

Syria and the Sham of “Humanitarian Intervention”

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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I continue to be amazed with the ease with which the dividing line is blurred between what is real and what is fiction in the reporting on Syria by the Western media. The press in the U.S. continues to dutifully report on the “objective diplomacy” by the Obama administration to broker a “peaceful” resolution to the conflict in Syria. However, those stories of noble and innocent efforts to avert the catastrophic human suffering that has eventually engulfed Syria has sanitized the bloody complicity of U.S. policy. Diplomacy, for the U.S., has meant calling for regime change from the outset and then encouraging Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Israel, their client states in the region, to arm, train and provide political support for a military campaign with the objective of effectively dismembering the Syria State.

Two years later, with [tens of thousands killed](#), millions uprooted and the delicate social fabric of the country shredded by sectarian brutality, the next phase in the propaganda war leading to more direct intervention by the West to finish off the regime is being organized in the form of a [peace conference](#) scheduled to take place in June.

Co-sponsored by Russia with a stake in maintaining the integrity of the Syria State, the U.S. approach to the conference, however, gives the impression that the gathering is a charade meant to mollify those elements in the U.S. Congress and public still hesitant to support another expensive military adventure. The U.S. demand that a peaceful solution to the conflict is predicated on a “transitional government” being established in which [Assad should play no role](#), means effectively that there will be no serious attempt to resolve the conflict short of regime change and the surrendering of Syrian sovereignty. The U.S. position also confirms the real objective of the conference which is to justify more direct military intervention by the U.S. once the conference “fails” to bring peace.

While this is absolutely clear for many people around the world, the U.S. public, along with much of what used to be called the progressive and/or radical sectors, continue to be hoodwinked by some of the most crude and obvious manipulation I have ever witnessed. It was precisely the smooth efficiency with which the public was being manipulated that motivated me to write [an earlier article on Syria](#) that attempted to offer an explanation for the reasons why U.S. State propagandists, and I include the mainstream media in this category, have been so successful in confusing the general public and dividing the anti-war, anti-imperialist movement.

I believe part of their success has been due to the fact that they have used the concept of humanitarian intervention as one of their main tools. In my article, I made the argument that humanitarian intervention, along with the concept of the “right to protect” (R2P) has developed into the most effective ideological weapon the liberal human rights community provided Western imperialism since the fall of the Soviet State. Humanitarian intervention

has proven to be an even more valuable propaganda tool than the “war on terror,” because as the situation in Libya and now Syria has demonstrated, it provides a moral justification for imperialist intervention that can also accommodate the presence of the same “terrorist” forces the U.S. pretends to be opposed to. And of course, in the eyes of the U.S. government, tyrannical and dictatorial governments that need to be deposed are only those that present an obstacle to the realization of U.S. geo/political interests—never those paragons of freedom and morality like Saudi Arabia and Israel.

As I said in my earlier article:

“Humanitarian intervention provided the U.S. State the perfect ideological cover and internal rationalization to continue as the global “gendarme” of the capitalist order. By providing the human rights rationale for the assertion that the “international community” had a moral and legal responsibility to protect a threatened people, mainstream human rights activists effectuated a shift in the discourse on international human rights that moved the R2P assertion from a contested legal and moral argument to a common-sense assumption. And because of their limited perspective, it did not occur to any of these theoreticians that what they propagated was a thinly updated version of the [“white man’s burden.”](#) The NATO intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, the assault on Iraq to “save” the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein, and most recently the NATO attack on Libya that brought to power a rag-tag assortment of anti-African racists, have solidified the idea among many in the U.S. that humanitarian intervention to protect human rights through aggressive war is justifiable. The consequence of this for U.S. policy makers and for the likely targets of U.S. aggression in the global South is that if properly framed, war could be moved back to the center of strategic options without much fear of a backlash from the American people—a development especially important for a declining power that appears to have concluded that it will use military means to attempt to maintain its global empire.”

The propagandists of the U.S. war strategy have been spectacularly successful in inculcating this shift in consciousness in the general population and the self-muting of the anti-war and anti-imperialist movements in the West, with the exception of a few [organizations](#). The assertion of the right to unilaterally attack any State that it deems unfit for sovereignty is not a new articulation of White supremacist, imperialist ideology but in this current period where there are few constraints on the global exercise of “White power,” the internalization of this position by the European and U.S. publics, irrespective of ethnicity or race, has made the world a much more dangerous place for Black and Brown people: 50,000 killed in Libya, 80,000 in Syria, 1,000,000 in Iraq, and 30,000 in Afghanistan.

The normalization of war as a contemporary expression of the West’s responsibility to bring liberal democracy and capitalist freedom to the non-White hordes, and the fact that most of the people being killed in the process of “being saved” by the West are non-European, is a graphic confirmation of the White supremacist assumptions of humanitarian intervention. The people being “saved” by the West are framed as people who would embrace the Western way of life if given a choice. That is why [Madeline Albright](#) could say with a straight face that the “price was worth it” in response to the 500,000 children that died in Iraq as a result of U.S. sanctions.

So as the U.S. government prepares to [wage war in Syria](#), the imperative for all of us who believe in peace and fundamental human rights is to attempt to persuade as many people as possible to choose peace instead of the war objectives of the 1%. The Syrian government

has a significant social base that is made up of Alawites, Druze, Christians and significant numbers of Sunnis who fear the takeover of the country by Islamic fundamentalists. This is a fact that is being hidden from the public in the U.S. Those in the U.S. who would like to see an end to the bloodshed in Syria, and I believe that is the majority of people, should call on their representatives to support real initiatives for peace that respect the sovereignty of Syria and the desires of all of the people in that country.

But really what the people of Syria and the world want and many have demanded, is for the U.S. and its Western allies – the minority who make up 10% of the world but pretend to be the world – to intervene into their own societies who are experiencing their own humanitarian crisis brought on by a moribund capitalism and leave the rest of the world alone.

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