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On Benghazi, the Buck Stops With Hillary

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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will face the wrong questions when she testifies today on the September 11, 2012, terrorist attack in Benghazi. The buck stops with Secretary Clinton -- and it should. But members of Congress will focus on politically charged and distracting issues. The terrorist attack on the consulate was abhorrent. But a broader discussion about the NATO-led regime change in Libya -- and its unfolding political aftermath in Mali -- would be a better use of Congress' time. The consequences of intervention should not be

ignored, and its antecedents must be explored.

Secretary Clinton was among the handful of U.S. and European officials who urged Western military action in Libya, a mission that entangled the United States in yet another volatile post-revolutionary Muslim country, and accelerated neighboring Mali's destabilization. North Africa's vortex of Islamicist crosscurrents has now sucked America and France into Mali. Indeed, the reverberations of NATO-led regime change in Libya impelled U.S. and French involvement in Mali. Like the conflict in Libya, France cannot do the heavy lifting in Mali on its own. Senators should ask: How far will the conflict in Mali go? Will the United States end up holding the broken pieces once again? Is America now "loading from behind"?

Furthermore, Congress should ask Secretary Clinton about how the White House shamelessly recast the word "war" into "kinetic military operations." That Orwellian revisionism allowed the administration to sidestep the War Powers Act and bypass congressional authorization. In the course of supposedly demonstrating America's selflessness in the promotion of democracy abroad, the administration compromised the integrity of our institutions at home. In that respect, the Libyan adventure has added to the steady aggrandizement of America's imperial presidency.

Secretary Clinton probably won't go into any of that, and pitchfork-wielding senators likely won't ask her about these far-reaching consequences.

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