

Libyan Scenario For Syria: Towards A US-NATO “Humanitarian Intervention” directed against Syria?

By [Rick Rozoff](#)

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On April 29 the White House issued an executive order to enforce new and more stringent sanctions against Syria and appealed to European North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies to follow suit.

In a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives President Barack Obama wrote, “I have determined that the Government of Syria’s human rights abuses....constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, and warrant the imposition of additional sanctions.”

His order targeted among others Syrian President Bashar Assad’s brother Mahir and cousin Atif Najib and also included – in an indication that broader objectives are also being pursued however tenuous, even farfetched, the link – the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, with the presidential demarche contending: “Despite the Government of Iran’s public rhetoric claiming revolutionary solidarity with people throughout the region, Iran’s actions in support of the Syrian regime place it in stark opposition to the will of the Syrian people.”

Immediately afterward a White House official threatened that President Assad himself could be sanctioned next.

On February 25 Obama issued a comparable – in fact an almost identical – order against Libya, only ten days after anti-government protests began in the nation and three weeks before U.S. cruise missiles and bombs landed on its soil.

Employing a standard template in which only proper and place names need be changed, the earlier version stated:

“I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, find that Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, his government, and close associates have taken extreme measures against the people of Libya...The foregoing circumstances...pose a serious risk to its stability, thereby constituting an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, and I hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.”

[1]

One cannot help be reminded of the couplet of Percy Bysshe Shelley:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!

Washington seized \$32 billion dollars worth of Libyan assets in the U.S., with special

emphasis placed on those belonging to “any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State...to be a senior official of the Government” or “to be a child of Colonel Muammar Qadhafi.”

Twenty-two days later bombing missions and missile attacks were unleashed against Libya, initially under U.S. Africa Command’s Operation Odyssey Dawn and since March 31 through NATO’s Operation Unified Protector, which are continuing into their seventh week.

Libya and Syria are the only two Mediterranean nations and the sole remaining Arab states that are not subordinated to U.S. and NATO designs for control of the Mediterranean Sea Basin and the Middle East.

Neither has participated in NATO’s almost ten-year-old Operation Active Endeavor naval patrols and exercises in the Mediterranean Sea and neither is a member of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue military partnership which includes most regional countries: Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. Lebanon is subject to a naval and internal (that is, on its border with Syria) blockade run overwhelmingly by NATO nations under the post-2006 expanded United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon mission.

Jordan and Morocco are supporting the NATO war against Libya and members of another NATO partnership program – the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative – Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, are supplying fighter-bombers for combat missions over Libya. Fellow Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partner Kuwait announced on April 24 that it will grant \$180 million to pay the salaries of employees of the rebel Transitional National Council in Libya.

With renewed efforts earlier this year to recruit Cyprus into NATO’s Partnership for Peace transitional program [2] – member Sweden, for example, has provided eight Gripen warplanes for the campaign against Libya – Libya and Syria were prospectively the last outposts of independence and non-alignment in the entire Mediterranean region.

On April 24, Easter Sunday, three leading members of the patrician branch of the U.S. regime (and effective modern-day proconsuls) – Senators John McCain, who had just returned from meeting with Libyan insurgents in Benghazi, and Joseph Lieberman and Lindsey Graham – appeared on CNN’s “State Of The Union” program, the first two live and the other in a segment taped two days before.

In what Americans and the rest of the world have come to accept as specimens of U.S. foreign policy expertise, international diplomacy and seasoned statesmanship, Lieberman stated that United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 “gives justification if NATO decides it wants to, for going directly after Gadhafi,” and Graham added that “my recommendation to NATO and the administration is to cut the head of the snake off, go to Tripoli, start bombing Gadhafi’s inner circle, their compounds, their military headquarters.”

McCain and Graham are Republicans and Lieberman is a self-described independent who caucuses with Democratic Party colleagues in the Senate and was the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 2000. The once almost second-in-command of the world’s sole military superpower, to use Obama’s phrase, added: “You can’t get into a fight with one foot.” The transition from republic to empire cost Rome the eloquence of Cicero. The United States has nothing to lose on that score.

Graham, further working himself into a frenzy of unbridled bellicosity and not to be outdone

by his colleague in either fury or coarse bluster, asserted that “the goal is to get rid of Gadhafi” and added “Let’s get this guy gone.”

He offered these specifics:

“The people around Gadhafi need to wake up every day wondering, ‘Will this be my last?’ The military commanders in Tripoli supporting Gadhafi should be pounded.” As the expression has it, beating – or more accurately killing – the servant to punish the master. The model of interstate relations the imperial metropolis is enforcing around the world with the resources of the most powerful military machine in history.

To demonstrate to Russia and China, nuclear powers and veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council, how much their obsequious compliance in allowing the U.S. and its NATO allies to launch the war against Libya by abstaining on the March 17 Security Council vote has gained them respect and gratitude as “responsible” partners on the global stage, Graham also said:

“You can’t let the Russians and the Chinese veto the freedom agenda. So any time you go to the United Nations Security Council, you run into the Russians and the Chinese. These are quasi-dictatorships, so I wouldn’t be locked down by the U.N. mandate.”

Lieberman, not content with a Libyan campaign that will soon enter its third month on the calendar with no indication of abating, advocated the replication of its lead-up in regard to Syria, calling for the seizing of government officials’ assets and an arms embargo against the nation he took pains to link with Iran.

In his words, “This is a moment of extraordinary opportunity for the cause of freedom in Syria, and it has tremendous strategic significance for the region.”

On April 28 Lieberman, McCain and Graham released a joint statement targeting Syria in earnest, which opens with this paragraph:

“The escalating crackdown by Bashar al Assad’s regime against the Syrian people has reached a decisive point. By following the path of Moammar Qaddafi and deploying military forces to crush peaceful demonstrations, Assad and those loyal to him have lost the legitimacy to remain in power in Syria. We urge President Obama to state unequivocally – as he did in the case of Qaddafi and Mubarak – that it is time for Assad to go. The President should take tangible diplomatic and economic measures to isolate and pressure the Assad regime, including through targeted sanctions against Assad himself and other regime officials who are responsible for gross human rights abuses.” [3]

From “Let’s get this guy [Gaddafi] gone” to “it is time for Assad to go” in four days.

The following day the Obama administration in large measure obliged them.

The U.S. and its NATO allies have, in addition to U.S. Sixth Fleet and NATO Active Endeavor military assets permanently deployed in the Mediterranean, warplanes, warships and submarines engaged in the assault against Libya that can be used against Syria at a moment’s notice.

On April 27 Russia and China evidently prevented the U.S. and its NATO allies from pushing through an equivalent of Resolution 1973 against Syria in the Security Council, with Russian

deputy ambassador to the UN Alexander Pankin stating that the current situation in Syria “does not present a threat to international peace and security.” Syria is Russia’s last true partner in the Mediterranean and the Arab world and hosts one of only two Russian overseas naval bases, that at Tartus. (The other being in Ukraine’s Crimea.)

Last May Russian President Dmitry Medvedev became the first Soviet or Russian head of state to visit Syria where he pledged assistance in developing the nation’s oil and gas infrastructure and discussed constructing a nuclear power station.

However, blocked in the Security Council this time, the West has resorted to unilateral, what it refers to as “coalitional,” expedients, the first of which is Obama’s executive order.

Britain, France, Germany and Portugal circulated a draft for a Resolution 1973-type initiative against Syria earlier in the week, failing which Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain later on the 27th demanded the Syrian ambassadors to their countries condemn their government’s actions at home.

Synchronized with the U.S. action on the 29th, the European Union announced it plans to impose a wide range of sanctions against Syria including the now typical portfolio of travel bans, the freezing of assets and an arms embargo.

What is underway currently is the realization of the former George W. Bush administration’s project for “regime change” in Syria of six years ago following the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon and the subsequent Cedar Revolution – a term coined by then-U.S. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky – the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country and the recall of the American ambassador from Damascus.

In 2005 the major Western powers – the U.S., Britain, France and Germany – acted against Syria in the United Nations. At the time Russia and China blocked more punishing measures than were taken under Security Council Resolution 1636 in October of that year.

In the same month Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz acknowledged that Syria could be the target of American military action, saying “I won’t be surprised if Syria gets a red card,” according to Britain’s Daily Telegraph.

Shortly before National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and the State Department’s Karen Hughes visited Turkey where, according to the Turkish Daily News, “Both U.S. officials said the Washington administration is in search of ways to facilitate a change of regime in Syria.”

Six years ago American and allied plans for overthrowing the government of Syria through subversion, military aggression or a combination of both were being justified by accusations of Syria’s alleged role in the Hariri killing, subversion of the U.S. client regime in Iraq and support for Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Today the rationale is that used for the war against Libya: The violent suppression of protests.

Justifications change. Political, particularly geopolitical, objectives do not.

Notes

1) http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/2011libya.eo_rel_.pdf

2) Cyprus: U.S. To Dominate All Europe, Mediterranean Through NATO

Stop NATO, March 3, 2011

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/cyprus-u-s-to-dominate-all-europe-mediterranean-through-nato/>

Libyan War And Control Of The Mediterranean

Stop NATO, March 25, 2011

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/3973/>

3)

http://mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=9cae435d-f7dd-27c7-bd7d-39e78c5ba2d0

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