

Thoughtful, Respectful, and Progressive? Regarding the “Responsibility to Protect”

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[Military and WMD](#), [US NATO War](#)
[Agenda](#)

Some of this has already been raised, in my recent [interview with Phil Taylor](#), plus in an excellent article by Ken Stone, “[UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay: ‘Pretext-maker’ for Western Military Aggression](#),” and by *The Wrong Kind of Green* (“[Must Watch: MP Laurent Louis Exposes International Neo-Colonialists Behind ‘War On Terror’ & ‘Humanitarian Interventions’ in Belgian Parliament](#)”), probably my favourite [website](#) right now (see additional articles of relevance from WKG at the end).

At the focus here is a basic, honest response to what is being sold to us by various vested interests as the ideal form of “humanitarian action,” and specifically Western notions of the “responsibility to protect” (R2P). The response is not collegial, civil, comforting—that’s because the speaker has not yet been pacified and tamed, not even as an elected member of a European parliament. However great is the pressure to become structurally adjusted in a normative sense, and aligned with the new [white woman’s burden](#), this speaker (Laurent Louis) bucks that trend.

While the focus is about a particular thesis, and its antithesis, this is part of a larger argument running across my essays here, as pointed out toward the end of this [recent essay](#). An anthropology critical of imperialism, should not just appear to be critical only once it comes knocking on the doors of anthropology departments searching for recruits. We should not become overly obsessed with the details of a single program, and the focus on militarism ought to always contextualize the phenomenon as a constituent part of imperialism. One important theme, bridging counterinsurgency, development, foreign aid, and R2P, is that of *humanitarianism* and its ever more frequent appearance in military garb. Simply put, what we are dealing with is the justifications for empire, that are meant to buy our peaceful compliance with resources that are redirected toward foreign escapades, and to sell others on the legitimacy of our ruling them.

To begin this “conversation,” I want to juxtapose two videos, where the second appears to reply almost directly to the first, with the intensity and honesty that is required now more than ever.

First, let’s hear from **Jillian Siskind**, President of [Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights \(CLAIHR\)](#) on Canada’s “Responsibility to Protect”:

Now, let’s hear from Belgian MP, **Laurent Louis**, who belongs to no political party ([website](#), [twitter](#), [facebook](#)):

“Thoughtful:” What amount of thought was given to the consequences of intervention in Libya? The almost unanimous opinion now is: not much. Siskind wrote [her article](#), the last one she has written for *the Mark*, just a mere two days before the bloody butchery of Muammar Gaddafi, and at the same time as Hillary Clinton was in Tripoli calling for the leader of another nation’s government to be “captured or killed,” later rejoicing in his death like some [wildly deranged ghoul](#). So much for civility, compassion, and decorum, dear “progressives.” What thought was there of how foreign military intervention would prolong the Libyan war and increase the number of Libyan deaths? What thought was there for the fact that political solutions, forcibly pushed through by external interests, would lay the foundations for continued instability that daily continues to threaten lives? And what thought is there for the lives of Canadian troops, whose existence is supposedly one of potential sacrifice of their own lives so that interests represented by people like Siskind can justify their own existence?

“Respectful:” Comfortably cushioned in her upper crust residence, piano in the background, what *respect* did the clean white evangelist show for the lives of black Libyans and African migrant workers, even months after the first reports of their suffering mass lynching? How will she respect the fact that her implicit collusion with racists, means that [she reinforces racism](#)? And what respect is there in arguing that the defense of sovereignty, as a protection of the right to self-determination hard won by the colonized, is to be swept away because a lawyer in Toronto has moral qualms about how others, very far away, exercise power?

Also striking: the rubber band morality of the humanitarian interventionists. **Compressed**, when feeling up close, as if they are part of someone else’s story, needing to take action (not standing idly by), and take editorial control in re-authoring that story towards a new universal conclusion, one on which they can sign their name. **Loosened**, stretched off to a distance, far removed and cold as they say that the war in Libya was “not perfect,” but it can be “improved upon” and used in other situations. Blowback-*that too can be improved upon*, Ms. Siskind, because it is currently not perfect either. The moral dualism of humanitarian imperialism nonetheless continues to fascinate me.

“Progressive:” Since when did violent regime change by NATO become a cause for “progressives”? On the other hand, we can certainly understand the choice of words, opting for “progressive,” a buzzword arising from the Social Darwinists, Positivists, and “scientific racists” of the 19th-century. The proselytizing mission of universal human rights, which does not place all its faith in the power of its message to convince (hence the resort to brute force), is little different from the civilizing missions of colonial powers of the past. If stressing the utter difference of others could sometimes be used as a justification for their enslavement or extermination, stressing equality as sameness achieves nothing better in the end. Now everyone else is subject to this blonde moral smothering and bleaching political homogenization that reveals an underlying fear and contempt of others. Now that truly is *progressive*.

Then there is Laurent Louis, with rare courage and honesty, who with passion essentially states some of the same arguments as David Harvey does in his [New Imperialism](#) text – with one salient difference: as much as he may have wanted to, David Harvey never told his adversaries to go f*** themselves. Thankfully, Louis remedies this ([thanks to WKG for this transcript](#)), with my own emphases added. I do not endorse this without any reservation, and I take exception with several points, but the basic thrust is one that I agree with:

Thank you, Mr. President. Dear Ministers, dear colleagues.

Belgium is indeed the land of surrealism. This morning we learned in the media that the Belgian army is incapable of fighting some extremist soldiers having radical Islamist beliefs existing within its own ranks and who cannot be dismissed by legal of legal means. However, at the same time, we decide to help France in its war against "Terror" by providing logistical support for its operation in Mali.

What wouldn't we do in order to fight against terrorism outside our borders? I just hope we took care not to send for this anti-terrorist operation in Mali, these much talked about Belgian Islamist soldiers! I seem to be joking, but what is going on in the world today does not make me laugh at all. It doesn't make me laugh because without any doubt, **the leaders of our Western countries are taking the people for imbeciles with the help and support of the Media which are nothing more today than an organ of propaganda of the ruling powers.**

Around the world, military actions and regime's destabilization are becoming more and more frequent. Preventive war has become the rule. **And today, in the name of democracy and the fight against terrorism our states grant themselves the right to violate the sovereignty of independent countries and to overthrow legitimate leaders.** There has been Iraq and Afghanistan, the wars of the American lie. Coming later, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya where thanks to your decisions, our country has been "first in line" to participate in crimes against humanity, in each case to overthrow progressive and moderate regimes and to replace them by Islamist regimes, and - isn't it weird? - their first will was to impose Sharia law. This is exactly what is currently happening **in Syria where Belgium is shamefully funding the arming of the Islamist rebels who are trying to overthrow Bashar Al Assad.**

Thus in the midst of economic crisis, as more and more Belgians can no longer house themselves, feed, heat and cure themselves - Yeah, I can hear what a filthy populist I am - Well, the Minister of Foreign Affairs decided to offer the Syrian rebels 9 million euros! Of course, they'll try to make us believe that this money will be used for **humanitarian purposes ... one more lie!** As you can see, for months, our country is only participating to put in place, Islamic regimes in North Africa and the Middle East. **So, when they come and pretend to go to war in order to fight against terrorism in Mali, well... I feel like laughing. It's false! Under the appearance of good actions, we only intervene to defend financial interests and to complete a neo-colonialist mindset.**

It's real nonsense to go to help France in Mali in the name of the fight against Islamic terrorism when at the same time, we support in Syria the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad by Islamist rebels who want to impose Sharia law, as was done in Tunisia and in Libya. It is about time to **stop lying to us and treating people like imbeciles.** The time has come to tell the truth. Arming the Islamist Rebels, as Westerners have in the past armed Bin Laden, that friend of the Americans before they turned against him, well, the western countries are taking the opportunity to place military bases in the newly conquered countries while favoring domestic companies.

Everything is therefore strategic. In Iraq, our American allies have put their hands on the country's oil wealth. In Afghanistan, it was its opium and drugs - always useful when it comes to make lots of money pretty quickly. In Libya, in Tunisia, in Egypt or then again in Syria, the aim was and still is today to overthrow moderate powers, to replace them by Islamist powers who very quickly will become troublesome and that we will shamelessly attack, pretending once again to fight terrorism or protect Israel.

Thus the next targets are already known. Within a few months I bet that our eyes will turn to Algeria and eventually to Iran. To go to war, to free people from an outside aggressor is noble. But to go to war to defend the interests of the USA ... **To go to war to defend the interests of big corporations such as AREVA ... To go to war to put our hands on gold mines, has nothing noble at all and it reveals our countries to be attackers and thugs!**

No one dares to speak, but I will not shut up! And if my battle makes me look like an enemy of this system who flaunts Human Rights in the name of financial, geo-strategic and neo-colonialist interests, so be it! Flaunting and exposing this regime is a duty and makes me proud. And honestly, I apologize for my low class speech, but **f*** you, all the so-called do-gooders, both left and right wingers or from the center who are today licking the boots of our corrupted powers and who will be pleased to ridicule me. F*** you all, leaders who are playing with your bombs as kids do in a playground! F*** you! - you who pretend to be democrats while you are nothing more than low class criminals. I don't have much respect either for the journalists who have the audacity to label the opponents as mentally retarded while basically, they know very well that these opponents are right.** Finally, **I despise at the highest point those who believe they are the kings of the world** and who are dictating their laws because I am on the side of the truth, the side of justice, the side of innocent victims of looting at all costs.

And it is for this reason that I have decided to clearly oppose this resolution. Since the beginning of the French operation, the lie has been organized. We are told that France is only answering the call for help of a Malian president. We almost forget that this president has no legitimacy and that he was put in place to ensure the transition following the coup of March 2012.

Who supported this coup d'état? Who started it? For whom is this president of transition actually working? This is the first lie! The French president, François Hollande dares to pretend to wage this war to fight against jihadist who threaten (Ohhh do you realize!) who threaten the French and European territory! But what an ugly lie! By taking the official argument, while taking the opportunity to frighten the population, increasing the terror alert level, implementing the Vigipirate plan our leaders and media are demonstrating an un-imaginable outrage! How dare they use such a point while France and Belgium have not hesitated to arm and support Jihadists in Libya and that these same countries continue to support these Jihadists in Syria. The pretext hides strategic and economic purposes.

Our countries are no longer fearing inconsistency because everything is done to hide it. But the inconsistency is well present. It is not tomorrow that you'll see a Malian citizen commit an act of terrorism in Europe. No, unless we'll suddenly create one so we can justify this military operation. Haven't we created September 11th, after all, to justify the invasions, arbitrary arrest, torture and massacre of innocent populations? Thus, to create a Malian terrorist is no big deal!

Another pretext used these recent months to justify military operations is the protection of Human Rights AHHH! ... This pretext is still used today to justify the war in Mali. But yes! We have to act, otherwise the evil Islamists will impose Sharia law in Mali, stoning women and cutting the thugs' hands off. Oh! The intention is truly noble. Noble and salutary for sure. But then why is it, Good Lord, why is that our countries have contributed in Tunisia and Libya to the accession to power of Islamists who have decided to apply this Sharia Law in these countries which were still not so long ago, modern and progressive?

I invite you to ask the young Tunisians who have launched the revolution in

Tunisia, if they are happy with their current situation? This is all hypocrisy. The purpose of this war in Mali is very clear. And since nobody will talk about it, I WILL. **The purpose is to fight against China and allow our American ally to maintain its presence in Africa and the Middle East. This is what guides these new-colonialist operations. And you will see, when the military operation will be over, France will, of course, keep its military bases in Mali. These bases will be a benefit to the Americans as well. Western corporates will put their hands on juicy contracts that will once again deprive re-colonized countries of their wealth and raw materials.**

So let's be clear, the primary beneficiaries of this military operation will be the owners and shareholders of the French giant AREVA who has been trying for years to obtain a uranium mine in Falea, a town of 17,000 inhabitants located at 350 km from Bamako. And I don't know why but my little finger is telling me that it won't take long before **AREVA** will eventually exploit that mine. I don't know, it's an impression I have. It is therefore out of the question that I would take part in this colonialist mining - the colonialism of modern times. And for those who have doubt about my arguments, I sincerely invite them to learn about the wealth of Mali. Mali is a major producer of gold, but recently it has been designated, recently, eh ... - as being a country that offers a world class environment for the exploitation of uranium. How strange! One step closer to a war against Iran, it is obvious.

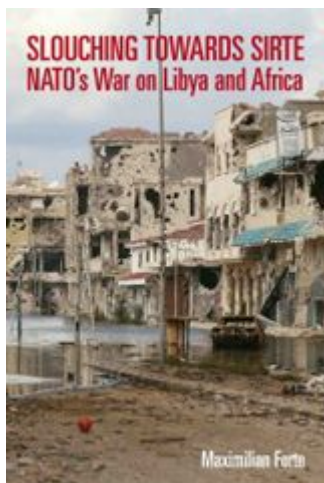
For all these reasons and in order to not fall into the traps of lies they are telling us, I've decided not to give my support to that intervention in Mali. Therefore, I will vote against it. And by doing so, **I'm being consistent since I never supported in the past our criminal interventions in Libya or in Syria, and so being the only MP in this country to defend the non-interference and the fight against obscure interests. I really think it is about time to put an end to our participation in the UN or NATO and get out of the EU** if Europe instead of providing peace becomes a weapon of attack and destabilization of sovereign countries, **submissive to financial rather than human interests.**

Finally, I can only urge our government to remind President Hollande the obligations resulting from the Geneva Conventions regarding the respect of all prisoners of war. Indeed, I was shocked to hear on television from the mouth of the French President that his intention was to "destroy" - I say "destroy" - Islamist terrorists. So, I do not want the qualification to be used to name the opponents to the Malian regime - it is always convenient today to talk about Islamic terrorists - to be used to circumvent the obligations of any democratic state in terms of respecting the rights of prisoners of war. We expect such respect from the Fatherland of Human Rights.

In conclusion, let me emphasize how lightly we decide to go to war. First, the government acts without any consent from the Parliament. It appears as though it has the right to do so. It sends equipment, men to Mali. The Parliament subsequently reacts and when it responds, as today, well, this institution [today] happens to be composed of only 1/3 of its members. Much less if we speak of the French speaking MPs. It is therefore a guilty lightness which does not really surprise me, coming from a Parliament of Puppies, submitted to the dictates of political parties. Thank you.

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2012).



**[SLOUCHING TOWARDS SIRTE:
NATO'S WAR ON LIBYA AND AFRICA](#)**

by Maximilian Forte

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NATO's war in Libya was proclaimed as a humanitarian intervention—bombing in the name of “saving lives.” Attempts at diplomacy were stifled. Peace talks were subverted. Libya was barred from representing itself at the UN, where shadowy NGOs and “human rights” groups held full sway in propagating exaggerations, outright falsehoods, and racial fear mongering that served to sanction atrocities and ethnic cleansing in the name of democracy. The rush to war was far speedier than Bush's invasion of Iraq.

Max Forte has scrutinized the documentary history from before, during, and after the war. He argues that the war on Libya was not about human rights, nor entirely about oil, but about a larger process of militarizing U.S. relations with Africa. The development of the Pentagon's Africa Command, or AFRICOM, was in fierce competition with Pan-Africanist initiatives such as those spearheaded by Muammar Gaddafi.

Far from the success NATO boasts about or the “high watermark” proclaimed by proponents of the “Responsibility to Protect,” this war has left the once prosperous, independent and defiant Libya in ruin, dependency and prolonged civil strife.

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Maximilian C. Forte is a professor of anthropology in Montreal, Canada. He teaches courses in the field of political anthropology dealing with “the new imperialism,” Indigenous resistance movements and philosophies, theories and histories of colonialism, and critiques of the mass media. Max is a founding member of Anthropologists for Justice and Peace. Visit him online at <http://openanthropology.org/>

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