of willing” Arab states – launched a war on Iraq supposedly in the name of “humanitarianism.” Operations exclusively run by several NATO powers in Iraqi Kurdistan would also become the basis for NATO’s future humanitarian mandates. The precedent and tempo was now set for NATO’s subsequent “humanitarian” wars. The no-fly zones and legal semantics that were innovated by the Western powers to justify their intervention in Iraq were also applied by these same powers with regard to the former Yugoslavia. Variants of this humanitarian pretext for war included “upholding international law” and “international security” and were deployed for the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and again against Iraq in 2003 – the Second Persian Gulf War – this time to justify the all-out conquest of that country. The same rhetorical justification for military intervention was used by NATO powers to unleash a seven-month aerial bombing campaign in Libya in 2011 that led to the overthrow of the government and to the murder of the country’s leader Muammar Qaddafi. The thematic R2P is currently being amplified to decibel levels by NATO state governments and mainstream media with regard to Syria, where a NATO-led intervention is also covertly underway.

Yugoslavia: Srebrenica’s Sacrifice for NATO Intervention

On July 11, 1995, the forces of the Bosnian Serbs would march into the so-called UN Srebrenica Safe Area. The official NATO narrative is that UN troops agreed to withdraw from Srebrenica and let the Bosnian Serb forces take care of the local Bosniaks, but that once the Bosnian Serbs entered the area they proceeded to slaughter 8,000 Bosniaks. This would be billed as the worst massacre in Europe since the Second World War.

In reality, the events of Srebrenica would be used and warped to justify a massive NATO response on the basis of public outrage. Bosniak leaders would also refuse to give the Red Cross the names of people who had fled Srebrenica, thus resulting in an inflated number of missing people. The number of the dead would later turn out to be significantly lower than originally reported. Media estimates also changed over time. The most senior UN official inside Bosnia-Herzegovina, Philip Corwin, would also lend his voice to those saying that the events in Srebrenica were distorted for political gain and military intervention by NATO.

Then US President Bill Clinton had actually instructed Alija Izetbegovic that 5,000 Bosniaks would need to be sacrificed to bring NATO into the war as a combatant. Surviving members of the Bosniak delegation from Srebrenica have stated on the record that Izetbegovic said that NATO would militarily intervene against the Republika Srpska if at least 5,000 dead bodies could be produced. *The Fall of Srebrenica*, a UN report issued on November 15, 1999, casually mentions this in paragraph 115. The Bosniak police chief of Srebrenica has also confirmed Clinton’s demand for a “sacrifice” from Izetbegovic to open the doors for NATO attacks against the Bosnian Serbs.

In the Bosnian War, all sides committed horrific atrocities. The crime of the Bosnian Serbs that appeared to rouse NATO was not ethnic cleansing. The crime of the Bosnian Serbs was that they were fighting to preserve Yugoslavia. Even Croats and Bosniaks in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who wanted to preserve Yugoslavia and inter-ethnic peace were targeted, demonized, or killed. For example, the Bosniak Fikret Abdic was charged as a war

criminal in Croatia after he fled Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Josip Rejhl-Kir, the Croat police chief of Osijek, was murdered by Croat nationalists for working to preserve the harmony between Croats and Croatian Serbs.

NATO intervened in Bosnia-Herzegovina to change the balance of power. The Bosnian Serbs were up until then the superior military force. Had NATO powers not internationalized the fighting and intervened, the Bosnian Serbs would have taken control of the country and maintained it as an integral part of Yugoslavia. This would have crippled or halted Euro-Atlantic expansion in the Balkans.

On January 15, 1999, the fighting in Racak between Serbian forces and the outlawed Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which the US State Department itself labelled a terrorist organization, would be used to paint a similar picture of genocide and ethnic cleansing to justify war. By this time, the Serbs had successfully been demonized by NATO and the media as the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, so NATO's efforts to vilify the Serbs were made relatively easy. It is a matter of public record that US Secretary of State Madeline Albright and the KLA leadership were working to create a humanitarian pretext for intervention. It was in this context that the US and NATO had pressured the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to accept an arrangement where their military forces would leave Kosovo, but allowed the KLA to continue its attacks. This stoking of tensions is what NATO has tried to replicate in Syria through the so-called Free Syrian Army, which in reality is a terrorist organization linked to NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

In the Arab World: Libya and Syria

In 2011, the humanitarian card would be played again by NATO, this time in the North African country of Libya. Colonel Qaddafi was accused of massacring his own people in Libya, particularly in Benghazi. Packaged with unverified claims of jet attacks and foreign mercenaries, this prompted the UN to permit the US and its NATO allies to impose another no-fly zone, as in Iraq and Yugoslavia. Illegally, the NATO powers arrogated the no-fly zone provision of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 to mount an aerial bombing campaign. The massive onslaught involving over 10,000 bombing missions was conducted in concert with NATO special forces and proxy militias on the ground. NATO warplanes targeted civilian population centres and civilian infrastructure, such as food stores and water and power utilities - acts that are war crimes under international law. Such a blatant campaign of state terrorism - obscenely in the name of "protecting human rights" - was instrumental in overthrowing the sovereign government in Tripoli and installing a proxy regime composed of an extremely volatile amalgam of opportunist para-militaries, terrorists, NATO intelligence operatives, and fractious tribal warlords. Recent reports of internecine bloodletting and revenge killing erupting across Libya, "post-NATO liberation," attest to the real criminal enterprise of NATO's regime change in Libya that was cynically perpetrated under the guise of protecting civilians.

Meanwhile, in Syria, the US and its cohorts have sought to replay the city of Homs like another Srebrenica, Racak, and Benghazi. They have sought to use the same tactic for inciting sectarian tensions and then blaming the government of President Bashar Al-Assad for conducting a "brutal crackdown." The US and its allies are demanding that the Syrian Army stops fighting while the insurgent forces of the Syrian National Council's Syrian Free Army are given a free hand to launch attacks, just as the NATO power demanded of the Yugoslav military while giving a green light to the KLA. Russian and Chinese demands that both sides observe a ceasefire offset this strategy.

What stands in the way of yet another NATO intervention is a firm resolve by Moscow and Beijing at the UN Security Council as well as the alliance between Syria and Iran. Damascus and its allies, however, should be wary of more traps to tie Syria down politically and legally through one-sided agreements. Nor should the Syrians place their trust in the United Nations to act as an “honest broker.”

Kofi Annan and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Much praise is being given to Kofi Annan as the special envoy of both the Arab League and United Nations. There should, however, be caution applied when dealing with Annan. In this regard, his history with regard to humanitarian interventions needs to be assessed.

According to American diplomat Richard Holbrooke, who was intimately tied to the balkanization of Yugoslavia, Annan was one of the most supportive figures for US foreign policy in the Balkans. Annan was actually instrumental in helping to put together the R2P doctrine with Canadian diplomats. Furthermore, the Ghanaian-born career diplomat owes his rise to power to senior Washington connections and specifically to the events of Srebrenica and the fighting in the former Yugoslavia. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was pushed aside by Washington to make way for Annan as the head of the United Nations.

Kofi Annan is also openly supportive of R2P. He participated as a panelist in a discussion about R2P (*The Responsibility to Protect – 10 Years On: Reflections on its Past, Present and Future*) held at the University of Ottawa on November 4, 2011. A week prior to this event, Allan Rock, president of the University of Ottawa and former Canadian ambassador to the UN, together with Lloyd Axworthy, president of the University of Winnipeg and former Canadian foreign minister, co-authored an article about R2P in the *Ottawa Citizen* (October 25, 2011). Both Axworthy, who was on the panel with Annan, and Allan Rock praised the war in Libya, calling it a victory for R2P.

At the panel, Annan was joined by the decidedly pro-NATO Canadian parliamentarian Christopher Alexander. Alexander is the parliamentary secretary to Peter MacKay. Mackay is the current defence minister of Canada and has voiced support for open wars against Syria and Iran. Christopher Alexander was also a Canadian diplomat in Russia for several years, the former Canadian ambassador to NATO-garrisoned Afghanistan, and the deputy special representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The R2P panel was moderated by Lyse Doucet, a correspondent for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and a friend of Alexander.

What is important to note about the R2P Ottawa panel is that it was largely supportive of R2P. Kofi Annan also voiced his support for NATO’s military intervention in Libya. When asked about using R2P in Syria, no firm answer was given by Annan. He did appear, however, to give his tacit support to intervention against Syria. Finally, both Annan and Axworthy proposed that regional organizations be given R2P mandates. For example, the African Union should be able to intervene on the behalf of the international community in African countries, such as Uganda and Sudan, or that the Arab League likewise be given an R2P mandate in countries, such as Syria.

These points are key factors. They should not be overlooked. Annan’s impartiality with regard to his latest pivotal task in Syria should be questioned, especially in light of his stated position on Libya and his generally supportive views for NATO military interventions.

Humanitarianism: The Face of Modern Imperialism

The NATO military interventions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Libya were and are colonial invasions masquerading as humanitarian endeavours. Moreover, what NATO did in Yugoslavia was to intervene incrementally to divide and conquer the country. According to General John Galvin, the former supreme commander of NATO, this was done because NATO officials knew that an all-out invasion during the disintegration of the country would result in a massive guerrilla war with high costs for NATO. It can also be added that such a NATO intervention would have had the inverse effect of unifying Yugoslavia instead of allowing the federal state to dissolve.

At the start of 2011, both Libya and Syria were holdouts to NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and they also had reservations about the EU's Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). This effectively means that they were both resistant to Euro-Atlantic expansion. While popular protests in Bahrain and Jordan went unnoticed, all public eyes were directed by NATO state governments and corporate media towards Libya and Syria. This is because of imperialist interests to subvert both the latter Arab states - while the former mentioned states are allies and therefore must be bolstered despite their well-documented repressive conducts.

Atlanticism is on the march. Both NATO's operations in the Balkans and the Arab World are intended to expand the Euro-Atlantic Zone. Its involvement in African Union missions in East Africa are also tied to this. For all observers who take a detailed look at the restructuring of states vanquished by NATO, this should be clear. Humanitarianism has become the new face of modern imperialism. Former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan is a man whose face fits the deceptive humanitarian agenda of modern imperialism.

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