

“Progressives” Support the US-NATO “No Fly Zone” on Libya

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Iraq lone should have made any progressive support for Western military intervention in Libya negligible. It is very sad to see that didn't happen. The corporate media has, again, succeeded in getting many well intentioned progressives to think within its box.

A dictator falls out of favor with the West and, after quietly supporting him for years, we are suddenly told that “we” must not tolerate him (and only him) a second longer. The other tyrants we support, however, are just fine. In fact, those tyrants can even boost their standing in “our” eyes provided they cooperate with bringing down the “bad” dictator. See the way the Arab League's support for a “no fly zone” (i.e. war) on Libya is routinely offered to justify it.

A similar argument can be made tomorrow against any one of the West's allies - Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, among numerous others - should they “go bad” in the West's eyes. All the crimes “we” ignored, never heard about, and were complicit with will suddenly be thrown in our faces. If “we” aren't willing to support our blood drenched governments as they “liberate” people then clearly we are putting our political views ahead of our humanity

No surprise that BBC presenters have repeatedly said “Saddam” recently when they meant to say “Gadaffi”. They've come to instinctively know the drill, even if they mess up the names.

Should we want to stop Gadaffi from killing people? Of course, but why only Gadaffi? Why not our own governments and their allies who have done so on a much larger scale and not only through war?

We - who want civilized polices - should never forget the incredible destructive power and criminality of the West. Again, look at Iraq - with about 2 million dead since the West “liberated” Kuwait from Saddam in 1990 then all of Iraq in 2003. One progressive writer, in support of the “no fly zone” (i.e. war) on Libya argued that the Western dominated UN Security Council is analogous to the police within a typical capitalist country - guilty of grave double standards in its behavior, no doubt, but still necessary to protect innocent people. The analogy fails completely because it grossly understates the criminality of Western governments internationally. That goes far beyond what anyone can accuse police of in a country like the USA. Again, see Iraq, the most obvious example from recent history but there are many others.

We - who want civilized polices - do not control our governments. With considerable effort,

we can influence what our governments do internationally; limit some of their destructiveness (like prevent Vietnam from being nuked or Iraq from being bombed even more heavily). That kind of influence is not to be dismissed but must not be exaggerated either. Influence is not control. In fact, we don't even have control of our governments at home, much less abroad.

When we support Western bombing we are helping to bolster the most criminal and destructive governments in the world – and solidifying their alliances with other tyrants. The US and its allies would likely have invaded Iran by now if they had not run into unexpected trouble (an undeniable disaster) in Iraq. A bogus military “success” (Kosovo, Grenada, the 1990 Gulf War, the bombing of Libya in 1986) where the carnage can be successfully covered up and downplayed softens the public up to get behind “disasters” in the future.

So what should we do? Rather than helping (however minor the help may be) to unleash destructive forces we do not control, we should be trying to hold our own leaders accountable for their crimes – in other words, get control over them. Among many other things, we need to put the arms manufacturers (overwhelmingly located in the self-proclaimed “civilized” countries where we live) out of business. That is hardly a short term project. It's a daunting task and there is an understandable appeal in getting behind policies (like a no-fly zone) that our governments are willing to do now. However, expanding the range of what our governments do to include civilized policies means we must not let the corporate media control what we think. Even when the corporate media fails to impose its worldview, it often succeeds in controlling what we think about, and in severely limiting our focus.

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