



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on March 30, 2011

## Obama's Incoherent Policy in Libya

You don't just walk up to the local bully and slap him across the face. If you are determined to confront him, then you try to knock the living daylight out of him. Otherwise, you are better off to leave him alone.

Anyone who grew up in my old neighborhood in Harlem could have told you that. But Barack Obama didn't grow up in my old neighborhood. He had a much more genteel upbringing, including a fancy private school, in Hawaii.



Maybe that is why he thinks he can launch military operations against Moammar Qaddafi, while promising not to kill him and promising that no American ground troops will be used.

It is the old liberal illusion that you can measure out force with a teaspoon, not only in military operations micro-managed by civilians in Washington, like the Vietnam war, but also in domestic confrontations when the police are trying to control a rioting mob, and are being restrained by politicians, while the mob is restrained by nobody.

We went that route in the 1960s, and the results were not inspiring, either domestically or internationally.

The old saying, "When you strike at a king, you must kill him," is especially apt when it comes to attacking a widely recognized sponsor of international terrorism like Colonel Qaddafi. To attack him without destroying his regime is just asking for increased terrorism against Americans and America's allies. So is replacing him with insurgents who include other sponsors of terrorism.

President Obama's Monday night speech was long on rhetoric and short on logic. He said: "I believe that this movement of change cannot be turned back, and that we must stand alongside those who believe in the same core principles that have guided us."

Just what would lead him to conclude that this includes the largely unknown forces who are trying to seize power in Libya?

Too often in the past, going all the way back to the days of Woodrow Wilson, we have operated on the assumption that a bad government becomes better after the magic of "change." President Wilson said that we were fighting the First World War to make the way "safe for democracy." But what actually followed was the replacement of autocratic monarchies by totalitarian dictatorships that made previous despots pale by comparison.

The most charitable explanation for President Obama's incoherent policy in Libya — if incoherence can be called a policy — is that he suffers from the long-standing blind spot of the left when it comes to the use of force.



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A less charitable and more likely explanation is that Obama is treating the war in Libya as he treats all sorts of other things, as actions designed above all to serve his own political interests and ideological visions. Whether it does even that depends on what the situation is like in Libya when the 2012 elections roll around.

As for the national interests of the United States of America, Barack Obama has never shown any great concern about that.

President Obama started alienating our staunchest allies, Britain and Israel, from his earliest days in office, while cozying up to our adversaries such as Russia and China, not to mention the Palestinians, who cheered when they saw on television the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Many people in various parts of the political spectrum are expressing a sense of disappointment with Obama. But I have not felt the least bit disappointed.

Once in office, President Obama has done exactly what his whole history would lead you to expect him to do — such as cutting the military budget and vastly expanding the welfare state.

He has by-passed the Constitution by appointing power-wielding “czars” who don’t have to be confirmed by the Senate like Cabinet members, and now he has by-passed Congress by taking military actions based on authorization by the United Nations and the Arab League.

Those who expected his election to mark a new “post-racial” era may be the most disappointed. He has appointed people with a track record of race resentment promotion and bias, like Attorney General Eric Holder and Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Disappointing? No. Disgusting? Yes. The only disappointment is with voters who voted their hopes and ignored his realities.

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