

# The American Conservative

## The Absurdities of the Libyan War

Posted By [Daniel Larison](#) On May 24, 2011 @ 1:16 pm In

That the top item at a summit between Britain and America should be how to bomb a north African state that threatens neither of them is absurd. ~[Simon Jenkins](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

Yes, it is, and what is even more absurd is for them to describe the Libyan war, as they have in their [joint op-ed](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in the *Times* today, as “critical to the type of world that we want to build.” When in Europe, American officials are quick to declare how extremely important the Libyan war is and how involved Americans are, and when at home they are equally quick to insist that it’s not that significant and Americans have almost nothing to do with it.

The administration has a habit of sending out very different messages to European and American audiences on Libya. As Doug Bandow [noted](#) <sup>[3]</sup> recently, for the benefit of American audiences the administration pretends that it is barely contributing anything to the war effort in Libya so as to maintain the fiction that the U.S. isn’t even really at war. The administration wants us to believe that the U.S. involvement is so tiny that it has nothing to do with war powers or the War Powers Resolution. As defenders of unchecked executive power would have it, it’s no different than chasing after cattle-rustlers anyway, so why worry? At the same time, administration officials boast to Europeans about the extent of American involvement to allay European concerns that the U.S. has checked out completely. Back home, administration officials acknowledge that Libya is a “sideshow,” and in Britain the President joins Cameron in saying that the Libyan war is *critical* to the future of the world.

In fact, the administration seems to be conning the American public, Congress, and NATO allies at the same time. Obama attaches his name to op-eds that wildly over-promise what the administration is actually willing to do, and his officials emphasize how much of the load U.S. forces are still carrying, which encourages the European allies to think that there is more willingness in Washington escalate the conflict than there is. He continues to involve the U.S. more extensively in Libya than he lets on, all the while effectively keeping Congress in the dark, and at home he pretends that U.S. efforts in Libya are little more than minimal supporting actions. This ensures that everyone involved has good reason to feel misled and abused, and at some point that is going to come back to haunt the administration.

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### 1 Comment To "The Absurdities of the Libyan War"

#1 Comment By [cfountain72](#) On May 24, 2011 @ 1:26 pm

“critical to the type of world that we want to build.”

What is in the DC water that generates such disgusting displays of hubris? We’re building a world now? Memo to the alleged Christians who inhabit the former Potomac swamp: Pride is one the Seven Deadly Sins for a reason.

Peace be with you.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Simon Jenkins: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/may/24/obama-america-break-addiction-to-war>

[2] joint op-ed: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article3033133.ece>

[3] noted: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-libyan-itty-bitty-kind-sort-quasi-war-5354>

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