

Responsibility to Protect (R2P): Where America Chooses to Back “Armed Struggle”

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Within a few days, the “Silmiya” (peaceful) popular uprising against the 42-year old rule of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya had turned into an “armed struggle” and in no time the U.S. administration was in full gear backing the Libyan armed violent revolt, which has turned into a full scale civil war, despite being the same world power who officially label the legitimate (according to the charter of the United Nations) armed defense of the Palestinian people against the 34- year old foreign military occupation of Israel as “terrorism.”

Backing the armed struggle of the Libyan people came less than a month since President Barak Obama on February 11 hailed the Egyptians’ “shouting ‘Silmiya, Silmiya’” — thus adding the Arabic word to the international language lexicon - because the “Egyptians have inspired us, and they’ve done so by putting the lie to the idea that justice is best gained by violence .. It was the moral force of nonviolence, .. that bent the arc of history toward justice,” he said.

When Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2009, he viewed the decision less as a recognition of his own accomplishments and more as “a call to action.” Within less than two years, he “surged” the U.S. - led war in Afghanistan, expanding it into Pakistan, stuck almost literally to his predecessor’s war agenda in Iraq, and now has opened a third war theater for the United States in Libya, where his administration ruled out any peaceful settlement of the conflict, insisting on its internationalization, ignored all efforts at mediation, especially by the African Union, and lent a deaf ear to calls for an immediate ceasefire as a prelude for dialogue in search for a way out of the bloody civil war, which were voiced recently in particular by the presidents of China, the world’s most populous country, and Indonesia, the largest Islamic country.

Libya is a “unique situation,” Obama says, where the U.S.-led military intervention and the backing of an armed revolt is the exception and not the rule in U.S. foreign policy. This exceptional and unique situation, it seems, justified his resort to an exceptional and unique process of decision-making that nonetheless doesn’t justify bypassing a consultation with the Congress and explaining his decision to the American public, where his hasty military intervention overseas could not in any way be justified by any immediate or direct threat to U.S. national security.

In his 2006 book, “The Audacity of Hope,” Obama wrote: “Instead of guiding principles, we have what appears to be a series of ad hoc decisions, with dubious results. Why invade Iraq and not North Korea or Burma? Why intervene in Bosnia and not Darfur?” Now, Obama seems to have no objection to an “ad hoc decision” on Libya.

His backtracking on his previous pledges to Arabs, Palestinians in particular, would not make any Arab or Palestinian expect him to pose any questions like: Why a U.S. military intervention in an internal conflict in Libya to protect civilians who resorted to arms to defend themselves and not one to protect defenseless Palestinian civilians who have been under military, economic and political siege for the sole purpose of depriving them of any means of defense against the external Israeli military occupation?

The Libyan precedent, of course, according to Obama's reasoning, could not be applied to Israel because Libya is a "unique situation" where the circumstances are unlikely to recur, but nonetheless dictate arming the "rebels," a process which the coalition of the intervening western powers are now considering and which the U.S, British, French and other intelligence teams are already on the ground to identify who among the rebels deserve arming and to facilitate the process in support of the Libyan people's "armed struggle," at the same time when the occupying Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are publicly threatening a new all-out assault on the besieged Gaza Strip with the declared purpose of uprooting the Palestinian armed struggle in self defense against a foreign power.

A thinly - veiled Arab cover and the UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which was not supported by major powers like Russia, China, Germany, India and Brazil, could hardly give legitimacy to the U.S.-led military intervention in Libya; neither does distancing itself by transferring the leadership to NATO because, as former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, told Fox News recently, "Obama may be the only man in the whole world who does not know that we, the United States, run NATO."

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