



How Clinton encouraged Obama's biggest blunder

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President Barack Obama recently said that his biggest blunder was “failing to plan for the day after” his intervention in Libya. While he defended the intervention itself, the president cannot deny that his reckless war has had disastrous consequences, including a growing ISIS presence in Libya.

Hillary Clinton eagerly pressured the president to overthrow Moammar Gaddafi. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates recalls that, “The president told me that it was one of the closest decisions he’d ever made, sort of 51-49, and I’m not sure that he would’ve made that decision if Secretary Clinton hadn’t supported it.”

After overthrowing Gaddafi, Clinton proclaimed triumph, saying “We came. We saw. He died.”

The U.S. intervention killed a dictator, but it certainly didn’t bring freedom or security to Libya. As Alan Kuperman explains, “Libya has not only failed to evolve into a democracy; it has devolved into a failed state.”

In that failed state, militias and terrorists fight a bloody civil war, with ordinary Libyan citizens caught in the crossfire. While Obama and Clinton sold the war as a humanitarian intervention, Libyans don’t seem to be better off in this violent and chaotic environment.

ISIS forces took advantage of this chaos to gain a foothold in Libya. So in addition to failing to protect Libyan civilians, Clinton and Obama undermined American national security interests. Kuperman writes, “Libya today is riddled with vicious militias and anti-American terrorists — and thus serves as a cautionary tale of how humanitarian intervention can backfire for both the intervener and those it is intended to help.”

Hillary Clinton stands by her decision, calling the Libyan intervention “smart power at its best.” But as Christopher Preble of the Cato Institute says, “If this is smart power at its best, I would hate to see it at its worst.”

This isn’t the first failed war Hillary Clinton supported. She infamously voted for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. That foolish war created a power vacuum and plunged Iraq into a civil war. Over 3,529 American soldiers died in combat. Over 156,492 Iraqi civilians were killed, according to Iraq Body Count.

After all those deaths, was America more secure? On the contrary, ISIS was only able to rise to power because of the power vacuum left by the American invasion.

While more blood and treasure was lost in Iraq than Libya, both interventions undermined American security.

President Obama recognizes this, but still defends the Libyan intervention itself, arguing that his “failure to plan for the day after” explains the disaster.

Would more planning have solved the problem? Foreign countries are complex, and wars cause unpredictable chaos. U.S. officials do not have enough knowledge to plan entirely new institutions and governance under these conditions.

The world is unpredictable and complicated. Wars create unintended consequences. When George W. Bush invaded Iraq, he caused a bloody civil war, thousands of civilian deaths, and set the stage for ISIS. When Barack Obama overthrew Gaddafi, he lengthened a bloody civil war, created a failed state, and gave ISIS a foothold in Africa.

Hillary Clinton recklessly supported both of these interventions. Rather than planning for the day after, she encouraged poorly planned wars that unleashed chaos and undermined security at home and abroad.

Leaders should be wary of war and cautious about intervening in complex foreign affairs. Wars squander taxpayer dollars, spread violence, and kill innocent civilians. The costs are clear. But the promised benefits, whether humanitarian or security-oriented, may never materialize. War often exacerbates humanitarian crises and undermines national security.

It is prudent to exercise caution and restraint in foreign affairs. Hillary Clinton shows no restraint. Instead, she recklessly promoted two of the most disastrous wars in recent memory.