

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېاد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مېاد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.amconmag.com>

Obama's Libyan War

3/21/2011

On March 19, 2011, the eighth anniversary of the Iraq War, Barack Obama started the Libyan War. Those who might claim that it was not the President, but Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi who started this war, ignore that it only became our fight the moment Obama decided to intervene. Those who support our bombing of Libya to enforce a no-fly zone claim that these actions will not lead to a larger or more entrenched conflict. This claim not only contradicts most of America's foreign policy history, but proves that our political establishment has learned virtually nothing from the lessons of Iraq.

Syndicated columnist George Will is an exception to the Washington rule. When he was asked by ABC's *This Week* host Christiane Amanpour if he believed Obama's bombing of Libya was the "right thing to do," Will replied: "I do not. We have intervened in a tribal society, in a civil war. And we have taken sides in that civil war on behalf of a people we do not know or understand, for the purpose—not a vow, but inexorably our purpose—of creating a political vacuum by decapitating the government. Into that vacuum, what will flow we do not know and cannot know."

Will is right, and it is typically unforeseen circumstances that perpetuate the excuses for perpetual war. US forces remain in Iraq today precisely because we fear what kind of regime might arise in our absence—yet there was very little discussion of this important issue before the invasion. After taking the fight to the Taliban in 2001 as payback for 9/11, we remain in that country a decade later out of fear of a resurgent Taliban. Much of the discussion concerning

Afghanistan today is whether we can ever leave due to this eternal concern. Similarly, instead of benefitting in the long term from Obama's shortsighted military action in Libya, there is far more potential that America will now be involved in yet another prolonged Middle Eastern war.

The open-ended and inexplicably optimistic manner in which we began our intervention in Libya reeks of past American foreign policy blunders. Noted Will on *This Week*:

There is no limiting principle in what we've done. If we are to protect people who are under assault... we are not only logically committed to helping them, we are inciting them to rise in expectation. The mission creep began here... before the mission began, because we had a means not suited to the end. The means is a no-fly zone that will not affect the end which is obviously regime change.

If the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have not given us regimes preferable and stable enough to allow the US to exit, how will simply enforcing a no-fly zone in Libya force Gadhafi out? Even if it could, what kind of regime will replace him? How easy will it be? Always eager for any and every new war, were the neoconservatives in the Bush administration who assured us that Iraq would be a "cakewalk" and that US troops would be greeted as "liberators" really that idealistic? Or were they willingly duplicitous in their efforts to establish a permanent US presence in that country; something they had vocally desired throughout Bill Clinton's presidency? The same neoconservatives are now claiming that America's new war will also be user friendly, or as Charles Krauthammer said of Libya on FOX News a day before the bombing: "The terrain is uniquely favorable. We're the greatest naval power ever. It's all happening on the coast. The Qaddafi forces are all exposed. It's a desert. There is nowhere to hide. If we can succeed anywhere, it would be there."

Though excited by it and characteristically supportive of it, Libya is not a neocon production. This is Obama's war and that of the liberal internationalists in his Cabinet and his party who have always differed little in their foreign policy from hawkish Republicans. Reluctant to get bogged down in any new conflicts, Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned against enforcing a no-fly zone in Libya. Not sharing Gates's reluctance, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton helped shepherd the deal.

If Obama first rose to political prominence due to his early antiwar, anti-Bush rhetoric, his performance since becoming president—staying in Iraq, escalating in Afghanistan, extending the Patriot Act, maintaining Guantanamo—has been nothing short of a Bush redux. Declared candidate Obama in 2007: "The President does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation." But what imminent threat did Gadhafi present to the US? President Obama has shown the same infidelity to the Constitution as his predecessor and now with Libya, he has once again exhibited the same foreign policy insanity. As with Iraq and Afghanistan, it's not farfetched to assume that in the years to come we will all be wondering how we got involved in the Libyan War. It's also not farfetched to assume that we will still be wondering how or when we might get out of it.