

Interview with Special Adviser Ed Luck

International Peace Institute 28 March 2011 Mr. Luck, is the military intervention in Libya about the world implementing the Responsibility to Protect?

Yes. Both Libyan resolutions of the United Nations Security Council refer to it. This is the first time that the Council has employed the enforcement provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter to implement the Responsibility to Protect. That is historic! Now the Member States, of course, have to strictly abide by resolution 1973.

Isn't the Coalition really pursuing regime change?

I don't see any indication of this. Some participating states may have other goals. But I am under the impression that everybody recognizes that the UN mandate only authorizes measures to protect the population. It is important that no one forgets the purpose of the exercise.

Do you worry about delegitimizing the concept of RtoP, which is very unpopular among opponents of humanitarian interventions anyway, if other goals are pursued in its name?

We always have to beware of possible abuse. The Secretary-General will regularly report to the Security Council about the steps the Coalition is taking. Generally, it is important for the acceptance of RtoP that we only invoke it when a population is in danger of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity.

Which scenario was impending in Libya?

There seemed to be crimes against humanity, that is, widespread and systematic attacks on the population with the knowledge of the authorities. The air attacks on peaceful protesters were outrageous. Nevertheless, the Security Council tried sanctions first - but the Qaddafi regime kept advancing. Finally, there was good reason to believe that a bloodbath in Benghazi was imminent. (...) (...) Unlike in Tunisia and Egypt, the Libyan protest movement has quickly become an armed resistance. Is RtoP in danger of becoming a pretense for supporting a party in a civil war?

The resolutions of the UN Security Council clearly state that the arms embargo and the call for a truce apply to both sides of the conflict. But Qaddafi's opponents are simple civilians who have taken up arms for self-defense: housewives, students, lawyers, doctors, teachers or technicians. It was not an armed rebellion. (...) (...) So you are not frustrated that Western states are only referring to RtoP in this case where tangible interests such as oil and refugees are concerned?

If states cared only about economic relations with Qaddafi, they would have looked the other way. To think that Western countries are merely waiting for pretenses to intervene militarily in other states is nonsense. More frequently, powerful states ignore the cries for help from people under duress. Somalia, Darfur, and the Congo are examples of this. (...) See [full interview](#) .