

## Security council heeds lessons from Rwanda and Balkans

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It has been said that politics, like sausage making, is not a process to observe too closely.

The same can be said of international politics, only it is often worse.

The tortuous UN Security Council process on Libya began nearly a month ago. And yesterday the council finally provided a result by 10 votes to zero, with five abstentions and, crucially, no veto. This was a narrow win given that the Security Council adopts resolutions only with a minimum majority of nine member states.

The Australian government strongly welcomed this outcome. There seem to have been three decisive players involved in bringing the resolution to pass.

The League of Arab States adopted its own resolution to support a no-fly zone for Libya at its March 12 meeting in Cairo. The support of the league was vital.

Its members are Libya's neighbouring states and were a critical element in the legitimacy of Security Council intervention.

Without their support, we might have found ourselves in the difficult and dangerous terrain of the Security Council deliberations on Iraq in the lead-up to the 2003 intervention, which occurred outside authorisation of the council.

Second, the British and the French have been active in the complex task of drafting this resolution. Their leadership has been critical in steeling wider European resolve on the intervention.

Third, and most critically, is the US, the world's remaining superpower. It is critical to note that in the affairs of state, it has once again fallen to decisive diplomatic intervention of the US to break through the impasse.

What is also critical is that neither China nor Russia sought to veto this resolution as some had feared. China, as chair of the council for March, appears to have exercised its responsibilities entirely appropriately - notwithstanding its long-held opposition to "interference" in the matters of other states.

So what does this resolution mean and what happens from here?

UN Security Council Resolution 1973 draws on the political doctrine called the **Responsibility to protect**, commonly called **R2P**.

Firmly grounded in well-established principles of international law, **R2P** was built on the failures of the international community in Rwanda and the Balkans during the 1990s. (...)

(...)Paragraph 8 of Security Council Resolution 1973 also authorises member states to "take all necessary measures to enforce" a no-fly zone: a "ban on all flights in the air space in Libya in order to help protect civilians".

The Security Council deliberately stopped short of authorising any occupation force in Libya.

Nonetheless, this resolution extends wide powers to member states to take a range of military actions to protect Libya's people.

If the diplomatic campaign for the moment has concluded, the military campaign is now the next step. (...)

(...)Some have asked why Australia is not contributing militarily to the proposed military actions by member states under this resolution. There are several reasons for this.

If a no-fly zone for a related authorised military intervention were applied to an operational theatre in Australia's wider region, we would of course be obliged to consider our own appropriate action.

By contrast, Libya lies just across the Mediterranean from the military, navy and air assets of the major NATO powers.

Moreover, in the history of the Security Council, nearly 2000 resolutions have been adopted.

The fact Australia may support particular resolutions diplomatically has not in the past mandated that Australia should also militarily give effect to every one of these resolutions. That has never been the case.

Furthermore, there are direct forms of humanitarian assistance we can provide.

Australia is the world's fifth largest contributor to the relief effort in Libya and neighbouring states.(...)

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