



Obama's War

by **Patrick J. Buchanan** ([more by this author](#))

Posted 03/29/2011 ET

In ordering air and naval strikes on a country that neither threatened nor attacked the United States, did [President Obama](#) commit an impeachable act?

So it would seem. For the framers of the Constitution were precise. The power to declare war is entrusted solely to Congress.

From King William's War to Queen Anne's War to King George's War to the Seven Years' War, the colonists had had their fill of royal wars. To no principle were they more committed than that the power to declare war must be separate from the power to wage it.

And Obama usurped that power.

His defenders argue that under the War Powers Act he can wage war for 60 days before going to Congress. But that applies only if the president is responding to an attack or has determined that the nation is under imminent threat.

Had JFK ordered air strikes on the [Cuban missile](#) sites, he would have been responding to an imminent and potentially mortal threat.

When [Ronald Reagan](#) ordered the liberation of Grenada after Marxist thugs murdered the president and 500 American medical students there seemed in danger of being taken hostage, he acted within the War Powers Act. Some 100,000 AK-47 automatic rifles were found stockpiled on the island.

Reagan again acted within the spirit and letter of the act when he used the New Jersey and carrier-based air to retaliate against the terrorist camps of those who engineered the massacre of the 241 Marines in Beirut and when he retaliated against Libya and Moammar Gadhafi for the attack on U.S. soldiers at the Berlin discotheque.

But before [George H.W. Bush](#) went to war to liberate Kuwait and George W. Bush took us to war against Iraq, each went to Congress and got roll-call votes authorizing those wars.

Obama worked the phones to get the approval of 10 of 15 members of the Security Council, but not Russia, China, Germany, India or Brazil. He then sought the benediction of the Arab League, which reveals much about where Obama thinks real moral authority in this world resides.

The president described his reasoning: "(W)hen innocent people are being brutalized; when someone like Gadhafi threatens a bloodbath that could destabilize an entire region; and when the international community is prepared to come together to save many thousands of lives -- then it's in our national interest to act. And it's our responsibility."

But if Obama's U.N. mandate was to "protect civilians" in besieged Benghazi, why did we put a [Tomahawk cruise missile](#) down the chimney of Gadhafi's compound, 600 miles away?

Saturday, Ajdabiya fell to the rebels after U.S. planes pulverized its defenders. If civilians were in danger in Ajdabiya, it was because of a rebel attack that could not have been mounted had U.S. planes not conducted air strikes on tanks and troops defending the town.

What civilians were we protecting in Ajdabiya -- or Brega and [Ras Lanuf](#), all of which fell over the weekend?

A time for truth. U.S. intervention prevented Gadhafi victories in a campaign to crush an insurgency. We have since destroyed his air force and smashed his armor and decimated his ground forces to demoralize and cripple his army until its officers realize they cannot survive weeks of U.S. bombing -- and they move to remove or kill him.

America is fighting the rebels' war.

So the questions arise that were never answered when Obama ignored Congress to start his war. Who are these rebels, some of whom belong to al-Qaida, as others show their hatred of Gadhafi by smearing his posters with a Star of David?

When we win the rebels' war for them, whom do we put in power? Who is our Hamid Karzai?

What allied troops come to occupy Libya?

Many NATO nations have spotty records there. The Turks ruled it in Ottoman days. [Benito Mussolini](#) held it for 20 years. Gen. Erwin Rommel, a Hitler favorite, used it for his desert campaign against the British.

What credibility will our Libyan proteges have when all in Libya know they hold office because Americans came and killed their army?

How many troops will it take to police the smashed cities and prevent reprisals? Who provides those troops? If a Battle of Algiers war begins, as happened in Iraq and Afghanistan and are still going on, who fights that war? And if a regime's use of violence against protesters justifies a U.S. attack, does Obama have [carte blanche](#) to attack Syria and Iran?

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman thinks so. As he said in Paris: "The same principles, activities, the Western world has taken in Libya ... I hope to see those regarding the Iranian regime

and the Syrian regime."

Is Libya the dress rehearsal for Syria and Iran?

Neocons could not be giddier. *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol is ebullient: "Despite his doubts and dithering, President Obama is taking us to war in another [Muslim country](#). Good for him."

Perhaps. But will bloodying another Muslim country be good for America?

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of *Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World*, ["The Death of the West."](#), ["The Great Betrayal."](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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