

UNITING FOR PEACE

The Morality of Intervention, Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Role of United Nations

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Disarmament Demilitarisation Development Democracy
4D FOR WORLD PEACE

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1. Introduction

Lord Frank Judd, respected speakers and distinguished delegates, it is great to be here in this August Building of Houses of Parliament where groundbreaking laws and treaties, policies and bills have become a reality. This has only been possible by thinkers and change makers, and peace campaigners like yourself whose passion is behind all the social changes in our world.

We have to just look around the Middle East and North Africa which is experiencing a phenomenal and historical Arab awakening. From Tunisia to Bahrain to Morocco to Libya and Egypt and Yemen, the younger generations have risen in revolt against long military dictatorships and monarchies to claim popular representation. The autocratic regimes have cracked down shedding blood and fury, but the tide is swaying in favour of the new generation.

In my presentation, I would explore the justification of Interventions and the concept of Responsibility to Protect, NATO's – Excuse for yet another war and United Nations Role in Peacekeeping and living up to its vision "...to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind." (Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations)

2. Interventions and the Responsibility to Protect

Responsibility to Protect is an idea which was adopted in the UN world leader summit, 2005. It is the need to act to avoid genocide and mass killing if it is taking place in a country. However, the pertinent question is can it be enforced through international community via the route of the International Criminal Court, the UN Security Council and citizens initiatives. Furthermore, can it prevent wars, genocides and crimes against humanity? It is a morally sound concept but can it be enforced by the International Community is a matter of concern as more and more powerful countries are using R2P as a pretence for military intervention. What practical steps we can take for R2P concept to become a new rule of customary international law and enforceable.

The guidelines for the use of force for intervention – which the High Level Panel and Secretary-General have agreed – is the adoption of five basic 'criteria of legitimacy' to test the validity of any case made for a coercive humanitarian intervention. These criteria are, in short, the seriousness of the harm being threatened (which would need to involve large scale loss of life or ethnic cleansing, happening here and now and not in the distant past, to prima facie justify military action); the primary purpose of the proposed military action (to halt or avert harm); whether there were reasonably available peaceful alternatives; the proportionality of the response; and the balance of consequences – whether, overall, more good than harm would be done.

On the bases of the above guidelines were the interventions and wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Libya were justified and why NATO is more and more doing the bidding for US and the West

3. NATO – Excuse for yet another war

NATO was formed in 1949 to defend Europe against the growing power of the Soviet Union. The original members were Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Canada, Portugal, Italy, Norway, Denmark and Iceland.

The first secretary-general of the alliance, the British General Hastings Ismay, joked that the purpose of the organization was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

Proponents of disbanding the alliance say that purpose was fulfilled in 1991, with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the alliance of the former Soviet Union and its satellite states. From then onwards NATO has been trying for the past 20 years to re-purpose itself for some other mission. It is called NATO yet it is called for military incursions in places like Afghanistan and most recently in Libya serving mainly European and US interests.

4. United Nations and its Role in Peacekeeping

In this jigsaw puzzle where does the UN fit in? 2010 has been one of the worst years which the role of UN and the international community has diminished to a low level. The escalating war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the ongoing problems in Middle East, Iran and North Korea are a few examples where the UN and international community have not been able to broker the peace.

Three of the largest peacekeeping operations in DRC, Darfur (Sudan) and Afghanistan, are not achieving the objective they were set out to do. Let me tell you what Ban-Ki Moon Secretary General of UN recently had to say about peacekeeping. "The United Nations is struggling to keep its peacekeeping missions staffed and supplied as the world endures an unprecedented combination of crises, i.e. food crisis, fuel crisis and financial crisis.

Among the peacekeeping reforms I am advocating the UN should have:

Clear, achievable mandates for peacekeeping and peace-building missions, matched by the adequate resources.

Regular and rigorous oversight of peacekeeping missions to ensure effectiveness on the ground.

More emphasis on peace-building and conflict prevention in those countries where insecurity remains high.

Support for the UN's review of international civilian capacity.

Ensuring the review of the UN's Peace Building Commission in strategic and country-focused.

Consideration of the UN Regular and Peacekeeping Budgets to take into account the current economic climate and the need to pursue good budget discipline, and more modernised cost-share calculations to secure value for money.

The bottom line in future peace keeping is that more efforts and resources should be spent on soft power, such as dialogue, diplomacy and reconciliation to end conflicts instead of military options.

5. Conclusion

Western intervention in Libya was grossly hypocritical. It's that such double standards are an integral part of a mechanism of global power and domination that stifles hopes of any credible international system of human rights protection.

So, to paraphrase one of the last voices of sanity in our midst Professor Michel Chossudovsky (Centre for Research on Globalisation)... 'powerful institutional speculators on Wall Street with links to the US military and intelligence establishment will now cash in on billions of dollars in speculative gains in the oil market and commodity and foreign exchange markets. The money will be appropriated from households paying higher prices for fuel'.... He goes on to remind us that financial institutions which had prior knowledge or intelligence of events in Egypt and Libya have already made billions of dollars in speculative gains in the futures and options markets for crude oil.

What we learn from 'Operation Libya' in the Spring of 2011 is that international law is finally dead, butchered into oblivion by the UN Security Council Resolution 1731 supposed to protect civilians under the pretext of no fly zone. We learn that governments are taking the business decision to cull innocent fellow humans for profit and greed.

The events in the Middle East and North Africa have highlighted that the governments who have ignored human rights issues to support and sell arms to authoritarian regimes are not only hypocritical and immoral, but also short-sighted in terms of realpolitik. Politicians squirm yet remained shameless when pressed on shameful dealings in the not-so-distant past.

The European military-industrial complex evolved to ensure the continued extraction of cheap resources from these former colonies. During the colonial period, this process was simple. Britain, France, and other colonial powers would simply dispatch ships to their colonies to collect resources – cotton, gemstones, tea, coffee, bananas, tobacco. Indigenous workers were paid enough to keep them alive, and powerful local interests were either forcibly destroyed or bought-off by the imperial administration.

That this highly artificial state of affairs has lasted mainly intact for almost a century is testament to the willingness with which European governments have armed their Arab proxies. It is also testament to the extent to which the West has portrayed any movement towards pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism as “extremist”.

Today, 1% of the top leaders, elites and corporations for their profit and greed have plunged the rest of the world into continuous warfare from one part of the world to another bringing untold violence, deaths, destruction and suffering to mankind. The bombing of Libya by NATO is the latest example of the brutality of the west for a regime change in the hope that they can install their own puppet regimes like the ones in Saudi Arabia and other places. The unrest and the protests are not just in Libya but also in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. An imminent attack on Iran is already being discussed. That begs the question what kind of change we need and how we bring it? Not by force and intervention but by dialogue and negotiations. We should assist regime change which should work towards the transformation of the world for good governance, rule of law and participatory democracy. Then only there is hope for freedom and equality for not only in all the Middle East and North Africa but also in the rest of the world.

Thank you for listening.

Notes

The following publications were consulted and excerpts have been taken from them during the writing of this article:

1. NATO at 60, Vijay Mehta, June 2009
2. Do we want the Gaddafis in the dock, or out of Libya, Philippe Sands, May 2011, The Guardian
3. Can it be enforced to prevent wars, genocides and crimes against humanity?, Vijay Mehta, March 2009
4. Libya without Qaddafi, Richard Falk, August 2011

This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com

Vijay Mehta is president of Mehta Centre (www.vmpeace.org), Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org), Chair of Uniting for Peace (Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign). He is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century.

He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum charity held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Aitak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

The Sunday Times described him as a ‘longstanding activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment’, who along with his daughter, Renu Mehta, has set a precedent for striving to change the world. (The Sunday Times, 1 February 2009). Vijay Mehta’s new book **“The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World”** will be published by Pluto Press later in early 2012.